The background of the slide is a textured, aged, light beige paper. On the left side, there are several black ink splatters of varying sizes, some with fine, radiating lines, suggesting a traditional East Asian ink wash style. The main title is centered in the lower half of the page.

Confucianism

The Basics I

Goals

- Confucius' story
- China during Confucius' time
- What is tradition? What are “norms”?
- Rise of Individualism
- American Parallel?
- Realists/Mohism/Confucianism
- Patterns of Prestige



Confucianism

- Established in China 500 BC
- Around 5 Million followers
- No talk of Gods or afterlife
- Has influenced Chinese and East-Asian culture for over 2000 years.

Chinese plain in the late Spring and Autumn period (5th century BC)





Confucius (Kong Qio)

- Born 551 BC, Lu Province
- Known as the “first teacher” of China.
- Fatherless at 3 years old. This causes much strife.



Confucius the bookworm

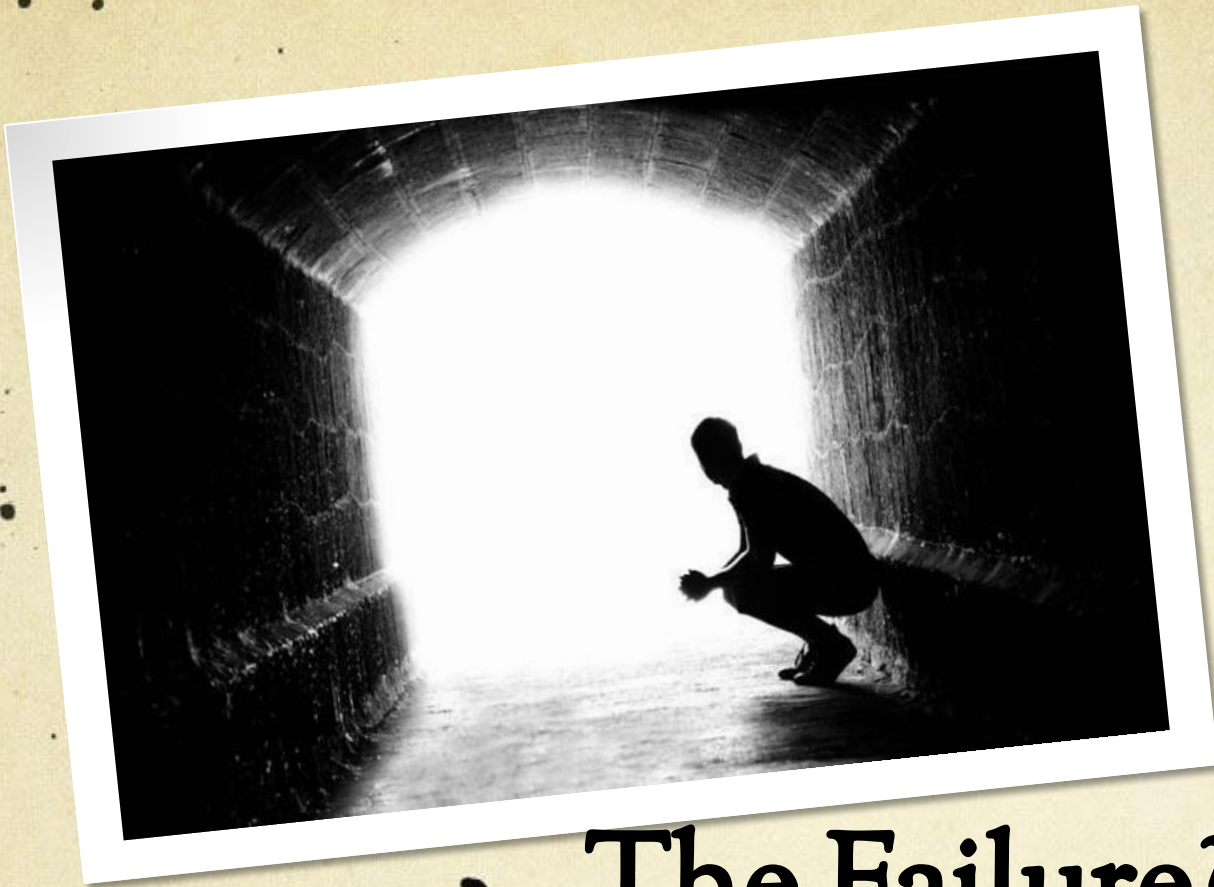
- No social status so Confucius explores books and ancient traditions.
- Known as a great student who loved learning.





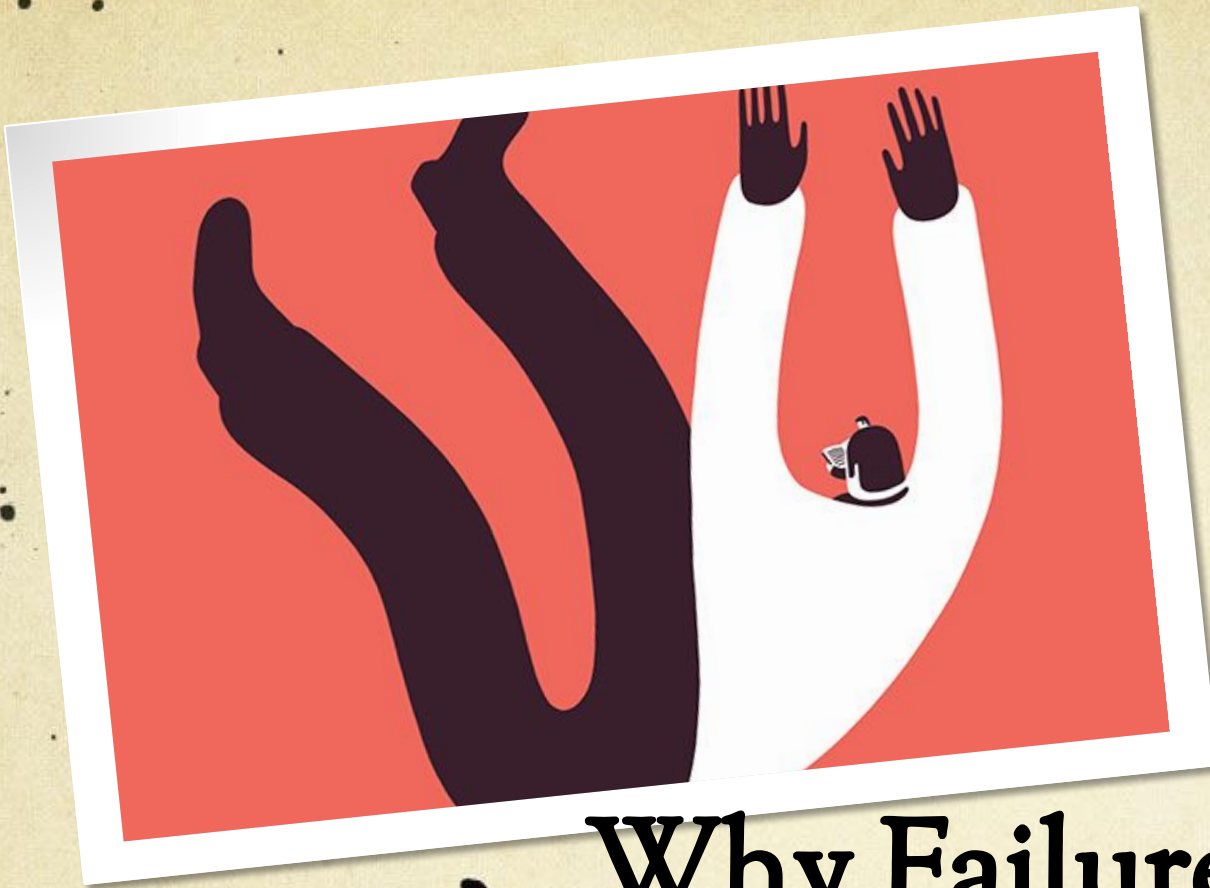
The Master Tutor

- Held several insignificant government positions.
- Finds success as a tutor with a reputation for having great wisdom.



The Failure?

- C's dream was to change Chinese society.
- He believed China needed real reform and unity.
- Wanted a powerful role in government, but never received one.



Why Failure?

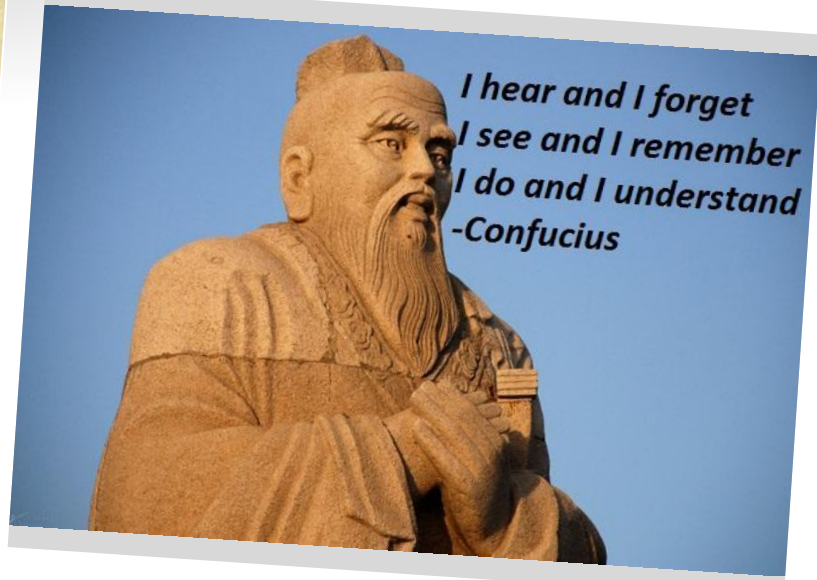
- Confucius was known for his candor (honesty).
- Always spoke truth to power.
- Leaders knew of his strong reputation, but rarely listened.
- Often given meaningless positions.



Advising the Ruler

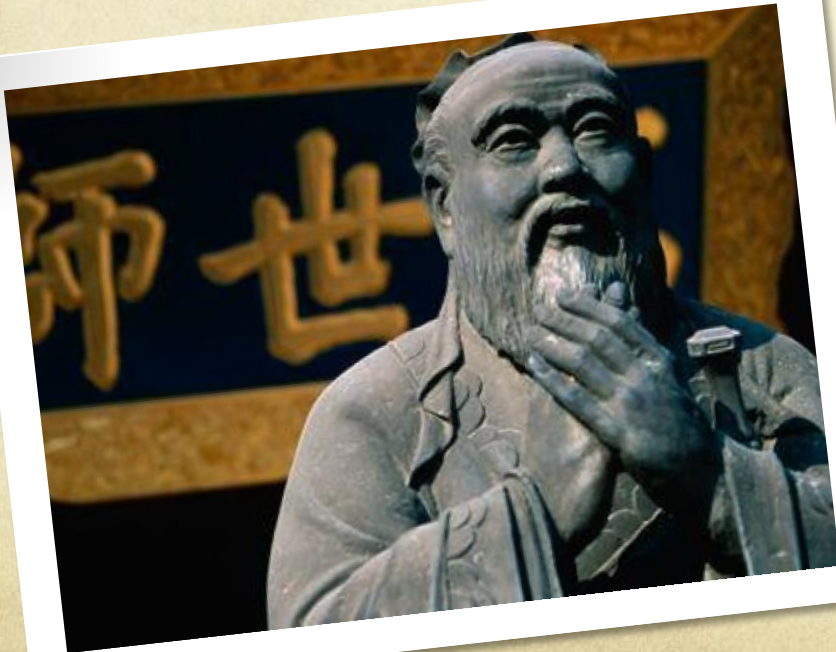
- Ruler: “How can I best govern?”
- Confucius: “You should learn to govern yourself before you can govern others.”
- Ruler: Makes sense. I shall give you a job in the middle of nowhere.

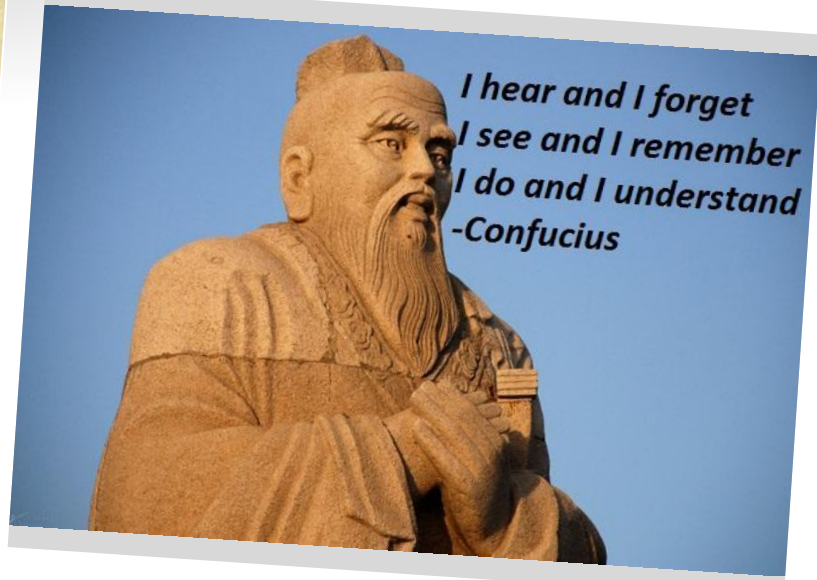




Personal failure...

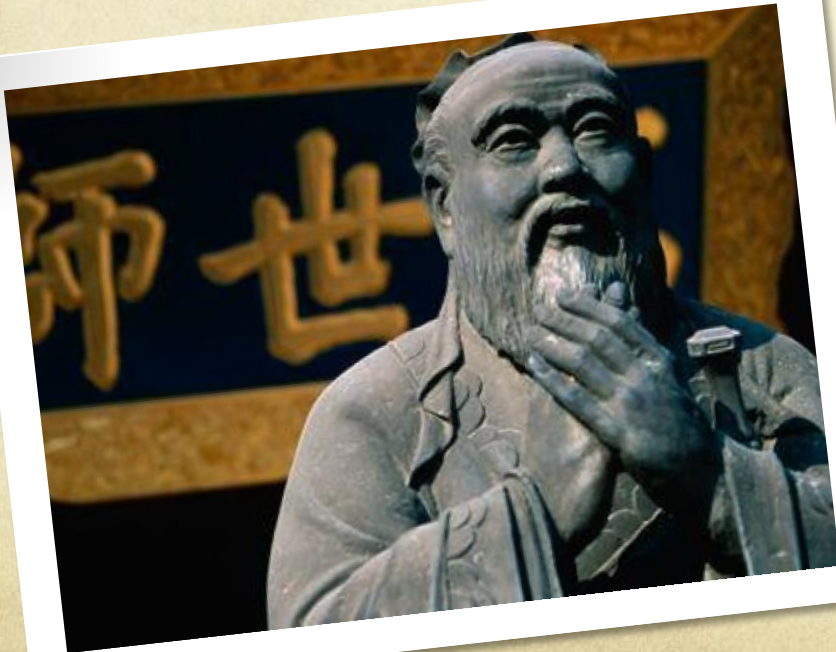
- At age 50, begins travelling to states as adviser.
- Confucius thought of himself as a failure.
- Eventually returned to his home state but was too old to govern.
- Spent his last years teaching and editing traditional texts.
- Dies in 479 BC





...Cultural success

- Maybe failed as politician but succeeded in transforming Chinese society.
- Taught in informal, Socratic method.
- Never compromised integrity for material gain.





...Cultural success

- Unlike Buddha: Confucius was not treated as a holy authority.
- Like Buddha: Rejected class distinctions and never traded integrity for material gain.
- Always saw himself as a person on the same journey as his students.



Lasting Impact

- Education: Students honored a picture of Confucius in classrooms for 2000 years.
- Government: His teachings were required reading for centuries.
- Eventually, some elevate Confucius to status of god.
- If he failed as a politician, what made him so special?



China is Confucius' time

- 800-300 BC = End of Chou Dynasty
- 500-400 BC = Period of Warring States
- Local rulers seek control = mass slaughter
- Chinese civilization is falling apart.



tradition

TRA•DI•TION: 1. a time-honored practice
2. the passing down of elements of a culture
from generation to generation
3. an inherited, established, or customary
pattern of thought, action, or behavior

What holds societies together?

- Smith: Humans have traditions and norms.
- “Patterns simply take shape over centuries, during which generations fumble their way toward satisfying mores and away from destructive ones (161)”
- Translation?



Modern life isn't very different.

- We maintain norms not because it's the only way or the right way to do X.
- We often practice norms because X has always been done that way.
- Ex. Neckties.
- Others?





Traditions and Norms

- Some norms disappear and others are passed down forever.
- Over time, what we call “norms” become traditions.





THE BEGINNING OF A GREAT TRADITION.

21 Powers of Tradition

- (1) Traditions keep bad social actions in check. Examples?
- (2) No written rule/law for traditions. (this shows how strong they are)



Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream.

Tradition in Confucius' China

- Rise of Individualism. What is Individualism?
- Reason replaces social norms.
- “X is tradition” is no longer good enough reason to X



What's in it for me?

- This was the most important question of Confucius' China.
- Parallels to modern life?

Smith's Parallels to American Culture



Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream.

- The US has a deficit of culture and tradition.
- It asks immigrants to water down their home culture to join the “melting pot”.
- America replaces home culture with education and reason.



Smith's Parallels to American Culture



Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream.

- But reason is not enough to replace traditions and culture.
- With reason, we see ourselves as free individuals, not connected communities.
- As free individuals we pursue our self-interested goals.



Smith's Parallels to American Culture



Never forget that only dead fish swim with the stream.

- In a free and self-interested society, tradition is not enough to keep us in check.
- We need a strong military and police state watching us at all times.
- We need intricate laws that are specific, big and scary.



Solutions to China's Problems: Realists

- People are naturally lazy, greedy and lustful.
- People don't know what's best for them.
- So China needs many rules, regulations and ways of keeping track of people to maintain order.



Solutions to China's Problems: Mohism

- Mo Tzu
- There is a personal God who looks after us.
- Doing good in doing God's work.
- So, we should practice love and love each other equally.



Confucius' Reply

Realists: Too crude and clumsy.

- You can force order through rules, but you'll never inspire people with them.

Mohism: Too utopian.

- Great result, but how do we get there? Where's the method?





Confucius' Solution

- Create intentional traditions
- Look to the past for success.
- Take what works and leave what doesn't.
- “Age of Grand Harmony” = Chou Dynasty ~1000 BC.



But...

Q: Norms are created naturally...how do we create them on purpose?

A: Educate people on the right ways of living. This starts with proper relationships.

Q: What was Confucius' technique to get people to follow?

A: Patterns of Prestige.



Patterns of Prestige

- Leaders admire some X.
- Followers admire the leader, so they admire X.



Examples:

- “I will not tell a lie” – George Washington
- “I have a dream” – MLK
- “Human beings are good by their nature” - Confucius



KEEP
CALM
AND
follow the
leader

Patterns of Prestige

- If people admire you, and you admire X...
- People admire X.
- So...you must be the kind of person worth admiring!



Recap

- Confucius' story
- China during Confucius' time
- What is tradition?
What are "norms"?



Recap

- Rise of Individualism
- American Parallel?
- Realists/Mohism/Confucianism
- Patterns of Prestige

End of Confucianism I

