

RSOC 10: Asian Religious Traditions
Winter 2016 TTh 8:30 am-10:10 am

Instructor: Thao Nguyen, S.J.
Office: Kenna 300F
Phone: X2390
Email: T2nguyen@scu.edu
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

Students will gain a basic understanding of the major Asian Religious Traditions. 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.

DEPARTMENT GOALS

Students will be introduced to diverse materials and perspectives of religion and religious ideas.

Students will demonstrate the use of formal practices of inquiry and reflection that enable them to go beyond simple typologies to fuller engagement.

Students will use the materials to address issues of religions in different social and cultural contexts.

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:

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 key terms from the traditions, explain basic concepts of each tradition (*assessing course goal #1*), and write a short essay critically reflecting upon and comparing the traditions studied. *Exam format: two essay questions and term identifications.*

Short Critical Essays (10%)

Each student will write two short papers (5% 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*). Critical essay papers should be posted on Camino.

Daily Assignments and Participation (30%)

Active participation in class discussions is a requirement of this class. 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. Students are required to write an one-page paper (single space) that will summarize the assigned readings and present the key points discussed by the author. In addition, students are asked to design two thoughtful questions for class discussion. Each class, five (5) to seven (7) students will be randomly chosen to present their papers and questions to class. Chosen students' papers must be submitted at the end of class. Your papers will be graded a P/F. 5% of your assignment and participation grades will be subtracted for each fail paper. *Students are not allowed to use the internet in class without permission.*

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-
67-69.9D+	63-66.9D		

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 from A to B; B to C; C to D, etc. (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; if you earn a C with two unexcused absences, your final grade will be D. Four (4) additional unexcused absences will lower your final grade from A to C; B to D; etc. (For example, if you got an A with four (4) unexcused absences, your final grade will be C; if you got a B with four (4) unexcused absences, your final grade will be D. 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.

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/>

Disability Accommodations: To receive academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact Disability Recourses located in Benson 216.

Students must register with Disabilities Resources and provide documentation of a disability to Disabilities Resources prior to receiving academic accommodations

CLASS TEXTS

(1) **WR** Willard Oxtoby & Roy Amore, *World Religions: Eastern Traditions* (4rd ed., Oxford 2014).

(2) **RN** Randall L. Nadeau, *Asian Religions: A Cultural Perspective* (Wiley Blackwell, 2014)

(3) Excerpts from AWS Robert Van Voorst, *Anthology of World Scriptures: Eastern Religions* (Thomson_Wadsworth 2007)

Syllabus

Jan 5 Introduction to the course and its requirements.

Jan 7 About Religion.

This class will introduce you to some basic characteristics of human religion from ancient times. We will study some theories of why humans are religious. **(WR)** *World Religion*, chapter 1. We will also begin our study of Hinduism, the most ancient religion in Asia. **RN** *Asian Religion*, ch. 15-17. (*short paper due*)

Jan 12 Hinduism I

This week, we will explore the religious tradition of ancient India, focusing upon a body of scriptures known as the Vedas. We will also explore the diversity of Hindu deities and the different forms of worship within this tradition. **WR**, 28-47. (*short paper due*)

Jan 14 Hinduism II

During this class we will study the Hindu Trinity and the attributes of God in Hinduism and Christianity. We will also study the origins and practices of caste system, stages, and spiritual practices such as yoga, tantra, etc. Finally, we will briefly look at the different movements within this tradition. **WR**, 48-63. Documentary film: *Hinduism 330 Million Gods*. (*short paper due*)

Jan 19 Hinduism III

We continue to enrich our study of Hinduism with a survey of major topics in the contemporary Hinduism, such as the importance of devotion, worship, and life cycle rituals such as birth, marriage, and death. **WR**, 69- 90. (*short paper due*)

Jan 21 Sikh Tradition

During this class, we will explore the founding of the Sikh tradition in India and study various groups of Sikhism as well as their teachings and practices. **WR**, 106-142. We also study contemporary Sikhism by viewing a documentary: Video *World Sikhism today* (1999, 49 min) (*short paper due*)

Jan 26 Jaina Traditions

This week, we will examine the development of Jainism and its bifurcation into two sects, the Digambara and Svetambara traditions. We also study the fundamental ethical principles of Jainism. **WR**, 148-180 (*short paper and critical reflection paper due*)

Feb 2 Video: *Frontiers of Peace Jainism in India*

Feb 4 **Midterm Exam**

Feb 9 **Buddhism I**

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 expansion of Buddhism beyond the soil of India. **WR**, 186-214; Video: *Seven Wonders of Buddhist World*. (short paper due)

Feb 11 **Buddhism II**

We continue to explore two major schools of Buddhism: Theravada and Mahayana. **WR**, 215-245. (short paper due)

Feb 16 **Buddhism III**

Tibetan Buddhism, East Asian, and Southeast Asian Buddhism. **WR** 232-258; (short paper and critical reflection paper due)

Feb 18 **Buddhism IV**

RN *Asian Religions* (chapters on Buddhism)

Feb 23 **East Asian Traditions: Confucian Tradition I**

We will explore the two major religious traditions of ancient China: Confucianism and Taoism. We particularly explore the historical, philosophical, ethical, divine, and cultural aspects of these two traditions.

WR *World Religions* 269-278; **AR**, *Asian Religion*, ch. 3 & 4. (short paper due)
Video: *The Dragon The Dragon: A Stroll in Beijing*

Feb 25 **Confucian Tradition II**

RN, *Asian Religion*, ch. 5, 6 & 7; **AWS**, 143-149. (short paper due)

Mar 1 **Taoist Tradition I**

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. **WR**, *World Religions*, 278-288; **RN**, *Asian Religion*, ch. 8 & 9. (short paper due); Video: *Question of Balance*.

Mar 3 **Japanese Traditions**

This week, we will explore the Shinto tradition as well as the integration of Buddhism and the Japanese indigenous tradition. **WR**, 342-367. (short paper due)

Mar 8 Video: *Shinto: Nature, Gods and Man in Japan*

Mar 10 **Cao Dai Tradition: Vietnamese Modern Religious Tradition**

Second Midterm (TBA)

