

RELIGIONS OF ASIA

RELI 212:02

Fall 2016

MW 4:30-5:45, Innovation Hall 133

Professor: Prabhavati Reddy (preddy3@gmu.edu; 703-993-1290)

Office Hours: Mondays/Wednesdays by appointment

Office: Robinson B443A

I. Course Description and Objectives

This cross-cultural course introduces students to the study of Asian religions and philosophies that have shaped profoundly the cultures of Asia in ancient and modern periods. Our inquiry begins with the exploration of some broader and important questions. What questions have Asians posed about the life-death-rebirth cycle of humankind? What teachings and paths have these religious traditions developed as responses to these questions? What practices have been promoted to achieve highest spiritual goals? In addition to explore these issues, we also examine the historical development of these traditions while focusing on major scriptures and figures, doctrinal beliefs and diverse practices in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, Confucian, Daoist, and Shinto religions.

- Cultivate an understanding of the ways the Asian religions are developed into comprehensive systems of life in India, China and Japan
- Demonstrate a basic knowledge of history, texts, doctrines, beliefs and practices of major Asian religions
- Engage in comparative reflection of Asian traditions and to think analytically about their own religious backgrounds and worldviews
- Good understanding of religions of Asia in modern and global contexts

Teaching Method

The format of this course will be a combination of lectures and in-class readings and discussions. PowerPoint lectures with digital images are designed to effectively engage students with subject themes and to facilitate an interactive class environment. Complimenting the class room teaching, students are encouraged to visit the Asian art collections at Freer and Sackler Galleries of Smithsonian institution.

II. Required Texts

1. Willard G. Oxtoby, ed., *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, 4th edition, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014
2. Robert E. Van Voorse, *Anthology of World Scriptures: Eastern Traditions*, 1st edition, Cengage Learning, 2006

III. Course Requirements

- Regular attendance of lectures and participation in class discussion are highly required. Students are responsible for all the announcements made during the classes as well as posted blackboard materials. Class absences are excused in the case of serious issues, decided on a case by case basis. Other classroom rules include not to use laptops, phones and other gadgets and not to leave the classroom in the middle of lecture or discussion unless you have to attend to an emergency situation.
- Each student must fulfill the course requirements: midterm (30%), final exam (40%) and a research paper (30%). See the syllabus for deadlines.
- Research Paper of 12 pages (double space). Instructor will discuss a range of topics or students can choose a topic of their interest. Guidelines for the paper will be posted on the blackboard in early November.
- Bring the books to class. We will often be referring to our readings in class so you will gain more out of our discussions if you have the text with you. Taking notes is extremely important for the successful completion of the course and good grades.

Grading Evaluation

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. Midterm (take home) | 30% (Syllabus covered up to Oct 12 th) |
| 2. Final exam (take home) | 40% (comprehensive) |
| 3. One research paper | 30% |

IV. Honor Code The George Mason University students should abide by the Honor Code and the guidelines of academic integrity are set by the university. You can find the information on the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. The violation of Honor code rules will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. Students who involve with plagiarism or cheating will meet with the severe penalties.

Schedule of Classes and Readings

South Asian Religions and Philosophies

- | | |
|------|--|
| 8/29 | General lecture. Asian Religions: Comprehensive Systems of Life |
| 8/31 | Religion in Ancient India: Indus Valley and Harappa Civilization
<i>Eastern Traditions</i> 28-32; Film: <i>Hinduism, Scientifically Proven Religion</i> |
| 9/5 | Labor Day – university holiday |
| 9/7 | Vedic religion and society, <i>Eastern Traditions</i> 33-37; <i>Anthology of Eastern Traditions</i> , 30-33 |

- 9/12 Upanisads & philosophical schools; *Eastern Traditions* 37-40, 53-56; *Anthology*, 34, 38, 53-56
- 9/14 Classical foundations of Hinduism, *Eastern Traditions* 41-52, 69-81; *Anthology*, 43-45
- 9/19 *The Bhagavad Gita*, *Eastern Traditions* 42-44; *Anthology*, 54-61
- 9/21 Hindu Temple, Bhakti/devotion and Dharma; *Eastern Traditions*, 59-66, 69-74
- 9/26 Hinduism in Practice, *Eastern Traditions*, 41-42, 52-53, 76-89
- 9/28 Hinduism in Modern Period, *Eastern Traditions* 66-69, 90-96; *Anthology*, 62-63
- 10/3 Shakyamuni Buddha, *Eastern Traditions* 186-198; *Anthology*, 78-85
- 10/5 Buddha dharma/teachings, *Eastern Traditions* 198-209, 241-246; *Anthology*, 86-91
- 10/10 The Sangha; Early Buddhism/Theravada and Practices, 209-217; Buddhist ethics, *Anthology*, 98-101
- 10/12 Mahayana Buddhism/The Great Vehicle in India, *Eastern Traditions* 217-224; *Anthology*, 109, 112, 116
- 10/17 Midterm (syllabus covered up to 10/12; exam will be posted on the blackboard by October 12th)**
- 10/19 Vajrayana Buddhism/The Diamond Vehicle in Tibet, *Eastern Traditions*, 234-238; *Anthology*, 114-115
- 10/19 Buddhism in Modern World, *Eastern Traditions*, 239- 248
- 10/24 The Jain Tradition, *Eastern Traditions* 147-173; *Anthology*, 131-132
- 10/26 Jain metaphysics & ethics, *Anthology*, 133-141; Jainism in modern period, *Eastern Traditions*, 173-178
- 10/31 The Sikh Tradition, *Eastern Traditions* 105-131
- 11/2 Sikh Doctrines and Practices, *Anthology*, 150-159; Sikhism in modern period, *Eastern Traditions*, 131-142

East Asian Religions & Philosophies

- 11/7 Ancient Chinese Religion: The Shang and Zhou Periods; Confucian origins, 266-274
- 11/9 Confucius and his teachings, *Eastern Traditions* 274-278; *Anthology*, 171-180

- 11/14 Confucian thinkers: Mencius and Xunzi, *Eastern Traditions* 276-278; State Confucianism & Han Dynasty, *Eastern Traditions* 286-293
- 11/16 Buddhism in China: Pure Land and Chan Schools, 224-230 and 301-304; Confucian interaction with Buddhism, 296-300
- 11/21 Daoism, *Eastern Traditions* 278-286, 293-294; *Anthology*, 199-208
- 11/23 Japanese Culture and Shinto, *Eastern Traditions*, 341-352, 363-376; *Anthology*, 221-227
- 11/23-27 Thanksgiving recess**
- 11/28 Instructor meets students to discuss research paper (students start working on research paper prior to thanksgiving holiday or earlier)
- 11/30 Japanese religious history and modern period, *Eastern Traditions*, 355-374
- 12/2 Research Paper Due**
- 12/14 Final Exam (exam will be posted on the blackboard by December 9th)**

Website links

- www.sacred-texts.com/hin/index.htm (Free online translations of Hindu scriptures)
- www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/ (Good link to South Asian culture, religions, history)
- www.harappa.com/har/haro.html (major link to Indus Civilization)
- www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/oogenerallinks/index.html (resources on South Asia)
- www.sikhs.org (The Sikhism Home Page, Brampton, ON)
- www.jaindharmonline.com (Jainism and Jaina dharma)
- www.jainworld.com (Jainism Global Resource Center, USA)
- www.americanbuddhist.net (Buddhism and Buddhist activism)
- www.orientalarchitecture.com (Asian Historical Architecture offers photographs of religious sites in China, Korea and other countries in Asia)
- eng.taoism.org.hk (The Taoist Culture and Information Centre offers an insider's view of Daoism's history)
- <http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/youkoso.htm> (A semi-annual journal dedicated to the academic study of Japanese religions)
- www.onmarkproductions.com/html/buddhism.shtml (A photo library devoted to artwork especially Buddhist and Shinto deities in Japan)