

## **RSOC 10: Asian Religious Traditions**

Fall 2009 MWF 11:45 AM-12:50 PM Kennedy 108

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Office Hours: Tuesday 9 AM-11:45 AM or by appointment

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course, which fulfills the RTC 1 requirement for the core curriculum, will introduce students to the history, major teachings, and practices of the major Asian Religious traditions of South, Central, East, and Southeast Asia, namely Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Shintoism. It will do so from an historical perspective, and will also explore the development of key theological and religious/philosophical doctrines as well as associated practices.

### **COURSE GOALS**

1. Students will gain a basic understanding of the Asian Religious Traditions.
2. Students will engage in critical and comparative reflection on these traditions, and will seek to understand the relevance of their teachings and practices to the practitioners of these traditions.

### **DEPARTMENT GOALS**

1. Students will be introduced to diverse materials and perspectives.
2. Students will demonstrate the use of formal practices of inquiry and reflection that enable them to go beyond simple typologies to fuller engagement.

The Religious Studies departmental learning goals are embedded in the course goals.

### **CORE CURRICULUM LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

*This course fulfills Santa Clara's Core Requirement Religion, Theology, and Culture 1.*

Core Learning Goals: Knowledge of Global Cultures and Habits of Mind and Heart: Complexity, Critical Thinking, Religious Reflection

Core Learning Objectives:

1. Students will be able to describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices from several traditions or within one, and from at least two globally distinct regions.
2. Students will be able to use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence.

### **ASSESSMENT & GRADING:**

#### **Test-based Assessment (60%)**

Two midterm examinations (30% each) will be given. Each exam will have two components: the identification of key terms and short critical reflection essays. The short identifications will require that students master the basic concepts of the tradition, *thus assessing course*

*goal #1 and the descriptive component of core learning objective #1. The short essays will ask the students to critically reflect upon and compare the traditions studies, thus assessing course goal #2, the comparative component of core learning objective #1, and core learning objective #2.*

### **Short Critical Reflection Essays (30%)**

Each student will write a two short papers that will critically review two of the documentaries viewed in the class. *This will assess course goal #2 and core learning objective #2.*

### **Class Participation (10%)**

Active participation in class discussions is a requirement of this class. This class will have structured discussions, in which students will be required to prepare in advance reflections on course readings, discuss them in small groups, and present the keys points of their discussions to the class. Discussions will also be held in class in conjunction with the documentaries viewed in class. These discussions are intended the students' knowledge of the traditions studies, their ability to reflect upon them critically, and their ability to work and learn collaboratively. Participation will both be directly measured by the instructor, and indirectly measured by the students' progress in the other assignments. *This will indirectly support, but not directly assess, all of the course goals and core learning objectives.*

*Students will be asked to assess the course via narrative evaluations at the end of the quarter. Students will receive regular feedback on their work from their instructor to help them improve their understanding and analytic skills.*

## **POLICIES**

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance is required. If you must miss a class, you should inform the instructor in advance when possible, and you are responsible for making up missed work. **Unexcused absences will significantly lower your class participation grade, and thus your final grade.**

### **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. 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 receive academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Resources located in Benson 216. The phone number is 408-554-4109 or inquiries can be emailed to Robin Cole, Administrative Associate, [rcole@scu.edu](mailto:rcole@scu.edu). Students must register with

Disabilities Resources and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations.

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

**Papers and group discussion assignments are due in class on the day that they are listed on the syllabus, and exams taken on the day they are given, or they will be considered late. Late work will be penalized unless the instructor granted an extension in advance (i.e., prior to the due date).**

### **Midterm Examinations (60%)**

There will be two midterm examinations, worth 30% each, which will evaluate students' mastery of the South and Southeast Asian traditions, and the East and Central Asian traditions, respectively. The midterm will ask students to identify, in approximately three to five complete sentences, key terms from the traditions. Each exam will also include a short essay requiring critical and comparative reflection on the traditions.

### **Short Reflection Papers (30%)**

Each student will write two short papers that will critically review two of the documentaries viewed in the class. Students will be expected to both describe the films accurately, and then reflect upon them critically.

### **Class Participation (10%)**

Regular attendance and informed participation are essential to the success of this course. We will all be learning from each other. Participation is not graded by the amount you speak in class, but by your presence and active engagement (which includes engaged listening!) Throughout the quarter, students will be expected to prepare in advance to discuss key readings, and also to take detailed notes on documentaries viewed in class. Notes prepared in advance for discussion will be collected by the instructor, and then returned at the next class. They will not be graded, but they will be used by the instructor to assess class participation.

## **CLASS TEXTS (REQUIRED)**

- (1) Willard Oxtoby, *World Religions: Eastern Traditions* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Oxford 2002)
- (2) Robert Van Voorst, *Anthology of World Scriptures: Eastern Religions* (Thomson-Wadsworth 2007)

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Mon. 9/21

### **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. South Asian Religions**
- Wed. 9/23 **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. 9/25 **Hinduism II: Classical Hinduism**  
 We will continue our study of Hinduism, with a class discussion of selections of the Vedic scriptures known as the *Upanishads* as well as the *Bhagavad Gita*.  
 •WR 32-55  
 •WS 53-63
- Mon. 9/28 **Hinduism III: Hindu Theology**  
 We will conclude our discussion of Hinduism with an exploration of the great theistic Hindu traditions, as well as 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. 9/30 **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. 10/2 **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. 10/5 **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. 10/7 **NO CLASS**
- Fri. 10/19 **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)

- Mon. 10/12 **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 199-213  
 •WS 78-86
- Wed. 10/14 **Buddhism in South Asia II: Buddhist Teachings**  
 We will survey the basic teachings of Buddhism, with particular focus on the subject of the Buddha’s first sermon, the Four Noble Truths.  
 •WR 213-227  
 •WS 86-91
- Fri. 10/16 **Buddhism in South Asia III: 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)
- Mon. 10/19 **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
- Wed. 10/21 **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
- Fri. 10/23 **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)
- Mon. 10/26 **Midterm Review**  
 We will conduct a review session for the first midterm, on the South Asian religious traditions.
- Wed. 10/28 **In-class Midterm #1: South Asian Religions**
2.  
 Fri. 10/30 **East Asian Religions**  
**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

- Mon. 11/2     **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  
**Short Paper #1 Due**
- Wed. 11/4     **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. 11/6     **No class**
- Mon. 11/9     **Daoism I**  
During this class we will explore the history and key teachings of Daoism.  
•WR 382-402  
•WS 195-217
- Wed. 11/11   **Daoism II**  
We will continue our study of Daoism, on the practice of Daoist and Daoist-related healing and meditative techniques in contemporary China.  
•Video “A question of balance: China” (1993, 53 min)
- Fri. 11/13    **Confucianism & Daoism: Class Discussion**  
We will dedicate this class to critical reflection on, and discussion of, a selection of readings on Chinese religions.
- Mon. 11/16    **Shintoism I**  
We will survey the basic teachings and practices of Shintoism, Japan’s indigenous religious tradition.  
•WR 341-352  
•WS 221-230
- Wed. 11/18    **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. 11/20     **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
- 11/23-27     **Thanksgiving break!**
- Mon. 11/30     **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. 12/2     **Midterm Review**  
We will dedicate this class to an overview of key ideas and themes that we have covered so far in this class.
- Fri. 12/4     **Midterm #2: East Asian Religions (in class)**
- Wed. 12/9     **Short Paper #2 Due**  
Due by 4 PM in my email inbox or Angel dropbox