

**WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?
PHILOSOPHICAL AND RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVES IN CHINA AND THE WEST
JULY 4-15, 2016, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY**



COURSE DIRECTORS

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BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

Explicitly or implicitly, the question of what makes us human has been a central and ongoing preoccupation among thinkers from antiquity to the present, and in intellectual traditions vastly removed from one another in time and space. That the question seems to be a fixture in the human imagination speaks not only to our need for self-understanding in the context of a broader world, but also to its relevance to issues of practical concern: how one conceptualizes the human has deep normative implications, grounding different moral systems, hierarchies of values, configurations of power and patterns of social interaction. That it has been answered in such diverse ways highlights the great stakes involved in this ongoing conversation.

This course examines the complex and varied trajectory of how thinkers, in China and Europe, have sought to make sense of their humanness. Bringing together specialists in the philosophical and religious traditions of both civilizations, it focuses particularly on the early history of thinking about the human as approached through a diverse range of sources, from ethical and cosmological writings to medical treatises and case studies, to religious and literary texts (such as ancient tragedy). The goal of the course is to explore linkages among the various realms of thought and experience represented by these diverse genres: thus, how emergent conceptions of the cosmos, the spiritual world, and the workings of nature might have shaped the understanding of the human, and conversely, how thinking about what makes humans distinct (for instance, certain cognitive, ethical, creative, spiritual capacities) confronts the place of humans in the world at large. The latter part of the course will focus on later developments in medieval Christian theology and in Renaissance humanism. We will conclude with reflections on the contemporary relevance of the human as a category, and on what examination of past ways of thinking about the human bears upon issues of pressing concern in the present.

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For further academic information on the course and on eligibility criteria and funding options please visit the web site at

<http://summeruniversity.ceu.edu/human-2016>

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