

RSOC 10: Asian Religious Traditions  
Spring 2017 TTh 8:30am-10:10am

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Office Hour: Wed 10:30am-12:30pm

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course, which fulfills the RTC 1 requirement for the core curriculum, will introduce students to the history, important teachings, and practices of the major Asian Religious traditions of East Asia, South, and Southeast Asia such as Confucianism, Daoism, Shintoism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sikhism. It 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 major Asian Religious traditions.
2. Students will engage in comparative and dialogical reflection on these traditions. As well, students will seek to understand the relevance of their teachings and practices to the practitioners of these traditions.

## **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.

### **Learning Objectives:**

Students will be able to describe and compare the central religious ideas and practices within one tradition as well as from several traditions.

Students will be able to use critical approaches to reflect on their own beliefs and the religious dimensions of human existence in different cultural contexts.

## ASSESSMENT & GRADING

**Test-based Assessment** (60%). There will be two examinations, worth 30% each. These examinations will evaluate students' understanding of the South and the East Asian traditions, respectively. Each exam will ask students to identify 10 key terms from the traditions, explain basic concepts of each tradition (*assessing course goal #1*), and write two short essays critically reflecting upon and comparing the traditions studied (*assessing course core learning objective #1*).

### **Short Critical Essays** (20%)

Each student will write two short papers (10% each) that will critically review two of the documentaries viewed in class. These papers will ask students to both critically assess the film, and also explore the degree to which it sheds light on the religious human existence. (*This will assess course goal #2 and core learning objective #2*).

### **Paper Guidelines**

You will write a one-page paper (single spaced) on the film that you think a prospective viewer of the film would be interested in knowing:

- 1) Try to identify the objective(s) of the film. Did it fulfill this objective? Was the objective a worthy one? Why was it successful or unsuccessful? Does the film portray the religion accurately? Does it exhibit any bias?
- 2) Please conclude your review with a short (paragraph length) reflection on the way or ways (if any) that this film sheds light on the religious dimensions of human experience. Did it enrich your understanding of the religious tradition in question? To what degree did the film accord with, challenge, or contradict your own religious beliefs or experiences?

(Note: *a paper that only describes the film will not adequately fulfill this assignment*)

### **Daily Assignments and Participation** (20%)

Active participation in class discussions is a requirement of this class. Students will be required to prepare in advance reflections on course readings and discuss them in small groups. Each class day, students are required to write a one-page paper (single space) on the assigned readings. Each class, five to seven students will be chosen at random to present their papers. Papers will be graded on a pass/fail basis. A failed paper will result in a reduction of 5% of your participation grade. (*assessing course goal #1*). *Later work will not be accepted.*

**Grading Scale:**

94-100% A	90-93.9% A-	87-89.9% B+	83-86.9% B
80-82.9% B-	77-79.9% C+	73-76.9% C	70-72.9% C-
67-69.9 D+	63-66.9 D		

**Attendance policies**

Students are required to attend every class. You are allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. Two additional unexcused absences will lower your final grade one level. (For example, if you earn an A with two unexcused absences, your final grade will be B; if you earn a B with two unexcused absences, your final grade will be C, etc; Four (4) additional unexcused absences will lower your final grade from A to C; B to D, etc. Five (5) or more unexcused absences will result in automatic failure for the course. If you experience life-altering circumstances and cannot attend class, please inform the instructor.

**CLASS TEXTS**

- (1) **WR** Willard Oxtoby & Roy Amore, *World Religions: Eastern Traditions* (4rd ed., Oxford 2014).
- (2) Excerpts from AWS Robert Van Voorst, *Anthology of World Scriptures: Eastern Religions* (Thomson\_Wadsworth 2007).
- (3) **RN** Randall L. Nadeau, *Asian Religions: A Cultural Perspective* (Wiley Blackwell, 2014).

**Syllabus**

April 4	<p>Class Introduction: Why Study Asian Religions?</p> <p>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.</p>
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April 6	<p><b>Hinduism I</b></p> <p>In this class, we will explore the religious tradition of ancient India, focusing upon a body of scriptures known as the <i>Vedas</i> and the status of the <i>Vedas</i> in the Hindu tradition. We will also study the Hindu understanding of gods, souls, karma, samsara and liberation. We will also study the most popular Indian epics: the <i>Ramayana</i> and the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>. <b>WR</b>, 31-42.</p> <p>We will watch a short video “The History of Hindu India” to broaden our understanding of the Hindu tradition.</p>
April 11	<p><b>Hinduism II</b> We will continue our study of Hinduism, with a class discussion of selections from the Vedic scriptures; we will also continue our discussion of Hinduism with an exploration of the deities of classical Hinduism, the Hindu “Trinity,” the caste system, Hindu practices, and the Bhakti devotional movement. <b>WR</b> 42-65. <b>AWS</b> 30-45</p>
April 13	<p><b>Hinduism III</b> We will continue our study of Hinduism with the viewing of a documentary that explores the practice of Hinduism in contemporary India.</p> <p>Video “<i>Hinduism: 330 Million Gods</i>” (1977, 52 min), followed with class discussion.</p>
April 18	<p><b>Hinduism IV</b> We will enrich our study of Hinduism with a survey of major topics in the contemporary Hinduism, such as the importance of devotion, worship, Hindu life cycle rituals, women’s rituals, and the performing arts. <b>WR</b>, 69- 89. <b>Video</b>: <i>Death, Rebirth, and Liberation in Hinduism</i></p>
April 20	<p><b>Sikhism I</b> In this session, we will explore the founding of the Sikh tradition in India and study various groups of Sikhism as well as their teachings and practices. We particularly study the religious, ethical, and cultural practices in the Sikh tradition. <b>WR</b>, 106-131. Video: “What is Sikhism”?</p>

April 25	<b>Sikhism II</b> We continue our study of contemporary Sikhism by viewing a documentary (TBA) followed with class discussion. <b>AWS</b> 147-158.
April 27	<b>Jain Traditions I</b> 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. We will also examine the development of Jainism and its bifurcation into two sects, the <i>Digambara</i> and <i>Svetambara</i> traditions and their ethical teachings and practices. <b>WR</b> 148-168.
May 2	<b>Jain Traditions II</b> We will conclude our study of Jainism with the viewing of a documentary Video <i>Frontiers of Peace: Jainism in India</i> (1986, 40 min); followed with class discussion. <b>AWS</b> 129-138.
May 4	<b>In-class Midterm #1</b>
May 9	<b>Buddhism I</b> This week, we begin our study of Buddhism with an overview of the life of its founder, Gautama Siddhartha. We also study the core teachings of Buddhism as well the diversity within the Buddhist tradition. We will then focus our study on each tradition of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana, and the spread of Buddhism to South and Southeast Asia, <b>WR</b> , 186-205; <b>WR</b> 211-238.
May 11	<b>Buddhism II</b> We continue our study of the diversity of Buddhism in the world by watching a documentary: <i>Seven Wonders of Buddhist World</i> .
May 16	<b>Buddhism III</b> In this class, we will deepen our study of the ethical and religious aspects of Buddhism. <b>RN</b> Randall L. Nadeau, 181-206. <b>Critical Reflection Paper #1 Due</b>

May 18	<b>Buddhism IV</b> We will go deep into the applications of Buddhist practices to daily life. Thich Nhat Hanh, <i>The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching: Transforming Suffering into Peace, Joy, and Liberation</i> , ch.
May 23	<b>East Asian Traditions: Confucianism I</b> We will explore the two major religious traditions of ancient China: Confucianism and Taoism. We particularly explore the historical, philosophical, religious, ethical, and cultural aspects of these two traditions. <b>WR</b> 264-284; <b>AWS</b> 165-178
May 25	<b>Confucianism II</b> We continue our study of the humanistic values of Confucianism by watching a documentary, <i>Confucius/ Kung-Tze</i> (2010)
May 30	<b>Confucianism II</b> During this class we will explore the key teachings of Confucius and their influences in East Asian cultures. <b>RN</b> <i>Asian Religion</i> , 21-49.
Jun 1	<b>Taoism I</b> We begin to explore the key teachings of Taoism and study the differences as well as similarities between Confucianism and Taoism. We particularly explore the religious and philosophical aspects of Taoism. <b>RN</b> , 61-81.
June 6	<b>Taoism II</b> We will continue our study of Daoism, on the practice of Daoist and Daoist-related healing and meditative techniques in contemporary China. Video <i>Healing and the Mind: The Mystery of Chi</i> (1993, 58 min). We will also deepen our study of Taoist various dimensions of Yin-Yang Cosmology <b>RN</b> , 82-101.
Jun 8	<b>Japanese Traditions</b> In this class, we will survey the basic teachings and practices of Shintoism, Japan's indigenous religious tradition. <b>RN</b> , 209-235
Jun 12-16	<b>Critical Reflection Paper #2 Due</b> <b>In-class Midterm #2 (TBA)</b>

**Academic Integrity**

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of -- and commitment to -- a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states: I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code. Students are expected to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. For more information about Santa Clara University's academic integrity pledge and resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see [www.scu.edu/academic-integrity](http://www.scu.edu/academic-integrity).

**Disabilities Resources**

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, <http://www.scu.edu/disabilities> as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy may also be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at 408-554-4109.

**Accommodations for Pregnancy and Parenting**

In alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and with the California Education Code, Section 66281.7, Santa Clara University provides reasonable accommodations to students who are pregnant, have recently experienced childbirth,

and/or have medically related needs. Pregnant and parenting students can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Alternatively, a pregnant or parenting student experiencing related medical conditions may request accommodations through Disability Resources.

### **Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)**

Santa Clara University upholds a zero-tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, or stalking, I encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please consult the University's Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy at <http://bit.ly/2ce1hBb> or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie, at 408-554-3043, [bguthrie@scu.edu](mailto:bguthrie@scu.edu). Reports may be submitted online through <https://www.scu.edu/osl/report/> or anonymously through Ethicspoint <https://www.scu.edu/hr/quick-links/ethicspoint>