

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

Religions of Asia • REL 2315 • Fall 2020

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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? 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, Jaina, and Shinto) 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.

Texts

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

Goals

1. To develop and demonstrate factual knowledge about the religions of Asia
2. To develop and demonstrate reading comprehension of the required primary and secondary source material
3. To develop and articulate your interpretation and analysis of the required primary and secondary source material

Evaluation Methods

List of Graded Work

1. Each Week students shall submit reading response papers that address the question posed for each week of class. Class time will be devoted to addressing the question of the week in the lectures, discussions, and group work. During this time students should begin to formulate their answers. Papers should be submitted by 5:00 pm on Friday of each week. For our two field trips (i.e., the Museum of Natural History and Library West) the papers may focus on issues related to them. 100-200 words (this does not count towards WR). 300 in total, or 20 points each
2. Paper One, Analytic, Due Week Nine. This papers should shall analyze and evaluate an essential question(s) in the topics from Weeks One to Seven. Students should use MLA or a related style. 1000 words (this does count towards WR) 200 points.
3. Paper Two, Connection, Due Week Sixteen. This paper should provide a critical reflection on your intellectual, personal, and/or professional perspective on an essential question(s) in the topics from Weeks Nine and Fifteen. Students should use MLA or a related style. 1000 words (this does count towards WR) 200 points
4. Mid Term Examination. Produce clear and effective responses to essential questions in the Topics for Weeks One to Seven. Given in class 150. Final Examination. Produce clear and effective responses to essential question in the Topics for Weeks Nine to Fifteen. Given at designated exam time. 150 points

Tentative Weekly Schedule: Consult Canvas Page for Complete Information

Week One - What is Religion? Why Study Religion?

Tuesday: Overview of Syllabus; Thursday: Read Chapter 1.

Week Two – Hindu Traditions

Tuesday: Read Chapter 2, Origins; Thursday: Read Chapter 2, Classical Hinduism.

Week Three – Hindu Traditions

Tu: Read Chapter 2, Schools of Theology; Th: Read Chapter 2, Practices, Rituals, & Arts. Thesis Statement One due.

Week Four – Hindu Traditions

Tu: Read Ch 2, Recent Developments, *cf.* p.416; Th: Read J.EDELMANN, “Introducing the

Bhagavad Gītā”.

Week Five – Jain Traditions

Tu: Read Ch 4, Shramana, Early Sangha; Th: Read Ch 4, Developments, Practice, Expressive. Paper One Due.

Week Six – Jain Traditions

Tu: Read Chapter 4, Among Others; Th: Read B.MATILAL, “Anekāta-vāda, Non-one-sidedness,” *cf.* “fundamentalism,” p.419.

Week Seven – Japanese Traditions

Tuesday: Read Chapter 7: First 2 sections; Thursday: Read Chapter 7: Next 2 sections.

Week Eight

Tuesday: catch-up, review, *etc.*; Thursday: Midterm Examination.

Week Nine – Buddhist Traditions

Tu: Read Ch 5, Buddha, Dharma, Sangha; Th: Read Ch 5, Theravada Buddhism.

Week Ten – Buddhist Traditions

Tu: Read Ch 5, Mahayana; Th: Read Ch 5, Vajrayana. Thesis Statement Two due.

Week Eleven – Buddhist Traditions

Tuesday: Read Ch 5: Modern World; Thursday: Read Ch 5: Recent Developments.

Week Twelve – Chinese & Korean Traditions

Tuesday: Read Ch 6, Chinese Religions; Thursday: Read Ch 6: Han, The Six Dynasties

Week Thirteen – Chinese & Korean Traditions

Tuesday: Read Ch 6, Sui & Tang; Thursday: Read Ch 6: Song, Yuan & Ming; Paper Two due.

Week Fourteen – Chinese Traditions

Tu: Read “Tao Te Ching”; Th: Read “Analects”

Week Fifteen – Chinese & Korean Traditions

Tuesday: no class; Thursday: Read Chapter 6, Korean Religions

Week Sixteen – Review for Final Examination

Grading

The final grade is 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, are not considered. Students should also not expect retroactive changes or other forms of grade modification. Students should take all assignments and other course requirements very seriously. There are no opportunities to do additional work for extra credit or better grade. No incomplete grades are 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 are computed according to the standard grading scheme in Canvas.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is expected of all students, starting with the first day of classes. (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 are primarily based on the lectures, along with the readings. Student with exceptional participation performance may be awarded up to 3 bonus points (3% of the final grade). This bonus is entirely based on the instructor's discretion, and the final assessment takes into account both the quantity and quality of student's participation in classroom discussions, as well as other elements of coursework.

Exams and Papers

The University of Florida's Honor Code is taken seriously: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." No make-up exams are 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. All papers and exams must be provided to the instructor at the scheduled time. In the absence of a documentable emergency, late papers and exams will given no credit.

Classroom Conduct

All students are required to come to class on time, as late arrivals (and early departures) are disruptive. The use of cell phones and computers for reasons other than note taking is considered counterproductive and disruptive.

Office Hours and Communication

Students are encouraged to come to office hours, especially if they have questions on the course materials. The instructor is also 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

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 the quizzes and the exams must be made at least one week in advance.