

REL 2315: Religion in Asia

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Spring 2023
- T | Period 8 - 9 (3:00 PM - 4:55 PM) AND 13
- R | Period 9 (4:05 PM - 4:55 PM) AND 13

Instructor

- Jonathan Edelmann
- Department of Religion, 106 Anderson Hall
- T and H, 10:00 – 11:30 am, or by appointment
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- 352.273.2932

Course Description

Who are we? What is our real nature? What are our most important duties to family, society, ancestor, gods, and God? What is the nature of God and the soul, and do they even exist? Why is religion important even if God does not exist and the soul is not eternal? How does one live in harmony with nature and society? How have you answered these questions? Does your academic discipline speak to them? Does your tradition speak to them? As the semester progresses, I look forward to hearing your ideas! These are some of the central questions that the Asian religious and philosophical traditions have dealt with for many thousands of years. In addition to examining how Asian thinkers (especially Taoist, Confucian, Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain) answered these questions, we'll also think about the social, ritual, and ethical implications of their answers. Should one leave the world behind, or should one adhere to one's social duties? How should one treat other humans, animals, and the gods? How should one relate with the divine? Based on my experience with research and teaching Asian thought, I find that we often learn comparatively: we make sense of the unfamiliar by means of the familiar. There is, therefore, a comparative component of this course, one that encourages discussion of the Asian religions in comparison with more familiar religions. We will also reflect on how Asian religion is interpreted in modern Western scholarship and popular media.

Required Readings and Works

- *Introducing Hinduism* (IH), by Hillary Rodrigues, Routledge Press.
- *Introducing Buddhism* (IB), by Charles Prebish and Damien Keown, Routledge Press
- *Introducing Chinese Religions* (IC), by Mario Poceski, Routledge Press.

Materials and Supplies Fees: n/a

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

- Midterm Exam: Six Weekly Essays of approximately 200 words each on Readings before Week 8. Does not count towards Writing Requirement.
- Final Exam: Six Weekly Essays of approximately 200 words each on Readings after Week 8. Does not count towards WR.
- Paper One: This paper should shall analyze and evaluate one topic from Weeks One to Seven. Students should use MLA or a related style. Rubrics and specifications provided by instructor. 1000 Words, counts towards WR.
- Paper Two: This paper should provide a critical reflection on your intellectual, personal, and/or professional perspective one topic from Weeks after the Midterm Examination. Students should use MLA or a related style. Rubrics and specifications provided by instructor. 1000 Words, counts towards WR.

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

Grading Writing	A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%	Rubric(s)
	A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%	
	B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%	
	B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%	
	B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%	
	C+	77 – 79%		E	<60	

Assessment Rubric and Statements

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit at least some evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide at least an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off-topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit at least some identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement but may require readers to work to follow progression of ideas.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.

ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical sentence structure. At a minimum, documents will display a less precise use of vocabulary and an uneven use of sentence structure or a writing style that occasionally veers away from word choice or tone appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, papers may contain some spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive so they do not muddy the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.

- The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.
- The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback before the end of the course on all of the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
- WR course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

III. Annotated Weekly Schedule

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 1	Topic: Ancient India Summary: In this first week of class we shall go over the entire syllabus, looking at the larger themes in the study of Asian religion and the time periods and religions we shall examine. We begin by looking at some of the general

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	<p>characteristics of ancient India, the place from which Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism emerged.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IH, Introduction; IB, Introduction [total pages: 23]</p> <p>Assignment: n/a</p>
Week 2	<p>Topic: Vedic Religion</p> <p>Summary: This is the most ancient aspect of Indian religion. The texts, called the Vedas, Aryankayas, Upanishads, etc. tell us about concepts of ritual, cosmology, theology, and philosophy, for which we shall examine the Vedic sacrifice, the Vedic concept of space, the Vedic concept of god and gods, and the Vedic concept of self and knowledge. While the date and origin of Vedic texts, written a particular type of Sanskrit, an Indo-European language, remains a matter of debate, we now have access to many interpretations of them. The goal of this week is to better the primary themes in the texts of Vedic religion.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IH, Chapter 1 [21]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 3	<p>Topic: Knowledge (jñāna) in early Hindu "sūtra" literature</p> <p>Summary: What is knowledge? How do we know what exists? What is the goal or purpose of seeking knowledge? These are some of the questions addressed in Hindu texts after the Vedic period, i.e. during the composition early Hindu philosophical texts like the Vaiśeṣika-sūtra, Nyāya-sūtra, Mīmāṃsā-sūtra, Yoga-sūtra, Vedānta-sūtra, and the Sāṃkhya-kārikā about 2200 to 1700 years ago. During this period many similar texts were composed by Buddhists and Jains. In this week we shall focus on those Indian philosophies that are often classified as Hindu in the sense that they accept in some manner or another the larger Vedic and Brahmanical texts, and in Part Two of this course we shall look at Indian Buddhist philosophies. As we shall see, there are some common elements, common vocabularies, while at the same time there are important divergences too. Everyone accepts the existence of "karma" or "karman," everyone accepts there is some type of self that reincarnates in a cycle of "saṃsāra", but they differ in the causes of karma, the nature of the self, and the nature of the reality as a whole.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IH, Chapters 6 [20]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 4	<p>Topic: The Bhagavad Gītā</p> <p>Summary: The Bhagavad Gītā is often called the Bible of Hinduism. While this is an imprecise statement, few would doubt the power and influence of the Bhagavad Gītā, especially in for the devotional, theistic, and popular aspects of Hinduism. The goal of this week is to understand the three yogas (karma, jñāna, and bhakti) in the Bhagavad Gītā.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IH, Chapters 9 [16]</p>

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)
Week 5	<p>Topic: The Purāṇas</p> <p>Summary: This week focuses on a massive genre of text called the Puranas, a place in which theology, philosophy, cosmology, mythology, and religion were developed and which continue to influence Hinduism today. We shall also return to the concept of yoga and its development in the Puranas.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IH, Chapters 10 [34]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 6	<p>Topic: The Four Noble Truths and No-Self</p> <p>Summary: The religions of Buddhism and Jainism, both native to India, represent a radical departure from the Hindu traditions discussed above in the sense that they did not recognize the authority of the Veda, they rejected the caste system, and (at least in the case of Buddhism) they rejected the notions of the eternal and unchanging nature of being. First, we shall examine the life of the Buddha and the way it is understood by Buddhists. In addition, we shall look at a core teaching of the Buddhist tradition, the four noble truths.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IB, Chapters 3 [17]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 7	<p>Topic: Buddhist Meditation</p> <p>Summary: One of the most important words in the Buddhist tradition is sangha, or the community practitioners. The goal of this week is to understand the historical development of the early Buddhist sangha and to examine some of the most important forms of meditation. This foundational knowledge of the early Buddhist tradition can provide insight into the many forms of meditation in the University of Florida like Mindfulness and Zen.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IB, Chapter 7 [23]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 8	<p>Topic: Library Visit, Paper Revisions, and Paper One</p> <p>Summary: This week we shall prepare you for the mid-term, paper one, and visit the library to learn about resources.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: n/a</p> <p>Assignment: Midterm Exam and Paper One due by Friday 5:00 pm</p>
Week 9	<p>Topic: Buddhism Outside of India</p> <p>Summary: Buddhism is the first Indian religion to spread beyond India. We shall explore how it developed in contact with other Asian cultures, especially China and Japan.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IB, Chapter 9 [18]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 10	Topic: Confucius in Context

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	<p>Summary: The remainder of this course is devoted to Chinese religions, especially the teaching of Confucius, Laozi, and the development of Chinese Buddhism. Like India, China is an ancient civilization, with a long and distinguished textual and ritual traditions that have been preserved and interpreted by scholars. The goal of this week is to understand the earliest known history of China, especially the views on god, kings, and heaven. This will provide a context for understanding the teachings of Confucius and Laozi, as well as the way Buddhism was appropriated.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IC, Chapter 2 [26]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 11	<p>Topic: Neo-Confucianism</p> <p>Summary: The goal of this week is to understand the how the Confucian tradition developed in during and after the medieval period, highlighting its emphasis on social order, productivity, and civil life, which will be distinguished from Daoist emphasis on metaphysics, seclusion, and a simple village life.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IC, Chapter 8 [25]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 12	<p>Topic: Early Philosophical Doaism</p> <p>Summary: The <i>Daoteching</i>, or <i>Tao Te Ching</i>, an ancient text attributed to Laozi, is one of the most widely translated texts in the world. Unlike the Confucian tradition, Doaism is concerned with the nature of the Dao or the way. The goal of this week is to gain a basic understanding of the Taoteching and to understand the early development of Doaism in China. We shall also look at other early Daoist thinkers like Zhuangzi</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IC, Chapter 3 [23]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 13	<p>Topic: Daoist Ritual</p> <p>Summary: In addition to its rich philosophical traditions, Chinese Daoism is also ritualistic. The goal of this week is to understand those rituals and their connection with the larger framework of Chinese religions.</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IC, Chapter 4 [29]</p> <p>Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)</p>
Week 14	<p>Topic: Buddhism in China</p> <p>Summary: In the fourth century AD Buddhism was introduced in China and at that time the Chinese people began to integrate Buddhism while at the same time maintaining their independence and autonomy in the areas of politics, religion, and culture. Is Buddhism a just form of Daoism? Does Buddhism contradict Chinese values such as family, industriousness, respect for the body, or respect for political authority?</p> <p>Required Readings/Works: IC, Chapter 6 [25]</p>

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)
Week 15	Topic: Popular Religion in China Summary: Underlying the ritual practices and philosophical teachings, China is home to an ancient and popular religion that involves a wide range of beliefs and practices involving ancestors, ghosts, and many forms of sacrifice to approach them. The goal of this week is to understand underlying logic of this and what it says more broadly about the nature of religion Required Readings/Works: IC, Chapter 7 [24] Assignment: Weekly Paper (cf. questions at end of chapter)
Week 16	Topic: Conclusion Summary: Review, and preparing your Final Exam and Paper Two. Required Readings/Works: n/a Assignment: Final Exam and Paper Two due by Friday 5:00 pm

IV. Required Policies

Attendance Policy

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. 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 Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/> , 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/> or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.

In-Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium,

to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.