

RSOC 10 Asian Religious Traditions  
Winter 2017 MWF 2:15pm-3:20pm

Instructor: Thao Nguyen, S.J; Ph.D.  
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Office Hour: Thursday 10am-12pm

### **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 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*). Guidelines for reflection papers will be posted on Camino or distributed in class.

### **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 four paragraphs (approximately 400 words) that present (a) the key points or concepts from the assigned readings (*assessing course core learning objective #1*), (b) your short reflection on the religious, ethical, or cultural aspects of the tradition discussed in the readings (*assessing course goal #2*). 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. Late 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   | 60-63% D-   | Below       |
| 60% F       |             |             |             |

**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).

**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. Three additional unexcused absences will lower your final grade from A to B-; B to C-, etc. Four additional unexcused absences will lower your final grade from A to C; B to D, etc. Five 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.

## Syllabus

### Jan 9

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. WR 4-25.

### Jan 11 Hinduism I

In this class, we will explore the religious tradition of ancient India, focusing upon a body of scriptures known as the *Vedas* and the Vedic tradition, WR Willard Oxtoby & Roy Amore, 28-39 (paper due). We will also watch a short video that offers an overview of Hinduism.

Video: *What is Hinduism?*

### Jan 13 Hinduism II

In this class, we will study the most popular Hindu epics: Ramayna and Bhagavad Gita as well as explore the various deities of classical Hinduism. WR 41-49.

### Jan 16 Academic Holiday

### Jan 18 Hinduism III

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 Hindu "Trinity," caste system, stages and goals of life, yoga practices, and the Bhakti devotional movement. WR 49-59. AWS 30-45; 62-65.

### Jan 20 Hinduism IV

We will enrich our study of Hinduism with a survey of major topics in the contemporary Hinduism, such as the importance of devotion, worship, the rite of worship (puja), and life cycle rituals. WR 61- 90.

**Jan 23 Hinduism V**

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)

**Jan 25 Sikhism I**

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. WR 106-124; AWS 147-158.

**Jan 27 Sikhism II**

Will continue to explore this religious tradition from other angles: ethics, arts, cultural expressions, and life cycle rituals. AWS 147-158; WR 125-131; 134-137.

**Jan 30 Sikhism III**

We continue our study of contemporary Sikhism by viewing a documentary: Video *World Sikhism today* (1999, 49 min).

**Feb 1 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. We will also examine the development of Jainism and its bifurcation into two sects, the Digambara and Svetambara traditions and their ethical teachings and practices. WR 148-158; AWS 129-138.

**Feb 3 Jainism II**

WR 159-170; AWS

**Feb 6 Jainism III**

We will conclude our study of Jainism with the viewing of a documentary Video "Frontiers of Peace: Jainism in India" (1986, 40 min).

**Feb 8** We will dedicate this class to critical reflection on the similarities and differences between the religions in India. We will also spend time

reviewing the essential components of each tradition studied in the first half of the quarter.

**Feb 10 First Midterm Exam**

**Feb 13 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 diversity within the Buddhist tradition. WR, 186-200.

**Feb 15 Buddhism II**

We continue our study of the diversity of Buddhism in the world by watching a documentary: *Seven Wonders of Buddhist World*.

**Feb 17 Buddhism III**

We will then focus our study on the oldest tradition of Buddhism: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana. WR 209-220; AWS 102-112.

**Feb 20 Academic Holiday**

**Feb 22 Buddhism IV**

We will then focus our study on the other traditions of Buddhism: Mahayana, and Vajrayana. WR 221-238. **Short Paper #1 Due**

**Feb 24 Buddhism V**

We will deepen our study of the Mahayana tradition as its influence in East Asia. RN Randall L. Nadeau, 181-198.

**Feb 27**

East Asian Traditions: Confucianism 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 264-274.

**Mar 1 Confucianism II**

During this class we will explore life and key teachings of Confucius, the founder of the Confucian tradition. RN, 21-35.

**Mar 3**

Confucianism III

RN 35-50; AWS 165-178.

**Mar 6 Taoism I**

We begin to explore the key teachings of Taoism and study the differences as well as similarities between Confucianism and Taoism. WR 278-286

**Mar 8 Taoism II**

In this session, we particularly explore the religious and philosophical aspects of Taoism. RN 61-75.

**Mar 10 Taoism III**

We will continue our study of Daoism, on the practice of Daoist and Daoist-related healing and meditative techniques in contemporary China. Video "Healing and the Mind: The Mystery of Chi" (1993, 58 min).

**Mar 13 Confucianism & Daoism: Class Discussion**

We will dedicate this class to critical reflection on, and discussion of, a selection of readings on Chinese religions.

**Mar 15 Japanese Traditions I**

In this class, we will survey the basic teachings and practices of Shintoism, Japan's indigenous religious tradition. NR 61-74.

**Mar 17 Japanese Traditions II**

WR, 342-367.

**Mar 20-25**

Second Exam (TBA)

### **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.

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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/>