

Chinese Religions (中國宗教)

Rel 3318 (Sec 008H), Spring 2014

Instructor **Yanchao Zhang** (Religion Department, University of Florida)



Class Time & Location

Tue, period 7 (1:55–2:45), MAT 0119, & Thu, periods 7 & 8 (1:55–3:50), MAT 0119.

Office Hours & Contact Information

Tue, 12:00–1:40 pm, and by appointment (1/6–4/25); 009 Anderson Hall; Tel: (352) 273-2943; email: yczhang.xmu@ufl.edu.

Course Description

The course is a comprehensive historical survey of the main religious traditions in China, including Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and popular religion. Through lectures, discussions, and reading of select primary and secondary sources, we will explore the formulations and subsequent transformations of key beliefs, doctrines, practices, and institutions that characterized specific religious traditions. We will also examine the patterns of interaction among different traditions, as well as the general character of religious life in both traditional and modern China.

Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites, although some prior knowledge of Chinese history will be helpful. No knowledge of the Chinese language is required.

Course Format

This is primarily a lecture course, but students are encouraged (and expected) to engage in class discussion and critical analysis of the course materials.

Requirements

- Class [attendance](#), participation, and reading of all assigned materials.
- Three [exams](#) (100% of the final grade).

Required Texts

Poceski, Mario. *Introducing Chinese Religions* (Routledge, 2009). Also available as an e-book, titled *Chinese Religions: the eBook* (JBE Online Books, jbeonlinebooks.org/eBooks/ChineseReligions). Students can use either version of the book.

Sommer, Deborah, ed. *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources* (Oxford UP, 1995).

Online e-Learning System

The syllabus and other course materials are posted online via UF's e-Learning system [lss.at.ufl.edu].

Lecture Topics and Course Schedule (Tentative)

W 1 ^{Jan 7 & 9}	Introduction [Poceski, Introduction]
W 2 ^{Jan 14 & 16}	Earliest Forms of Religious Life in China [Poceski, ch. 1; Sommer 3–16, 21–30]
W 3 ^{Jan 21 & 23}	Classical Confucian Tradition [Poceski, ch. 2; Sommer 31–48, 55–70]
W 4 ^{Jan 28 & 30}	Early Texts and the Emergence of Religious Daoism [Poceski, ch. 3; Sommer 71–83]
W 5 ^{Feb 4 & 6}	Exam 1 (Tue); Video: <i>Choice for a Chinese Woman</i>
W 6 ^{Feb 11 & 13}	Daoist Traditions and Practices [Poceski, ch. 4; Sommer 149–51, 199–203]
W 7 ^{Feb 18 & 20}	Spread and Flourishing of Buddhism in China [Poceski, ch. 5; Sommer 119–43]
W 8 ^{Feb 25 & 27}	Schools and Practices of Chinese Buddhism [Poceski, ch. 6; Sommer 155–68]
W 9 ^{Mar 4 & 6}	Spring Break
W 10 ^{Mar 11 & 13}	Movie Week: <i>Long Life, Happiness, and Prosperity</i>
W 11 ^{Mar 18 & 20}	Popular Religion [Poceski, ch. 7; Sommer 239–46]
W 12 ^{Mar 25 & 27}	Exam 2 (Tue), video: <i>To the Land of Bliss</i>
W 13 ^{Apr 1 & 3}	Later Transformations of Confucianism [Poceski, ch. 8; Sommer 169–75, 187–96]
W 14 ^{Apr 8 & 10}	Islam and Christianity in China [Poceski, ch. 9]
W 15 ^{Apr 15 & 17}	Religious Life in Modern China [Poceski, ch. 10; Sommer 281–316]
W 16 ^{Apr 22 & 24}	Contemporary Beliefs and Practices [Sommer 331–348]
W 17 ^{Apr 29}	Exam 3



Grading

- Final grades will be computed on this scale:
 - A = 100–93%; A- = 92.5–90%; B+ = 89.5–87%; B = 86.5–83%; B- = 82.5–80%; C+ = 79.5–77%;
 - C = 76.5–73%; C- = 72.5–70%; D+ = 69.5–67%; D = 66.5–63%; D- = 62.5–60%; E = 59.5% or less.
- The final grade will be based on each student’s individual performance and his/her fulfillment of the course requirements, as stipulated in the syllabus.
- Students should take all assignments and other course requirements very seriously. There will be no opportunities to do additional work for extra credit or better grade.
- The same course rules and expectations apply equally to all students—no student is entitled to special consideration or unique treatment. Other extraneous or irrelevant factors, including student’s personal desires or expectations about grades, will not be taken into account.

Attendance

- Attendance is expected of all students, starting with the first day of classes. Students who have problems with class attendance or punctuality should think twice before enrolling in this course. (For more on the university's attendance policies, see the Undergraduate Catalog).
- Students are advised to take extensive notes in class, and to use them prudently in their preparation for the exams. The exams will primarily be based on the lectures.

Exams

- No make-up exams will be given, except in documented instances of illness or other emergency, in which case the student must contact the instructor directly before the exam, if feasible, or as soon as possible.
- If any student has a valid reason to request rescheduling of an exam—such as observance of a religious holiday—he/she must contact the instructor in person and make suitable arrangements one week before the examination. Failure to act in accord with these instructions will lead to a failing grade.

Office Hours and Communication

- Students are encouraged to come to office hours, especially if they have questions or need help with the course materials. The instructor will also be glad to discuss all relevant topics that, due to time constraints, are not covered in the lectures in much detail.
- Any questions about the course requirements or any aspect of the coursework should be resolved by consulting the instructor directly and in person, preferably during the office hours.

Educational Objectives and Learning Outcomes

- In addition to facilitating student learning about the main topics, the course will also introduce key themes and concepts in the study of Chinese religions.
- There will be some coverage of relevant theories and methods used in religious studies, as well as focus on key historical trajectories and relevant socioreligious contexts.
- By reading, reflecting upon, and discussing a range of materials, students will receive training in critical thinking and effective analysis, as well as develop communication skills that will enable them to intelligently discuss key issues from a multiplicity of perspectives.
- Students will be exposed to principal characteristics of Chinese civilization, including dominant values, norms, socioeconomic models, and artistic representations.
- The course will facilitate students' enhanced understanding and appreciation of Chinese culture and society, which can serve as constructive conceptual framework for reflecting on their own social mores and cultural norms.

Other Notices

- A student who has a documented disability that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements should consult the instructor at the beginning of the course so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Note that the student is responsible for communicating his/her needs to the instructor, as early as possible. All arrangements for changes pertaining to the exams must be made at least one week in advance.
- Plagiarism and cheating will result in a failing grade and other serious penalties. For more information, see the "Academic Honesty—Student Guide" brochure (posted online by the Dean of Students Office).

- Students are expected to be courteous and abstain from disruptive behavior in the classroom that adversely affects others and is contrary to the pursuit of knowledge. Examples of such behavior include talking with someone, making late entrances or early exits from the classroom, displaying active disinterest in the class (e.g. sleeping or inappropriate computer use), eating, or putting down others. Offending students will be asked to leave.
- Registration in the course implies that each student enters a contractual agreement with the instructor, whereas he/she is accountable for fulfilling all course requirements and adhering to the course policies.
- Students are responsible for knowing and following all schedules and instructions contained in this syllabus, as well as any other instructions given in class (remember, attendance is expected). Pleading ignorance or a lack of common sense are not valid excuses for failures to fulfill requirements or abide by course policies.



“Humanity is the very mind of human beings, and righteousness is the road they must take. To neglect this road and not follow it is to lose one’s mind and not know where to find it. Alas! When people lose a chicken or a dog, they know how to find it, but when they lose this mind, they do not. The way of study and inquiry is nothing more than seeking this lost mind.”

— Mencius 孟子 (c. 371–289 BCE)