I. **Name:** Named after the founder, Confucius

II. **Origin** *(see timelines section)*
   A. Date: 500 BCE
   B. Location: China

III. **Adherents** *(see statistics section)*
   A. Number: Unknown (due to eclectic nature of Chinese religion)
   B. Location: Primarily in China

IV. **Key Figure/Founder**
   A. Date: 551-479 BCE
   B. Name: *K’ung Fu-tzu* ("Master K’ung") (Latinized form: Confucius)
   C. Life
      1. Born: 551 BC in the principality of Lu (in current-day Shantung province) to a modest family
      2. Parents: Raised primarily by impoverished mother (since father died early)
      3. Life
         a) At 15, took to studies and later married and became a tutor (soon was known for his charm and wisdom)
         b) Said to have met Lao Tzu (Confucius being the younger of the two)
         c) From age 50-63 wandered from state to state offering his services and advice to rulers
      4. Occupation: Teacher
         a) Method of teaching: Socratic (was hard on his students)
         b) Likened himself to a fellow traveler (himself attempting to become fully human and not being completely successful)
      5. Goal: To serve in public office (to demonstrate that his theories worked) though he never had the opportunity
         a) Many rulers were too intimidated by him and didn’t offer him a position
         b) Some rulers offered him trivial posts or were unscrupulous and were therefore rejected by him
      6. Death: Returned to his own state and died in 479 BC at the age of 73 (after his death he began to be glorified)
   
D. Nature: A man (with human faults and interests)
E. View of the supernatural: Did not reject but did not emphasize
F. Historical context: Period of disunity
   1. Problem: Social anarchy
   2. Answers
      a) Legalists: Desired a strong centralized government (cf. Hobbes)
         1) AKA: Realists
         2) Analysis of human nature: Low
      b) **Mohists:** Desired a government ruled by love
         1) Founder: *Mo tzu* (or Mo Ti)
         2) One should regard others as one regards one’s own
      c) **Taoists:** Desired no government (or as little as possible)
      d) Confucius: Desired a return to idealized feudalism
         1) Analysis of rivals
            a) Legalists: Force is external and clumsy
            b) Mohists: Reliance on love is utopian and unrealistic
            c) Taoists: No government also was not the solution
         2) His answer: Deliberate tradition
            a) Behavior patterns in China’s Age of the Grand Harmony should be emulated
               i) To a large extent, Confucius idealized the period
Confucianism

(a) It was neither grand nor completely harmonious
(b) The accuracy of the assessment is irrelevant to his program

(ii) Three steps in the process
(a) Maintaining the tradition
(b) Determining the values/ends the tradition should serve
(c) Using education (formal and informal) to universally internalize the values

V. Sacred Text
A. The Five Classics
1. Book of Changes (I-Ching or Yi-Ching) (edited and commentary provided by Confucius): Addresses divination as well as the theory of yin and yang
2. Book of History (Shu-Ching): Accounts of the Sage Kings of the Golden Age
3. Book of Odes (Shih Ching): Collections of songs and ballads
4. Book of Springs and Autumns (Ch’un Ch’iu): Accounts of rulers of the Province of Lu (where Confucius lived)
5. Book of Rites (Li Chi): Treatises on ceremonies

B. The Four Books
1. The Analects (Lun Yü): The sayings of Confucius and his followers
2. The Great Learning (Ta Hsüeh): Deals with the training and education of a gentleman (written after Confucius)
3. The Doctrine of the Mean (Chung Yung): Deals with relationship of human nature to the universe (written after Confucius—possibly by his grandson Tzu-Ssu)
4. The Works of Mencius (Mêng Tzû): Written by Confucian Mencius as an exposition of Confucianism (stresses the goodness of human nature)

VI. Key Teachings of Confucius (cf. Huston Smith’s The World’s Religions)
A. Jen
1. The term
   a) Etymology: A combination of the characters for “human being” and “two”
   b) Meaning: “Goodness,” “human-heartedness,” “benevolence,” etc.
2. Described: Jen is the ideal relationship between individuals
   a) Confucius claims to have never witnessed a complete manifestation of it
   b) Jen involves a respect for oneself and humanity toward others
   c) Attitudes that automatically flow from jen: Magnanimity, good faith, charity (a person of jen is diligent, courteous, unselfish and empathetic [cf. the Silver Rule])

B. Chun tzu
1. The term means “gentleman,” “superior person,” “the mature person,” etc.
2. Described: The chun tzu is not petty, mean or small-spirited but is respectful, accommodating, pleasant, modest and not overly talkative

C. Li (two meanings: propriety and ritual)
1. Propriety
   a) Described: What is right or the way that something should be done
   b) Key concepts
      (1) Rectification of Names: Terms and words mean what they should (Confucius was grappling with the issue of semantics)
      (2) Doctrine of the Mean (cf. Aristotle)
         (a) Described: One should seek the middle way between two extremes
         (b) Result: Harmony, balance, compromise, reserve, protection from fanaticism, etc.
      (3) Five Constant Relationships (or Five Great Relations)
         (a) Parent (should be loving)—child (should be reverential)
         (b) Husband (good)—wife (listening)
         (c) Elder sibling (gentle)—junior sibling (respectful)
         (d) Elder friend (considerate)—junior friend (deferential)
         (e) Ruler (benevolent)—subject (loyal)
      (4) Respect for Family
         (a) Filial piety (the children’s respect and responsibility for their parents)
Confucianism

Ancestor worship
Respect for Age
With age comes experience, wisdom, and mellowing
Three of the Five Constant Relationships focus on respecting one’s elders

Ritual (changing what is right into a rite)

D. 
Te
1. Literal meaning: Power
2. Meaning for Confucius (broader): Virtue (or a kind or moral charisma)
   a) Mere force (like the Realists propounded), according to Confucius, was not enough to have a successful society
   b) Rulers must have and be of a character that compels respect (cf. Plato and Jefferson)

E. Wen
1. Refers to the “arts of peace” (as opposed to those of war): Music, poetry, art, etc.
2. Confucius valued the arts highly
   a) Intrinsically: For its own sake
   b) Instrumentally
      (1) Because of its transforming power (to transform one into a virtuous individual)
      (2) Because of its political power (the state the highest wen, or best culture, will ultimately conquer all others)

VII. Development
A. Early Confucianism
   1. Mencius
      a) Date: 370-290 BC
      b) Human nature: Believed that humans are by nature good
         (1) Evil is due to ignorance
         (2) Evil is due to a lack of good example and proper training (“The heart of the child is naturally inclined to good”)
   2. Hsün Tzu
      a) Human nature: Believed that humans are by nature evil (which could be overcome by training and education: li)
      b) Compared to Mencius: Although Mencius and Hsün Tzu disagreed regarding human nature, they agreed on the value of li

B. Neo-Confucianism
   1. Date: During Sung period (960-1279 AD)
   2. Reason for development
      a) Restoration of the great imperial state (which restored the status of Confucianism)
      b) Response to attraction of Taoism and Buddhism
         (1) To the True Man of Taoism and the Bodhisattva of Buddhism, Confucianism offered the Saint or Sage (shēng-rén)
         (2) They offered their own canon in response to the texts of Taoism and Buddhism
   3. Two schools (both agreed with Mencius that human nature is basically good)
      a) School of Li
         (1) The moral principles are to be found in the world outside
         (2) Spokesperson: ChuHsi
            (a) Date: 1130-1200 AD
            (b) Importance: Has been called the Thomas Aquinas of China
            (c) Reduced the forces of the universe to two: chī and li (a development of yin and yang)
            (d) Incorporated elements of Taoist and Buddhist thought into Confucianism
      b) School of Hsin
         (1) The moral principles are to be found within one’s mind
         (2) Spokesperson: Wang Yang-ming

VIII. Related Religions (see Religions of India and other Far Eastern Religions sections)
A. In China, Confucianism is oftentimes synthesized with the other major Chinese religions: Taoism and Buddhism
B. Compared to **Taoism**

1. **Taoism**
   a) Stresses *yin*
   b) Emphasizes naturalness and spontaneity
   c) Focus: What transcends the human
   d) Ceremony and formality are rejected
   e) Conform to the *Tao* and let behavior spontaneously flow

2. **Confucianism**
   a) Stresses *yang*
   b) Emphasizes social responsibility
   c) Focus: The human
   d) Ceremony and formality are emphasized
   e) Construct a pattern of responses that is imitated consciously

IX. **Structure**

A. Goal: To become fully human
B. Problem: Impossible without deliberate tradition
C. Solution: Return to Golden Age by deliberate tradition

X. **Status**

A. Some argue that Confucianism is *not* a religion
   1. Reason: Confucianism does not meet a narrower definition of religion or have a sufficient number of defining characteristics (*a rejection or downplaying of the supernatural*)
   2. Alternate classification: Some argue that it is merely an ethical system or a philosophy of life

B. Some argue that Confucianism *is* a religion
   1. Confucianism meets a broader definition of religion (*it has what Tillich referred to as “ultimate concern”*)
   2. While emphasizing the natural, Confucianism does not reject the supernatural
      a) Emphasis should be on the people rather than ancestors
      b) Emphasis should be on this realm rather than the other
      c) Emphasis should be on filial piety rather than ancestor worship