

# REL 3938 Asian American Religions

University of Florida  
Department of Religion  
Fall 2015

Course Meeting Times: **MAT 108** Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:00am-10:25am

Instructor: Bhakti Mamtora    Email: [bhaktim@ufl.edu](mailto:bhaktim@ufl.edu)  
Office: Anderson 123    Office Hours: Mondays 11:30am to 1:00pm, Thursdays 10:30am-12:00pm & By Appointment

## Course Description

This course examines the development of Asian Religions in America from the nineteenth century to the present. Throughout the semester, we will consider the early encounters between Asian and American religious figures and analyze contemporary expressions of Asian Religions in America. This course will examine a number of religious traditions, including but not limited to Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Confucianism, to understand how these traditions became a part of the American religious landscape and gave rise to practices such as Zen Buddhism, yoga, and transcendental meditation in the United States. We will conclude the course by discussing representations of Asian religions in American culture by looking at one or more of the following: comic books, magazines, and news media.

As we learn about the Asian American Religions, we will ask ourselves the following questions: (1) What constitutes a religion? (2) How do prominent thinkers describe Asian religious traditions? (3) In what ways did Asian Religions emerge and develop in the United States?

There are no pre-requisites for this course.

## Course Objectives

- Analyze primary and secondary sources critically
- Identify the characteristics of Asian Religions in America
- Broadly sketch the emergence and development of these religious traditions in the United States

## Evaluation & Grading Policy

1. **Attendance & Participation (15%):** A participation grade will be determined on the basis of the student's attendance, preparedness and active participation in the discussions throughout the semester. Students are allowed three unexcused absences; however, **every absence thereafter will be penalized** unless appropriate documentation of medical or other emergency is provided. Students are expected to arrive on time. Excessive and consistent tardiness will be penalized.
2. **Weekly Reflections (25%):** Students should submit a brief (150-300 word) write up reflecting on the readings for the week. A detailed description of the requirements is available on Canvas.
3. **Response Paper (20%):** Students will submit a short response paper (1000 words) on a current events or news media item that focuses on Asian Religions in America. A detailed description of the assignment is available on Canvas. **Due: October 1, 2015 at 5:00pm.**
4. **Final Paper (40%):** Throughout the semester, students will have several smaller assignments, such as the weekly reflections and response paper, that will help prepare the students for their final paper. Students should visit the instructor during office hours early on in the semester to discuss a topic for their final paper.

- a. Thesis & Bibliography (5%) **Due November 3<sup>rd</sup>**
- b. Essay Draft (10%) **Due December 3<sup>rd</sup>**
- c. Final Paper (20%) **Due December 16<sup>th</sup>**

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

Grade	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
<b>Total %</b>	93-100	92-90	89-86	85-82	79-81	78-75	75-72	71-69	68-66	65-62	61-60	59-0

## Class Policies

### *Academic Honesty*

Students should familiarize themselves with the University's standards of academic honesty and integrity. If students are caught or suspected of plagiarizing, cheating or violating the Honor Code in any assignment for this course, they will be reported to the Student Conduct Committee at the Dean of Students' Office. For further information about academic honesty please visit the following website: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>.

### *Students with Disabilities*

Students requesting classroom accommodations or special consideration must first register with the Dean of Students' Office. The Dean of Students' Office will provide the necessary documentation to the student, who is then required to give that documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. For further information, please visit the following website: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

### *Absences*

In order to maximize on their learning experiences, students are expected to attend every single class. Students are allowed three unexcused absences. Thereafter, students will be penalized for any unexcused absence.

### *Late or Make-Up Assignments*

Students can request an extension on an assignment only in extraordinary circumstances. If the instructor does not grant an extension, late assignments will be marked down 1/3 grade for each day late.

### *Written Assignments*

All written assignments should be submitted electronically via Canvas. Please make sure that all written assignments are typed, double-spaced, and have standard fonts (Calibri or Times New Roman, 12 pt.) with 1" margins.

### *Required Readings*

Tweed, Thomas and Stephen Prothero eds. *Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

All additional readings for the semester will be available via Canvas. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings.

### *Classroom Etiquette*

Students are expected to arrive on time and prepared to discuss the readings for the week. Students should not arrive late to class as it is disruptive to the instructor and their fellow classmates. Before entering the classroom, students should turn off their cell phones. Students who engage in disruptive behavior during class

(including, receiving or making calls, sending text messages, whispering, talking in class etc.) will be asked to leave and marked absent for the day.

## Class Schedule

### Week 1

*August 25 Course Introduction & Syllabus Overview*

*August 27 Introduction*

- Tweed & Prothero, “General Introduction”

### Week 2

*September 1 Asian Religions: At a Glance*

- Tweed & Prothero, “Introduction to Asian Religions”

*September 3 Perceptions and Perspectives*

- Tweed & Prothero, “Views from Abroad” (Chapter 1)

### Week 3

*September 8 Perceptions and Perspectives*

- Tweed & Prothero, “Views from Home” (Chapter 2)

*September 10 Defining Asian Religions*

- Tweed & Prothero, “Journeys in the Study” (Chapter 5)

### Week 4

*September 15 Immigrants in America*

- Tweed & Prothero, “East to America: Immigrant Landings” (Introduction & Chapter 3)

*September 17 Missionaries Abroad*

- Tweed & Prothero, “Postcards for the Pews: Missionaries & Their Critics” (Chapter 6)

### Week 5

*September 23 World's Parliament of Religions*

- Tweed & Prothero, “The World's Parliament of Religions” (Chapter 7)
- Hinsley, Curtis. “The World As Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893.” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* edited by Ivan Karp and Steven D. Laine.

*September 24 WPOR's Legacy*

- Eric J. Ziolkowski, ed., *A Museum of Faiths: Histories and Legacies of the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993 (subsequently, Oxford University Press), selected pages.

## Week 6

### *September 29 Looking East*

- Tweed & Prothero, "Turning East: Sympathizers and Converts" (Chapter 8)
- Goldberg, Philip. "The Public Intellectuals," in *American Veda*. New York: Harmony Books, 2010.

### *October 1 Wait a minute...*

- Tweed & Prothero, "Closed Ports and Open Camps" (Introduction and Chapter 9)

**Response Paper Due at 5:00pm**

## Week 7

### *October 6 Legal Issues*

- Tweed & Prothero, "Mapping Legal Boundaries: Religion and State" (Chapter 20)
- Lal, Vinay. "Sikh Kirpans in California Schools" in *New Spiritual Homes*. David Yoo, eds. Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

### *October 8 Legal Issues*

- TBD

## Week 8

### *October 13 Hindu Gurus and Disciples*

- Tweed & Prothero, "Hindu Crossings: Gurus and Disciples" (Chapter 10)
- Goldberg, Philip. "The Yogi of the Autobiography," in *American Veda*. New York: Harmony Books, 2010.

### *October 15 Buddhist Masters and Students*

- Tweed and Prothero, "Buddhist Crossings: "Masters and Students" (Chapter 11)

## Week 9

### *October 20 Post 1965*

- Tweed & Prothero, "Countercultural Appropriations" (Chapter 13)

### *October 22 Post 1965*

- Iwamura, Jane. "The Monk Goes Hollywood: Kung Fu" in *Virtual Orientalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

## Week 10

### *October 27 Post 1965 Buddhist Traditions: Movements*

- Tweed and Prothero, "Buddhist Teachers, Converts and Movements" (Chapter 15)
- Machacek, David. "Soka Gakkai: A Human Revolution" in *Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America*. Eugene Gallagher and Michael Ashcraft eds. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006.

*October 29 Buddhist Traditions: Temples and Practices*

- Tweed & Prothero, “Buddhist Immigrants” (Chapter 17)

Week 11

*November 3 Americanization of Buddhism*

- Seager, Richard. “Making Some Sense of Americanization.” *Buddhism in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

**Thesis and Bibliography Due**

*November 5 East Asian Traditions*

- TBD

Week 12

*November 10 Hindu Traditions: Movements*

- Tweed & Prothero, “Asian Indian Gurus, Converts and Movements” (Chapter 14)
- Gosvami, Tamal Krishna and Ravi M. Gupta. “Krishna and Culture: What Happens When the Lord of Vrindavana Moves to New York City” in *Gurus in America*. Thomas A. Forsthoefel, Cynthia Ann Humes, eds. Albany: SUNY Press, 2005.

*November 12 Hindu Traditions: Movements*

- TBD

Week 13

*November 17 Hindu Traditions: Sacred Space*

- John Stratton Hawley. “Global Hinduism in Gotham.” *Asian American Religions*, ed. Tony Carnes. New York: New York University Press, 2004.
- Vasudha Narayanan. “Hinduism in Pittsburgh: Creating the South Indian “Hindu” Experience in the United States.” *A Sacred Thread: Modern Transmission of Hindu Traditions in India and Abroad*, ed. Raymond Williams. Chambersburg: Anima Publications, 1992

*November 19 Asian Indian Traditions*

- Tweed and Prothero, “Asian Indian Immigrants: Hindu, Jain and Sikh” (Chapter 16)

Week 14

*November 24 Hindu Traditions: Practices*

- Stefanie Syman. *The Subtle Body: The Story of Yoga in America*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux Publishers, 2010, selections.
- Yoga Debates:
  - “Take Back Yoga.” *Hindu American Foundation*.  
<http://www.hafsite.org/media/pr/takeyogaback>

- Lawson, Jill. "Yoga in America: Where Bowing to God is not Religious." *Huffington Post*. 8 November 2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jill-lawson/yoga-and-religion\\_b\\_4230240.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jill-lawson/yoga-and-religion_b_4230240.html)

*November 26 Thanksgiving Holiday, No Class*

**Week 15**

*December 1 Asian Religions in American Culture: Print*

- Lyden, John and Eric Michael Mazur. *The Routledge Companion to Religion and Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge, 2015.

*December 3 Asian Religions in American Culture: Image*

- Hoover, Stuart and Lynn Schofield. *Practicing Religion in the Age of the Media*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. (selections)

**Final Paper Draft Submission**

**Week 16**

*December 8 Final Paper Workshop*

**Final Papers are due on December 16, 2015 at 5:00pm**