

Chinese Religions 中國宗教 | REL 3318, Spring 2024
Yuan Zhang (Religion Dept., University of Florida)



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Class Time

- Tuesday, period 7, 1:55 pm – 2:45 pm, LIT (Little Hall) 0221.
- Thursday, period 7-8, 1:55 pm - 3:50 pm, MAT (Matherly) 0013.

Office Hours

Thursday, 11:30 – 1:40 pm, in 132 Anderson Hall, and by appointment. Appointments need to be made at least one day in advance.

Contact Information

Email: zhangy3@ufl.edu; or through Canvas message.

Course Description

The course is a historical and philosophical 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 explore the formulations and subsequent transformations of key beliefs, doctrines, practices, and institutions that characterized specific religious traditions. We 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 is helpful. No knowledge of the Chinese language is required.

Course Format

This is an in-person course, combining lectures and class discussions. Students are expected to engage in critical analysis of the course materials.

Requirements

- Reading of the assigned materials (listed after each lecture topic in the schedule) and the study guides for each lecture.
- Class attendance and participation (20% of final grade): Coming to the class, Listening to the lectures, and participating in class discussions.
- Written assignment: one paper, 1500 words (40%)
 - Proposal (500 words), due 3/20, 12:59 pm (5%)
 - Polished draft, due 4/19, 12:59 pm (15%)

- Finalized paper, due 4/30, 5 pm (20 %)
- Two exams (40%): see schedule below for dates. There will be pre-exam preparations, including review and Q&A sessions.

Course Schedule

Section one: Early Traditions

Week 1 | 1/9: Introduction & Study of Chinese Religions

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 1-7

Company, “On the Very Idea of Religions,” 287-299. (Optional)

Week 2 | 1/16: Early Patterns of Chinese Religious Life

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 8-33.

Week 3 | 1/23: Classical Confucian Tradition

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 34-59.

Week 4 | 1/30: *Dao* in Early Traditions

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 60-72.

Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*, 42-52.

Week 5 | 2/6: Special Topic: Foundations of Buddhism | Review 1

Readings: Poceski, “Buddhism: Beginnings,” in *Introduction to World Religions*

Week 6 | 2/13: Exam 1 (Tuesday, 2/13) | Religious Daoism – Celestial Master

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 72-82.

Section two: Medieval Period

Week 7 | 2/20: Schools and Practices of Daoism

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 83-111.

Week 8 | 2/27: Flourishing of Buddhism in China

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 112-137.

Week 9 | 3/5: Traditions and Practices of Chinese Buddhism | Instruction on writing

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 148-162.

Week 10 | 3/12: Spring Break (work on your abstract)

Week 11 | 3/19: Three Teachings in Ghost Festival | Review 2 | Proposal due (3/20, 11:59 pm)

Readings: Teiser, Stephen. *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China*, 3-10, and 26-42.

Week 12 | 3/26: **Exam 2 (Tuesday, 3/26) | Experiential Learning: Mindfulness Practice**

Section Three: Later Transformations

Week 13 | 4/2: **Later Transformation of Confucianism**

Readings: Poceski, *Introducing Chinese Religions*, 188-212.

Week 14 | 4/9: **Later Daoism - Zhengyi and Quanzhen**

Readings:

Goossaert, "Quanzhen (Complete Perfection)," in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 814-820.

Chen Yaoting, "Zhengyi (Orthodox Unity)," in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, 1258-60.

A Mangy Priest Exorcises a Den of Ghosts. A story by Feng Menglong (1574-1646), in his *Stories to Caution the World: A Ming Dynasty Collection*, tr. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, pp. 212-225, 756-757 (notes).

Week 15 | 4/16: **Chan/Zen and Gong'an (Kōan) | draft due (4/19, 11:59 pm)**

Readings: Schlütter, *How Zen Became Zen*, 1-12.

Some very interesting Kōan stories.

Week 16 | 4/23: **Course Summary & Discussions (no reading, work on your paper); | paper due (4/30, 5:00 pm)**

Textbook and Supplementary Readings

- Poceski, Mario. *Introducing Chinese Religions* (Routledge, 2009). Also available as an e-book, titled Chinese Religions: the eBook (JBE Online Books, <https://worldreligionsebooks.com/eBooks/chineseReligions/>). Students can use either version of the book.
- Supplementary articles/essays and English translations of primary texts are posted online via UF's e-Learning system, using Canvas.

Attendance, Late, Missing Assignments, or Incomplete Grade

- Students who do not submit assignments on time will not receive credit for them.
- Students who cannot join the class or take an exam on time for UF-authorized excuses must inform the course instructors of the reason for their impending absence in advance, and provide evidence verifying the reason.

- Student who has a valid reason to request rescheduling of an exam—such as observance of a religious holiday—he/she must contact the instructor and make suitable arrangements before the examination. Failure to act in accordance with these instructions leads to a failing grade.
- No make-up exams or assignments are given apart from a contemporaneous emergency or serious illness immediately prior to the exam, in which case the student must contact the instructor directly before the exam (or, if not feasible, as soon as possible), with documented excuses. To put it in another way, students should not miss an exam or assignment without a valid, documented reason, or only inform the instructor after the event.
- No incomplete grades are given, except in very exceptional circumstances, in which case the student should contact the instructor no later than a week before the last day of classes.
- For further information about what constitutes acceptable absences or late assignments, see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Exams

- The exams are to be taken online, via Canvas, on the dates listed in the syllabus schedule. Students must plan their schedules accordingly and ensure that they are able to take the exams on those days.
- The exams are closed-book exams.
- The exams are primarily based on the lectures, along with the readings. They are not cumulative (i.e., Exam 2 will only cover the materials studied after Exam 1).
- Exams primarily consist of multiple-choice and short Q&A; there might also be a single short essay (a few paragraphs, and not more than one per exam).

Written Assignment

- Completion of the term paper consists of the following three procedures.
 - Proposal (500 words), any time before 3/20, 11:59 pm (5%)
 - Required: Polished draft (1500 words), due 4/19, 11:59 pm (15%)
 - Required: Finalized paper, due 4/30, 5 pm (20 %)

Students should choose their own topic of interest. It is strongly recommended that students communicate with the instructor in advance for approval and suggestions. The paper should be no less than 1500 words, and its content should be reflective and critical, demonstrating high relevance to the course. Please remember that the instructor value quality more than quantity, and that students can have the instructor's support throughout the semester.

- The written assignment must be submitted in MS Word. Use standard font, such as Calibri 12, with 1.5 spacing and 1" margins.
- Do not forget to include paper title, course name, date, and page numbers.
- The written assignments must be submitted digitally, via Canvas, before the final deadline.

- Name the Word document you submit following this format: <yourname>-Chinese Religions-s24 term paper; for the name, surname comes first. For instance, a student named Peter Pan should name his file as: Pan, Peter- Chinese Religions-s24 term paper.
- No late submissions will be accepted. Students are encouraged to avoid procrastination and make early submissions, well before the deadline.
- Students are welcome to ask for feedback/advice about their paper draft, during office hours.
- For the WR Statements and Grading Rubric, see <http://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-edcourses/structure-of-wr-courses/wr-course-guidelines/>
- For Writing Requirement Rubric, see <http://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-courses/structureof-wr-courses/writing-requirement-syllabus-policy/>

Extra Credit

Extra credit can be earned in at least two ways.

- Since week 12, the course has integrates opportunities for mindfulness practice. Students can write a reflection paper on the said experiential learning activity, which should be around 500 words long. It should offer a succinct introduction to the practice of mindfulness, followed by the student's personal reflections on his/her experience with the practice done in class, and brief comments on its relevance to contemporary life. The due day for submitting the reflection is Apr. 21st, 11:59 pm.
- On week 16, students can give a presentation to their classmates on any topics related to Chinese religions. It can be of the same content as their term paper. The presentation should be around 10 minutes, including the Q&A session.

Please be aware that simply submitting additional work does not grant you the extra credit. Your submission will be assessed for content, critical thinking, and communication.

Office Hours and Communication

- Students can schedule office hours, especially if they have questions or need help with the course materials.
- The instructor is glad to assist students with their pursuit of knowledge and facilitate their success with the course.
- The instructor is also willing to discuss relevant academic 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, 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

- Students engaged in any form of academic dishonesty, as defined under the “Academic Misconduct” section of the [Student Honor Code](#), will be subject to other disciplinary measures. By all means, students should not give or receive unauthorized assistance in completing assignments. Violations can result in failing an exam, paper or the course.
- Students should know what constitutes plagiarism and avoid inadvertent forms of it that can occur. Please note that acts of plagiarism include:
 - Turning in a paper or assignment that was written by someone else.
 - Copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from the work of another author without proper citation and quotation marks.
 - Using and copying verbatim a sentence or paragraph of text from Chatgpt or any other AI software for any kind of course assignments.
 - Paraphrasing or restating in your own words, text or ideas written by someone else without proper citation.
- Plagiarism and cheating will result in a failing grade and other serious penalties.
- For more information, see the “[Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#)” – the Orange Book.
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昔者庄周梦为胡蝶，栩栩然胡蝶也，自喻适志与！不知周也。俄然觉，则遽遽然周也。不知周之梦为胡蝶与，胡蝶之梦为周与？周与胡蝶，则必有分矣。此之谓物化。

Last night Chuang Chou dreamed he was a butterfly, spirits soaring he was a butterfly (is it that in showing what he was suited his own fancy?), and did not know about Chou. When all of a sudden he awoke, he was Chou with all his wits about him. He does not know whether he is Chou who dreams he is a butterfly or a butterfly who dreams he is Chou. Between Chou and the butterfly there was necessarily a dividing; just this is what is meant by the transformations of things.

UF Criteria and Policies

- **Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)**

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved General Education learning outcomes as follows:

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Students learn how to identify, describe, and explain the key historical developments, themes, and concepts in the academic study of Chinese religions (**H**). **Assignments:** exams 1 & 2; writing assignments.
- Students learn how to identify, describe, and explain the principal characteristics of Chinese civilization, including dominant values, ethical norms, socioeconomic models, and religious beliefs. (**H**). **Assignments:** exams 1 & 2; writing assignments.
- Students acquire knowledge about the historical developments, teachings, and traditions of the main religious traditions that shaped the course of Chinese history, and learn about some of the key concepts deployed in religious studies (**H**). **Assignments:** exams 1 & 2; writing assignments.

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- By careful reading, critical analysis, thoughtful reflection, and open discussion of Chinese religions and other relevant topics, as well as by independent research and experiential learning, students receive valuable training in critical thinking and effective analysis. (**H**). **Assignments:** exams 1 & 2; writing assignments.
- Students learn how to analyze or evaluate complex issues, such as religious pluralism and cultural diversity, from a multiplicity of perspectives (**H**). **Assignments:** exams 1 & 2; writing assignments.

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Students develop important writing and oral communication skills that enable them to intelligently identify and discuss key issues, explaining them clearly and logically, with a sense of nuance and from a multiplicity of perspectives (**H**). **Assignments:** exams 1 & 2; writing assignments.

Connection: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*

- The course facilitates 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. Some of the themes discussed in the course provide fecund entry points for students' reflection on some of the central

issues that shape life in contemporary America, including the make-up and impact of religious identities, and the possible ways of coming to terms with religious diversity. The course topics lend themselves to critical self-reflection about issues of central import that affect us all, in a manner that is meant to stimulate critical thought and engagement. That (hopefully) will have lasting effects on the students intellectual and personal developments, at UF and beyond, as they enter the professional world and participate constructively in Americas multicultural society and democratic system of governance (H). **Assignments:** exams 1 & 2; writing assignments.

- **General Education Credit**

➤ *This course accomplishes the General Education objectives of the subject areas listed below.*

Humanities (H): Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

➤ **Writing Designation:** Writing Designation (WR) 2000 words

A minimum **grade of C** is required for general education credit. Courses intended to satisfy the general education requirement cannot be taken S-U.

- **WR Statements and Grading Rubric**

Writing Requirement Guidelines: <http://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-edcourses/structure-of-wr-courses/wr-course-guidelines/>

Writing Requirement Rubric: <http://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-courses/structureof-wr-courses/writing-requirement-syllabus-policy/>

	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	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.

	provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	
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, 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.

• Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academicregulations/grades-grading-policies/>

A	94 – 100%	C	74 – 76%
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

• Disability

- A student who has a documented disability that may require some modification of testing or other class requirements should consult the instructor directly 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.

- **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/cwc/Default.aspx>, 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 at 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.