

# CHINESE RELIGIONS 中國宗教 (REL 3318/0928) | Fall 2015

Prof. Mario Poceski (Religion Department, University of Florida)



## Class Time & Location

Tue, period 7 (1:55–2:45), MAT 18, & Thu, periods 7 & 8 (1:55–3:50), MAT 15

## Office Hours & Contact Information

Tue, 12:00–1:30 am, and by appointment; 132 Anderson Hall; email: [mpoceski@ufl.edu](mailto:mpoceski@ufl.edu) (to be used for all communications); webpage: [www.clas.ufl.edu/users/mpoceski/](http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/mpoceski/); tel: (352) 273-2937

## 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 and tenor of religious life in both traditional and modern China.

## Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites, although some prior knowledge of Chinese history or of the main religions being studied 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.
- One quiz (10% of the final grade).
- Three exams (each 30% 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](http://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 & email Communication

- The syllabus and other course materials are posted online via UF's e-Learning system [[lss.at.ufl.edu](http://lss.at.ufl.edu)], using Canvas.

- Students should not write to the instructor by using the email feature in e-Learning; instead, they should send written communications directly on the email address given above.



## Course Schedule

- Aug** W 1 **Introduction** | Poceski, Introduction
- Sep** W 2 **Earliest Forms of Religious Life in China** | Poceski, ch. 1; Sommer 3–16, 21–30
- W 3 **Classical Confucian Tradition** | Poceski, ch. 2; Sommer 31–48, 55–70 | **Quiz** (Thu)
- W 4 **Early Texts and the Emergence of Religious Daoism** | Poceski, ch. 3; Sommer 71–83
- W 5 **Daoist Traditions and Practices** | Poceski, ch. 4; Sommer 149–51, 199–203
- W 6 **Exam 1** (Tue) | Video: *Choice for a Chinese Woman*
- Oct** W 7 **Spread and Flourishing of Buddhism in China** | Poceski, ch. 5; Sommer 119–43
- W 8 **Schools and Practices of Chinese Buddhism** | Poceski, ch. 6; Sommer 155–68
- W 9 **Popular Religion** | Poceski, ch. 7; Sommer 239–46
- W 10 **Exam 2** (Tue) | video: *To the Land of Bliss*
- Nov** W 11 **Later Transformations of Confucianism** | Poceski, ch. 8; Sommer 169–75, 187–96
- W 12 **Islam and Christianity in China** | Poceski, ch. 9
- W 13 **Religious Life in Modern China** | Poceski, ch. 10; Sommer 281–316
- W 14 No class (AAR conference and Thanksgiving)
- Dec** W 15 **Contemporary Beliefs and Practices** | Sommer 331–348
- W 16 **Exam 3**



## Grading

- 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.
- 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. Students should also not expect retroactive changes or other dubious forms of grade modification.
- 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.
- No incomplete grades will be given, except in very exceptional circumstances, in which case the students should contact the instructor no later than a week before the last day of classes.
- Final grades will be computed on this scale: A = 100–94%; A- = 92.9–90%; B+ = 89.9–87%; B = 86.9–83%; B- = 82.9–80% ; C+ = 79.9–77%; C = 76.9–73%; C- = 72.9–70%; D+ = 69.9–67%; D = 66.9–63%; D- = 62.9–60%; E = 59.9% or less.

## 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, along with the readings.

## 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.

## Quiz

- The quiz will include the readings for that and the previous week, so students should come to class prepared to be examined on them. Remember, the readings are not optional and they should be done in advance.
- Students who are late will not be able to take the quiz and will have to wait outside until it has ended. Be considerate of your fellow students and the professor.
- In most circumstances, there will be no make-ups on the quiz.

## 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.

## Classroom Conduct

- All students are required to come to class on time, as late arrivals (and early departures) are very disruptive.

- Students are expected to be courteous and respectful, 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, displaying active disinterest in the class (e.g. sleeping or inappropriate computer use), or putting down others. Phones should also be turned off during class. Offending students will be asked to leave.
- It is hoped that there will be lively debates and informed discussions. While there is room for individual opinions and disagreements, they have to be expressed in ways that are appropriate for an academic setting.

### 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 class 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 office hours. Pleading ignorance or lack of common sense are not valid excuses for failures to fulfill requirements or abide by course policies.

### Plagiarism and Cheating

- 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).

### Disability

- A student who has a documented disability that may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements should consult the instructor in person at the beginning of the course so that appropriate arrangements may be made.
- The student is responsible for communicating his/her needs to the instructor, as early as possible. All arrangements for changes pertaining to quizzes and exams must be made at least one week in advance.

### Other Notices

- 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 not optional).

