

Religion in Asia

(Spring 2017 REL 2315; Sections 004E, 004F)

Instructor: Rodney Sebastian (Religion Dept., University of Florida)

Class Time & Location:

Monday, Wednesday 4th period (10.40am to 11.30am)

Section Meetings on Friday

Location: MAT 7

Office Hours & Contact Information:

Tuesday and Friday 12:00–1:45 pm, and by appointment; 123 Anderson Hall;
email: r.sebastian@ufl.edu (to be used for all written communications).

Course Description

This is an introductory course designed to familiarize students on the diverse religious concepts and traditions in Asia. We will broadly survey Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Daoism, and Confucianism. These religions originated in Asia and played a prominent role in the history, culture, and politics of the people of South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. We will also briefly look at Islam and Christianity in Asia because they are practiced by a large number of people in some Asian countries. As this is a survey course, we will not delve deeply into the subtleties and variants of each religious tradition, but will broadly discuss their worldview and history. We will also invite representatives of some of these religions to share their experience with us and visit places of worship. Students will be encouraged to actively participate in discussions.

No prior knowledge of Asian religions, history of language is required. However, students are expected to be respectful and committed to the understanding and study of the religions covered in this course.

Objectives

Students will

- 1) develop an understanding of the worldviews, philosophy, and practices of the traditions studied
- 2) be able to an overview of how different religious traditions emerged, interacted and shaped the history of Asia
- 3) apply the knowledge obtained in this course to engage with people and communities who identify with the religious traditions of Asia in an informed way

Assignments and Requirements

1. Reading of assigned materials, class attendance, participation in class discussions and activities (10 % of the final grade or 10/100 points).

Students are expected to discuss the readings, in-class films and participate in field trips.

2. Four 500-700 word film response papers (10 % each, overall 40%). These are due on 1/27, 2/24, 3/31, and 4/14. See schedule below for more information.

3. Four quizzes (2.5% each, overall 10%).

There will be four quizzes based on lectures, readings, and in-class films. They will be brief and will be given at any point during the semester.

4. Midterm Exam (15%).

The exam will be composed of multiple choice questions and short essays. It will be a 50 minute in-class exam held on March 3, 2016.

5. Final paper (25%)

Students should submit a 3000-4000 word final paper on any one of the religious traditions discussed in the course. The paper is due on April 19, 2016.

Attendance policy

Attendance is compulsory. Two unexcused absences are permitted. For each additional unexcused absence, two points will be deducted. Excused absences will have to be substantiated with a written document like a doctor's letter.

In-class behavior

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a mature and professional manner. Points will be deducted for inappropriate behavior. This includes coming late for classes, leaving class early without permission, answering cell-phones, text messaging, and rudeness to the instructor or fellow students.

Required Texts

Flood, Gavin. 1996. *An Introduction to Hinduism*. United Kingdom, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Poceski, Mario. *Introducing Chinese Religions*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009.

Course Schedule and Discussion Topics

Week 1: Introduction and syllabus overview

W - 1/4 Flood, G. "Points of Departure", Chapter 1, 5 – 22

Week 2: Vedic Traditions and Dharma

M – 1/9 WRE, Chapter 6, Narayanan, V. "Hindu Traditions", 280 – 290
Flood, G. "Ancient Origins", Chapter 2, 23 – 50

W – 1/11 Flood, G. "Dharma", Chapter 3, 51-74

Purusha sukta prayers: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-NHJffUIIo>

Film: "Altar of Fire"

Week 3: Renunciation, Yoga and Early Buddhism in South Asia

W – 1/18 Flood, G. "Yoga and Renunciation", Chapter 4, 75 - 102

F – 1/20 Berkwitz, Stephen C. 2009. *South Asian Buddhism: A Survey*. London and New York: Routledge, Chapter 1, 1-32

Week 4: Jaina Traditions

M – 1/23 WRE, Chapter 7, 342-377

W – 1/25 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01z7emOxb_A

F – 1/27 1st Film Response paper due

Week 5: Schools of Theology and Classical Hinduism

M – 1/30 Flood, “Hindu theology and philosophy”, Chapter 10

WRE, Chapter 6, Narayanan, V. “Hindu Traditions”, 291 – 300

Mahabharata summary:

<http://larryavisbrown.homestead.com/files/xeno.mahabsynop.htm>

W – 2/1 Field trip to Krishna House

Week 6: *Bhakti* movements, Vaishnava traditions

M – 2/6 Flood, “Narrative traditions and early Vaishnavism” Chapter 5, 103-127,
WRE Chapter 6, Narayanan, V. “Hindu Traditions”, 306 - 310

W – 2/8 Flood, “The love of Vishnu”, Chapter 6, 128-147

Film: Nimai of Nadia: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y8qbMDxniSg>

Week 7: *Bhakti* movements, Saiva and Sakta traditions

M – 2/13 Flood, “Saiva and tantric religion”, Chapter 7, 148-173

W – 2/15 Flood, “The Goddess and Sakta religions”, Chapter 8, 174-197

Week 8: Modern Hinduism

M – 2/20 WRE Chapter 6, Narayanan, V. “Hindu Traditions”, 311 - 335

W – 2/22 Flood, “Hinduism and the Modern World”, Chapter 11, 250-273

F – 2/24 2nd Film response paper due

Week 9: Sikhism

M – 2/27 WRE, Chapter 9, 443-477

W – 3/1 Mid-term review

F – 3/3 Mid-term Exam

Week 10: Spring Break

Week 11: Daoism

M – 3/13 Poceski, Chapter 1, Chapter 3, “Early Texts and the Emergence of Religious Daoism”

W – 3/15 Poceski, Chapter 4, “Daoist Traditions and Practices”

Film: Confucius

Week 12: Confucianism

M – 3/20 Poceski, Chapter 2, “The Classical Confucian Tradition”
Poceski, Chapter 8, “Later Transformations of Confucianism”

W – 3/22 Field trip to Gainesville Tibetan Buddhist Center

Week 13: Buddhism in East Asia

M - 3/27 Poceski, Chapter 5, “Spread and Flourishing of Buddhism in China”

W – 3/29 Poceski, Chapter 6, “Schools and Practices of Chinese Buddhism”

Film: Mystic Vision, Sacred Art

F – 3/31 3rd Film response paper due

Week 14: Islam and Christianity in Asia

M – 4/3 http://islamtoday.berkeley.edu/Islam_SouthAsia, Ernst & Lawrence, *Sufi Martyrs of Love: The Chishti Order in South Asia and Beyond*, pp. “What is a Sufi Order?” pp. 11-26.

W – 4/5 Poceski, 2009. Chapter 9: Christianity, Islam and other 'Western' Religions

Eastern Christianity in Asia: Video lecture:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lxTM4JTzoY>

Week 15: Religion in Southeast Asia

M – 4/10 Winzeler, Robert, 2016, “The Development of Religion in Southeast Asia”

W – 4/12 Spencer, Robert F. 1996. "Ethical Expressions in a Burmese Jataka." *Journal of American Folklore* no. 79 (311): 278-301

F – 4/14 4th Film response paper due

Week 16: Student Presentations

M – 4/17 Course Review

W – 4/19 Student Presentations,

Final paper due

Grading and Academic Policies

Grades and Grading Policies

Grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
100-93	92-90	89-86	85-82	81-79	78-76	75-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-60	<60

In addition, please familiarize yourself with the official UF policies on how grade points are assigned: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/Pages/home.aspx>

Academic Honesty

Students must conform to UF's academic honesty policy regarding plagiarism and other forms of cheating. This means that on all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment. "The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/honorcodes/conductcode.php> and <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html>.

All students found to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in any assignment for this course will be prosecuted to the full extent of the university honor policy, including judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

For serious violations, you will fail this course.

Students with Disabilities

Please do not hesitate to ask for accommodation for a documented disability. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office.

(<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>).

The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting

accommodation. Please ask the instructor if you would like any assistance in this process.