

REL 2315: Religions of Asia

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Office Hours: by appointment

Location: MAT 9
Time: T 1:55 – 2:45 PM
Th 1:55 – 3:50 PM



The Buddha told Ānanda, "You and others like you still listen to the Dharma with the conditioned mind, and so the Dharma becomes conditioned as well, and you do not obtain the Dharma-nature. This is similar to a person pointing his finger at the moon to show it to someone else. Guided by the finger, the other person should see the moon. If he looks at the finger instead and mistakes it for the moon, he loses not only the moon but the finger also. Why, because he mistakes the pointing finger for the bright moon. (Shurangama Sutra)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces the beliefs and practices of Asian religions. Although it is impossible to discuss these traditions in depth in such a short course, this class seeks to help students understand the worldviews of these traditions and the context from which they emerge. Additionally, we will discuss how various Asian traditions (1) establish and maintain social groups and hierarchies, (2) deal with changing circumstances, (3) construct identities, and (5) reinforce and challenge social order and cultural norms.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course will endeavor to help students:

1. Understand the worldviews of Asian traditions
2. appreciate the ways in which literature, film, and music can contribute to a deeper understanding of the beliefs and practices of a religious tradition
3. think more deeply and critically about religious experience and its modes of expression and forms of interpretation
4. improve their abilities to read actively, to think analytically, and to write compellingly¹

¹ Objectives 3-4 adapted from Courtney O'Dell-Chaib's *Introduction to the Study of Religion* syllabus

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation (100/1000 pts or 10% of final grade)

Since this is a discussion course and not a lecture class, it is imperative that students complete the reading on time and come to class ready to talk about the arguments of the text and their own observations. Attendance will be recorded at the start of each class. You will be marked absent if you arrive more than ten minutes after the start of class; leave class early without advanced permission by the instructor; or engage in disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Attendance includes being present, prepared, and participatory. **Students should bring their notes and all the reading for that day to class** and be prepared to use them during class.

Participation refers not just to speaking in class but actively listening, taking notes, and engaging in activities. Computers/tablets should only be used to take notes and phones should be put away during class time.

Students can miss **two classes without penalty**.

Reading Quizzes (5 quizzes x 20 points each = 100/1000 pts or 10% of final grade)

Five reading quizzes will be given throughout the semester. These quizzes will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions and cover the major concepts and arguments of the text. Questions for the quizzes will be taken from the book chapters and articles. To help you study for the exam, I will give you a reading guide for each of the book's chapters. Makeup quizzes will not be given unless the student has a valid excuse. Students who arrive late or leave before the quiz is given will not be allowed to take the quiz.

Buddhist Temple Reflection Paper (200/1000 or 20% of final grade)

Students are required to visit the Gainesville Karma Thegsum Choling (GKTC), a Tibetan Buddhist center in Gainesville, and write a reflection paper on their experience. The purpose of this assignment is to give you a more hands on experience of Buddhism and to make you more aware of the resources within our local community. Students are encouraged to attend together. More information about the paper will be given later in class. Late papers will not be accepted unless the student has a valid excuse.

Short Papers (4 papers x 100 points each = 400/1000 pts or 40% of final grade)

In lieu of a midterm and final, students will be given four short essays to complete throughout the semester. Each essay will be 2-3 pages long and are worth 40 points. The essays are take-home and usually due two weeks after it is assigned.

Project (200 pts or 20% of final grade)

To help students think about the everyday practice and cultural influences of the traditions we will be studying, students are required to turn in a project the day of the final. The project consists of several parts: taking pictures of encounters of these traditions, looking at artwork, finding a recipe connected to the tradition, and looking at a news article. More information about this project will be given separately.

GRADING

Participation	100 pts	10%
Mini Papers 100 x 4	400 pts	40% (each worth 10%)
Buddhist Reflection	200 pts	20%
Reading Quizzes 20 x 5	100 pts	10%
Pop Culture and Media	200 pts	20%
Total	1000 pts	100%

GRADE	POINTS
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D/PASS	65-69
F/FAIL	64 and below

Grade A is reserved for work that is exceptional in quality, for work showing keen insight, understanding and initiative. (Note: No A+ grades).

Grade B is for work that is consistently superior, for work showing interest, effort and/or originality.

Grade C is a respectable grade that reflects consistent daily preparation and completion in a satisfactory manner of all work required in the course. A minimum "C" average (2.00) is required for graduation.

Grade D is below the average necessary for meeting graduation requirements and ordinarily is not accepted for transfer by other institutions. A grade of a "D-" is the lowest passing grade.

Grade F is failing.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to complete their own work and include necessary citations. No particular citation style is required, but students should be consistent with their choice. Any assignment turned in that proves not to be the work of the student and is not properly cited will receive a zero. Please visit <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> for additional details and information on citations. I operate under a zero tolerance policy: students caught plagiarizing or cheating will automatically receive a grade of zero on the assignment in question and may also fail the course.

DISABILITY STATEMENT

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Disability Resource Center <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/> to make an appointment to discuss your needs or request accommodations. Once the appropriate forms have been filled out, I will happily accommodate any specific student needs.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES POLICY

Please visit <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#religious> for information on UF's policy on religious observances. Please note that students are required to inform instructors of any

religious observances in order for it to be excused and students are responsible for any work that will be missed.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE STATEMENT²

It is expected in this course that all participants use inclusive language in all verbal and written assignments especially with respect to humanity, cultures, nationalities, ethnicities, races, and religions, with regard to characteristics such as sex, gender/sex, sexual identities, social class, age, and dis/abilities. We are all a part of creating a space for dialogue and engagement where the importance of differences in relationships are engaged in a substantive manner. The goal of this class is to think carefully about the words we use and the images, metaphors, similes, and linguistic ideas that we are invoking. In keeping the vision of thinking thoughtfully about language, here are some resources for further reflection on the importance of inclusive language.

Related Links:

Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language, from the website of National Council of Teachers of English.

<http://www.ncte.org/positions/statements/genderfairuseoflang>

Tips for Using Inclusive, Gender Neutral Language:

<http://www.mu.edu/wac/neutral/NeutralInclusiveLanguage.shtml>

² This section is taken from Adam Brett's proposed world religion syllabus
https://www.academia.edu/4230971/Proposed_Syllabus_Religion_101_Religions_of_the_World

Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

Tuesday, January 9

Course Introduction

Thursday, Jan 11

Martin, "Introduction to the Study of Religion"
King, "Orientalism"

Week 2: Hinduism

Tuesday, Jan 16

Oxtoby - Hinduism Chapter

Thursday, Jan 18

Miller, "Bhagavad Gita," Introduction and Chapter 2

Week 3: Hinduism

Tuesday, Jan 23

Guest Lecture: Rodney Sebastian

Thursday, Jan 25

Narayanan, "One Tree Equals 10 Sons"
NPR: "Can Human Rights Save the Ganges?"
Essay 1 Assigned

Week 4: Hinduism

Tuesday, Jan 30

King, "Krishna's Prasadam"
The Indian Express: Why is Vegetarianism linked to Purity?

Thursday, Feb 1

ISKCON visit

Week 5: Hinduism

Tuesday, Feb 6

Reddy, "Men Who Would be Kings"

Thursday, Feb 8

Watch: *Sita Sings the Blues*
Simmons, "Yes Sir, That's My Devi"
Quiz 1: Hinduism
Essay 1 Due

Week 6: Jainism

Tuesday, Feb 13

Oxtoby – Jainism Chapter
Guest Lecture: Venu Mehta

Thursday, Feb 15

Kelting, "Candanbala's Hair: Fasting, Beauty, and the materialization of Jain wives"
NPR: "Fasting To The Death: Is It A Religious Rite Or Suicide?"
The Indian Express: "The Jain religion and the right to die by Santhara"

Week 7: Sikhism

Tuesday, Feb 20

Oxtoby – Sikhism Chapter

Thursday, Feb 22

Dorn, "The Sword and the Turban"
The New Yorker: "The Bloody Partition"
BBC: "The Voices of the Divide"
Quiz 2: Jainism and Sikhism
Essay 2 Assigned

Week 8: Buddhism

Tuesday, Feb 27

Oxtoby – Buddhism Chapter

Thursday, March 1

Williams, Buddhism Chapter - Anatman

Week 9: Spring Break

Tuesday, March 6

SPRING BREAK

Thursday, March 8

SPRING BREAK

Week 10: Buddhism

Tuesday, March 13

Research Day
Essay 2 Due

Thursday, March 15

Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism"

Week 11: Buddhism

Tuesday, March 20

Jerryson, "Buddhism and Violence"
Sirimanne, "Buddhism has no Gender"

Thursday, March 22

Numrich, "The Problem with Sex According to Buddhism"
Conner, "The Gay Way"

Quiz: Buddhism
Essay 3 Assigned

Week 12: China

Tuesday, March 27

Oxtoby – Chinese Traditions
Guest Lecture: Yan Chao

Thursday, March 29

Hoff, "The Tao of Pooh"
Allen, "Daoism and Chinese Martial Arts"

Week 13: Japan

Tuesday, April 3

Oxtoby – Japanese Traditions Chapter

Thursday, April 5

Film: *Spirited Away*
Nishimura – Shinto Perspectives in "Spirited Away"

Essay 3 Due

Week 14: Japan

Tuesday, April 10

Josephson – The Invention of Religion in Japan

Thursday, April 12

Harn Museum Visit

Quiz 4: Japanese and Chinese traditions

Buddhism Reflection Paper due

Essay 4 Assigned

Week 15: Islam and Vietnam

Tuesday, April 17

Islam in Indonesia

Guest Lecture: Najiyah

Thursday, April 19

Gustafsson, *War and Shadows: The Haunting of Vietnam*
Hoskins, “What are Vietnam’s Indigenous Religions?”

Week 16: Review

Tuesday, April 24

Review

Quiz 5: Islam and South East Asia

Essay 4 Due

Project due Exam Week