

RSOC 10 Asian Religions
Fall 2008 MWF 9:15-10:20 AM Kenna Hall 310

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Office Hours: Monday 10:30AM-12 noon, Wednesday 4:10-5 PM, or by appointment

In this course we will survey the history, major teachings, and practices of the major Asian Religious traditions. In the course of doing this we will also explore the various approaches that can be taken in the study of religions. That is, we will examine these traditions from socio-historical and theological perspectives. We will also engage in the comparative study of religion, for as the course progresses we will continually engage in comparative reflection upon these traditions, vis-à-vis one another, and also in relation to the Western tradition with which many of us will be more familiar. We will engage with these traditions textually, via the class readings, and also via multimedia sources. Through this, we will hopefully end the quarter with a richer understanding of the Asian religions.

Course Objectives:

1. A basic understanding of the teachings and histories of the major Asian religious traditions.
2. A basic understanding of the methodological approaches taken in the academic study of religions.
3. Appreciation of the contemporary relevance of the study of Asian religious traditions.

Requirements:

Regular attendance is required, and frequent, unexcused absence will result in a grade penalty. I expect active participation in class discussions and will strive to make to class as interactive as possible; you should always feel free to ask questions and contribute your ideas. To do so you should come to class prepared; reading should be completed during the week they are assigned, and be prepared to be called upon to discuss them in any given class. Attendance will be measured via participation in group discussions and discussions in connection with readings assignments and following video presentations (10%). Unexcused absences will result in a grade penalty. There will be two in-class midterm exams (30% each), and two short papers (2 pages, 15% each).

Papers should be submitted in or before class on the day that they will be due. Extensions will be granted with advanced notice and good reason; if you are having difficulty in any way, **please do not wait until the last minute to contact me.** As it is my goal to see that you successfully complete the assignments, I will do whatever I can to assist you if you are experiencing difficulty. However, in the interest of fairness, work handed in late without a prior extension will receive a grade penalty, which will increase as time passes. I will accept all written submissions as MSWord document email attachments (preferably) or in paper “hardcopy” format. Please submit emailed papers in .doc format, not the new .docx format.

The short papers will consist of critical analyses of two of the documentaries that we will view in this class. In order to save paper, I encourage student to submit the papers electronically as MSWord document email attachments, but I will also accept paper “hardcopy” submissions. All documents should be double-spaced with at least 1” margins, in an easily readable 12 pt font. Emailed papers must be in my inbox by the beginning of class on the day they are due; I will send a confirmation email once I have successfully opened the attachment. If you do not receive a confirmation email within 24 hours please inform me. Emailed papers will be returned with comments via email once they are graded. The class texts are available both at the bookstore and on reserve.

Respectful behavior in the class is also a requirement. This means, for example, turning off or silencing your cell phones. Please refrain from texting in class, and laptops are welcome for note taking only.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or academic dishonesty in any form (as described in the Student Conduct Code) will result in a failed grade for the project, and possibly for the course. All allegations of academic dishonesty will be reported to the department chair and Office of Student Life. For a full presentation of University policies concerning plagiarism, see:

<http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/resources/academicintegrity/>

In order to avoid the sanctions applied to cases of academic dishonesty, please make sure that you properly cite all sources that you utilize in your writing, including works that are directly quoted or paraphrased, as well as works used as a source of information. This includes both print and online sources. While you are encouraged to work with other students in preparing for class discussions, and are welcome to seek the feedback on your paper drafts from the instructor or your peers, your paper submissions must consist of your own writing, and any direct quotations or paraphrasing from other works must be properly cited.

Disability Accommodations:

To request academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources in the Drahmman Center in Benson, room 214, 408-554-4111, TTY 408-554-5445. Students must provide documentation from Disability Resources prior to receiving accommodations.

Class Texts (Required):

Class texts are available in the bookstore and on reserve in the library.

WR Willard Oxtoby, *World Religions: Eastern Traditions* (2nd ed., Oxford 2002)

WS Robert Van Voorst, *Anthology of World Scriptures: Eastern Religions* (Thomson-Wadsworth 2007)

Course Outline

- Mon. 9/22 **Class Introduction: Why Study Asian Religions?**
During the first class we will quickly go over the plan for the quarter, and engage in the usual introductions. We will begin with a discussion of the reasons why we might feel interested or compelled to study the Asian religious traditions in our contemporary global context.
1.
Wed. 9/24 **South Asian Religions**
Hinduism I: The Vedic Tradition
We will explore the religious tradition of ancient India, centering around a body of scriptures known as the *Vedas*.
•WR 13-32
•WS 30-45
- Fri. 9/26 **Hinduism II: Classical Hinduism**
We will continue our study of Hinduism, focusing on the spiritual teachings known as the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita*. We will discuss Hindu theology and the teachings of the yoga tradition.
•WR 32-55
•WS 53-63
- Mon. 9/29 **Hinduism III: Bhakti and Tantra**
We will conclude our discussion of indigenous traditions with an exploration of later developments in Hinduism, namely the *Bhakti* devotional movement and the Tantric systems of advanced yogic practice and ritual.
•WR 32-55
•WS 35-36 (The Goddess as Kali), 47-48 (Puja of a Yogin), 64-65
- Wed. 10/1 **Hinduism IV: Modern Hinduism**
We will conclude our study of Hinduism with the viewing of a documentary that explores the practice of Hinduism in contemporary India.
•Video "Hinduism: 330 Million Gods" (1977, 52 min)
- Fri. 10/3 **Jainism I**
We will explore the origins of Jainism, an ancient Indian religion that focuses on the renunciation of worldly bonds, and we will focus on the basic teachings of this religious tradition.
•WR 161-178
•WS 129-138
- Mon. 10/6 **Jainism II**
We will examine the development of Jainism and its bifurcation into two sects, the Digambara and Svetambara traditions. We will also focus on Jain ethical teachings and practices.
•WR 179-193
•WS 138-144

- Wed. 10/8 **Jainism III**
 We will conclude our study of Jainism with the viewing of a documentary
 •**Video** “Trip to awareness: a Jain pilgrimage to India” (197?, 30 min)
- Fri. 10/10 **Buddhism in South Asia I: The Life of the Buddha**
 We will begin our study of Buddhism with an overview of the life of its founder, Gautama Siddhartha, and will focus on his teaching called the “Four Noble Truths.”
 •**WR 199-227**
 •**WS 71-91**
- Mon. 10/13 **Buddhism in South Asia II: Theravada Buddhism**
 We will then turn to the Theravada tradition of Buddhism, which predominates in South and Southeast Asia.
 •**WR 227-243, 294-298**
 •**WS 102-112**
 •**Video** “Making of a Monk” (1996, 15 min)
- Wed. 10/15 **Sikhism I: Origins and Development**
 We will explore the founding of the Sikh tradition in India, with a focus on Guru Nanak and his successors.
 •**WR 127-141**
 •**WS 147-158**
- Fri. 10/17 **Sikhism II: Teachings and Practice**
 We will continue our exploration of Sikhism with a look at contemporary Sikh groups and their characteristic teachings and practices.
 •**WR 141-155**
 •**WS 159-162**
- Mon. 10/20 **Sikhism III: World Sikhism today**
 We will conclude our study of Sikhism by viewing a documentary on contemporary Sikhism.
 •**Video** “World Sikhism today” (1999, 49 min)
- Wed. 10/22 **Midterm Review**
 We will conduct a review session for the first midterm, on the South Asian religious traditions.
- Fri. 10/24 **In-class Midterm #1: South Asian Religions**
Short Paper #1 Due

2. **East Asian Religions**
 Mon. 10/27 **Archaic Traditions: Ancestor Worship and Shamanism**
 We will survey the beliefs and practices centering upon the ancestors in ancient East Asia.
 •WR 317-341
 •WS 159-162
- Wed. 10/29 **Confucianism I**
 During this class we will explore life and key teachings of Confucius, the founder of the Confucian tradition.
 •WR 352-367
 •WS 165-178
- Fri. 10/31 **No class**
- Mon. 11/3 **No class**
- Wed. 11/5 **Confucianism II**
 We continue our discussion with a focus on key Confucian ethical teachings, and their impact in East Asia.
 •WR 367-382
 •WS 178-189
- Fri. 11/7 **Daoism I**
 During this class we will explore the development of Daoism, with a particular focus on its key early scriptures, the *Dao-de-jing* and the *Zhuang-zi*.
 •WR 382-389
 •WS 195-208
- Mon. 11/10 **Daoism II** We will explore the development Daoism, with a focus on the Daoist traditions that developed in China during and after the Han dynasty.
 •WR 389-402
 •WS 208-217
- Wed. 11/12 **No class**
- Fri. 11/14 **Chinese Religions Today**
 We will conclude our study of traditional Chinese religions by viewing a film that documents their contemporary practice.
 •Video "A question of balance: China" (1993, 53 min)
- Mon. 11/17 **Shintoism I**
 We will survey the basic teachings and practices of Shintoism, Japan's indigenous religious tradition.
 •WR 341-352
 •WS 221-230

- Wed. 11/19 **Shintoism II**
 We will conclude our study of Shintoism by viewing a documentary illustrating key Shinto teachings and practices.
 •**Video** “Shinto: nature, gods and man in Japan” (1996, 50 min)
- Fri. 11/21 **East Asian Buddhism I: The Mahayana Tradition**
 We will return to Buddhism with an overview of the Mahayana Buddhist tradition and the history of its spread in East Asia.
 •**WR 243-255, 258-268**
 •**WS 92-93, 101-102, 112-113**
- 11/24-28 **Thanksgiving break!**
- Mon. 12/1 **East Asian Buddhism II: Pure Land and Zen**
 We will look closely at the two most widespread traditions of East Asian Mahayana Buddhism, the Pure Land, Zen, and Vajrayana traditions.
 •**WR 255-258, 268-294, 298-308**
 •**WS 94-98, 114-124**
- Wed. 12/3 **East Asian Buddhism III: Buddhism in Japan**
 We will conclude our study of East Asian religions with a documentary that explores the role of Buddhism in contemporary Japanese society.
 •**Video** “The Yamaguchi story: Buddhism and the family in contemporary Japan” (48 min)
- Fri. 12/5 **Midterm Review**
 We will dedicate this class to an overview of key ideas and themes that we have covered so far in this class.
Short Paper #2 Due
- Mon. 12/8 **Midterm #2: East Asian Religions**
Monday December 8, 1:30-4:30 PM
Location TBA