

## **RELI 212\_001: Religions of Asia**

**Spring 2024- 3 credit hours**

Andrew D. Thrasher

Email: [athrashe@gmu.edu](mailto:athrashe@gmu.edu)

Class meets: TR 12:00pm-1:15pm in Krug Hall 7

Office Hours: Via Zoom. Wednesdays 3:30pm-5:30pm and by Appointment.

### **I. Description of Course:**

This course surveys religions of South and East Asia: Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Shinto. This course seeks to describe religious and philosophical perspectives that shape South and East Asian worldviews. Particularly this course addresses the historical development of Asian religions and philosophy with attention to the development of paths of salvation, religious and philosophical developments in metaphysics, cosmology, and epistemology, textual analyses of religious scripture, and religious conceptions of God, humanity, and nature within the context of Asian culture and society. This course will engage in the historical development of religious and philosophical themes in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Japanese traditions.

There are no pre-requisites or co-requisites for this course.

### **Global Understanding Learning Outcomes:**

The goal of the global understanding category is to help students see the world from multiple perspectives, reflect upon their positions in a global society, and be prepared for future engagement as global citizens. While it may include a historical perspective, global understanding courses focus primarily on a contemporary understanding of one's place in a global society.

Courses in this category must meet a minimum of three of the following learning outcomes:

1. Identify and articulate one's own values and how those values influence their interactions and relationships with others, both locally and globally.
2. Demonstrate understanding of how the patterns and processes of globalization make visible the interconnections and differences among and within contemporary global societies.
3. Demonstrate the development of intercultural competencies.
4. Explore individual and collective responsibilities within a global society through analytical, practical, or creative responses to problems or issues, using resources appropriate to the field.

### **Teaching Method and Course Expectations:**

Students are expected to:

- Keep pace with weekly readings, lectures in the class, and assignments
- Students must log into Blackboard every week by using their credentials for MyMason.
- Students will need reliable internet and a computer for this course to take tests and submit written assignments via Blackboard.
- The professor will send announcements via Blackboard as needed and hold office hours every Wednesday from 3:30-5:30pm and by appointment.
- The professor will attempt to check emails at least three times a week. On Weekends however, emails will only be checked if there are major assignments due.

### **Course Learning Outcomes:**

- Demonstrate basic knowledge of history, texts, doctrines, beliefs, and practices of major Asian religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto
- Develop an understanding of the ways the religions are developed into comprehensive systems of life in India, China, and Japan
- Understand the interconnections and differences among Asian cultures
- Demonstrate the skills of critical thinking and written communication

## II. Required Texts:

The following texts are required for the course. The textbooks are used in conjunction with the professor's lecture notes. Required reading includes Professor's lecture notes, primary texts, and secondary textbooks. Students should always read the professor's lectures for class sessions. The Professor's lecture documents may be found on Blackboard. The following textbooks may be found in the Bookstore and/or through GMU Libraries as ebooks.

- Karyn Lai, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy*, (Library ebook) ISBN: 9780511422386
- Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby, *Religions of India: An Introduction*, second edition, Routledge, ISBN: 978-1138681262 (Also a Library Ebook)
- Ebooks: The Bhagavad Gita by Easwaran (Library Ebook); The Dhammapada by Easwaran (Library Ebook); The Analects (Library Ebook: 2016: Open Road Integrated Media publishers); The Dao De Jing: The Book of the Way, Moss Roberts translation (Library Ebook); and The Dao of Pooh (PDF)

## III. Course Requirements

- *Assignments*: Each student must fulfill all the course requirements to pass the course: 1 group presentation of a primary text (20%); 4 Quizzes (20%); 2 Short Essays (10%); 3 Major Essays (30%); and participation (20%).
- *IMPORTANT NOTES*: 1) All assignments are due at 11:59pm on Fridays unless otherwise noted and late penalties begin to accrue at midnight; 2) all late work is given a grace period of 48 hours, after which a 10 point late penalty will be applied for every week late, starting at 12am 48 hours after day due; 3) all assignments require citation of *academic* sources, according to consistent MLA, APA, or Chicago Style citations—this means students should offer correct and consistent in text citations and offer works cited with each assignment that requires it; 4) Please refer to rubrics on Blackboard for grading criteria (these are subject to change, but notice will be given before grading any assignment); 5) all Written assignments should be formatted as follows: Times New Romans, 12 point font, be Double Spaced without extra space between paragraphs, and they must have justified margins (this document uses Justified margins, where each side of the page is even. Most assignments require left-hand margins. Note the requirement of justified margins for this class, regardless of citation style).

## Grading Evaluation

- 1) *Quizzes* (4) (20%): There are four quizzes worth 5% of the grade each, totaling 20% of the course grade. These are terminology quizzes, consisting of 200 terms that students will be expected to know by the end of term. Each quiz has 50 questions, worth 1 point each and students are given 1 hour, and two attempts, to complete quizzes. The highest grade will be kept. Quizzes are open book, and a study guide is provided for students while they complete course work. Have these study guides with you while completing quizzes.

- 2) *Presentation* (1) (20%): Students will choose at the beginning of the course which group presentation they wish to present on a primary text with. The choices are the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Dhammapada*, the *Analects*, the *Dao De Jing*, and the *Dao of Pooh*. Each group will be given five questions to answer, four of which should be presented by an individual student in the group. The fifth question will be answered by every student in the group and the whole group will be graded for a Q&A session at the end of the presentation. Students should trade contact information once groups have been established and the presentation should be a single PowerPoint submitted individually by each student on blackboard AND emailed to the professor.
- 3) *Short Essays* (2) (10%): There will also be two short essay assignments due throughout the course, based on course readings, where students will answer 1 question from the Two Short Essay prompts, totaling 2 short essays. These are worth 5% each, and, in total, are worth 10% of the term grade. They must be 350-700 words and cite at least one academic source, both in text and in a works cited. These short essays test students on course comprehension and serve as the midterm and final.
- 4) *Participation* (20%): All students will be required to participate in at least 10 class sessions throughout the semester. Each day of participation is worth 2% of the participation grade. It is up to the student to make sure they participate in the course by asking and responding to questions in at least ten (10) class sessions throughout the semester! Extra credit of 10 points will be awarded for every extra day of participation in the course. ☺
- 5) *Major Essays* (3) (30%): All students are required to submit three Major essays for the course. These essays must be at least 700 words, should cite at least 3 in text citations of at least 2 *academic* sources in the works cited, according to MLA, APA, or Chicago style citation. Each essay is worth 10% of the term grade, totaling 30% of the term grade. These essays meet the Global Understanding requirement for the course.

#### Grading Brackets:

A+: 99-100; A: 90-98; B: 80-89; C: 70-79; D: 60-69; F: 0-59.

A quality papers are exceptional in style and understanding, thorough in analysis, research, and organization of material. A+ papers include everything an A paper has but also includes, lucidity, clarity, and/or creative insight. B papers understand, articulate, and organize material well, taking it beyond the basics, though lacks substantial research. C papers adequately understand the material, though do not take it beyond the basics and may be structurally problematic. D papers are conceptually unclear, grammatically problematic, and demonstrate a lack of understanding of course material. A failing paper fails to: address the prompt question; write a sufficient word count; and/or does not engage course material. However, points will be awarded for all work submitted.

Students are expected to wrack up points for this class. The grading bracket for points obtained are as follows:

A+: 1000-985; A: 984-895; B: 894-795; C: 794-695; D: 694-595; F: 594-0

Midterm grades will be calculated based on total possible points that can be obtained based on assignments that have been due by about week 8. They will be calculated out of a 10 point scale based on total possible points to that point in the semester.

#### **IV. MISC**

*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](http://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.

*AI Assignments:* Submitting Assignment that utilize AI generated work is forbidden in this course. If an assignment is AI generated, it will be awarded a 0 for the course.

*Diversity Statement:* George Mason University promotes a living and learning environment for outstanding growth and productivity among its students, faculty, and staff. Through its curriculum, programs, policies, procedures, services, and resources, Mason strives to maintain a quality environment for work, study and personal growth.

An emphasis upon diversity and inclusion throughout the campus community is essential to achieve these goals. Diversity is broadly defined to include such characteristics as, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, disability, and sexual orientation. Diversity also entails different viewpoints, philosophies, and perspectives. Attention to these aspects of diversity will help promote a culture of inclusion and belonging, and an environment where diverse opinions, backgrounds, and practices have the opportunity to be voiced, heard and respected.

The reflection of Mason's commitment to diversity and inclusion goes beyond policies and procedures to focus on behavior at the individual, group and organizational level. The implementation of this commitment to diversity and inclusion is found in all settings, including individual work units and groups, student organizations and groups, and classroom settings; it is also found with the delivery of services and activities, including, but not limited to, curriculum, teaching, events, advising, research, service, and community outreach.

Acknowledging that the attainment of diversity and inclusion are dynamic and continuous processes and that the larger societal setting has an evolving socio-cultural understanding of diversity and inclusion, Mason seeks to continuously improve its environment. To this end, the University promotes continuous monitoring and self-assessment regarding diversity. The aim is to incorporate diversity and inclusion within the philosophies and actions of the individual, group and organization, and to make improvements as needed.

#### Key Links:

- Disability Accommodations: [ds.gmu.edu](http://ds.gmu.edu)
- [the core rules of "Netiquette"](#)
- <https://ulife.gmu.edu/religious-holiday-calendar/>
- <https://registrar.gmu.edu/ferpa/>
- Keep Learning, Learning Services ([learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/](http://learningservices.gmu.edu/keeplearning/))
- University Libraries ([library.gmu.edu](http://library.gmu.edu))
- Writing Center ([writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu))
- Counseling and Psychological Services ([caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu))

#### V. Course Schedule and Readings:

Week	Topic Content	Assignments
Week 1: 1/16-1/18	Introduction to Course and Hinduism 1.1	1/16: First day of classes

	Read: Syllabus; Hinduism Lecture Document Pages 1-14; “Hindu Dharma” in Mittal and Thursby	
Week 2: 1/23-1/25	Hinduism 1.2 and 2.1  Read: Hinduism Lecture Document, 14-38; “Hindu Dharma” in Mittal and Thursby	
Week 3: 1/30-2/1	Hinduism 2.2 and <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>  Read: <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> ; Hinduism Lecture Document, 38-end; “Hindu Dharma” in Mittal and Thursby	Due Dates: 2/2: Quiz 1 (Hinduism) 2/1: Bhagavad Gita Discussion/Presentation day
Week 4: 2/6-2/8	Jainism and Sikhism  Read: Jainism Document; “Jain Dharma” in Mittal and Thursby; Long, “Jaina Philosophy”; Sikhism Document (ALL)	
Week 5: 2/13-2/15	Sikhism and Buddhism 1.1  Read: Sikhism Document; “Sikh Dharma” in Mittal and Thursby; Buddhism Document, 1-21	Due 2/16 at 11:59pm a) Quiz 2: Jainism and Sikhism
Week 6: 2/20-2/22	Indian Buddhism 1.2 and 2.1  Read: Buddhism Lecture Document pages 1-21; “Buddhist Dharma” in Mittal and Thursby	Due 2/23 at 11:59pm a) Major Essay 1
Week 7: 2/27-2/29	Buddhism 2.2 and <i>Dhammapada</i> Presentation  Read: Buddhism Document pages 1-21; “Buddhist Dharma” in Mittal and Thursby; <i>Dhammapada</i>	Due 3/1 at 11:59pm a) Short Essay 1 (SE1) 2/29: Dhammapada Presentation Day  <i>Midterm grades will be calculated out of assignments</i>

		<i>due to this point, except presentation grade.</i>
Week 8: 3/5-3/7: Spring Break	No Class	
Week 9: 3/12-3/14	<p>East Asian Buddhism Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism in China, Tibet, and Japan</p> <p>Read: Buddhism Document pages 21-end; Karyn Lai, "Chinese Buddhism"; Kapstein, Tibetan Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction (ALL): Optional Reading: Poceski, et al., "Traditions of East Asian Buddhism</p>	
Week 10: 3/19-3/21	<p>Chinese traditions 1.0</p> <p>Read: Chinese Traditions Document pages 1-25; Karyn Lai, chapters 1-2, and 10</p>	
Week 11: 3/26-3/28	<p>Chinese 2.0 and <i>The Analects</i> (AN) presentation</p> <p>Read: Chinese Traditions Document, 34-36; Chong, "Mencius and Xunzi"; Karyn Lai, chapters 3-4, and 9; <i>Analects</i> (ALL).</p>	3/28: Analects Presentation Day
Week 12: 4/2-4/4	<p>Chinese 3.0 and <i>The Dao De</i> <i>Jing</i> (DDJ) Presentation</p> <p>Read: <i>Dao De Jing</i> (ALL); Chinese Traditions Document, Liu, "Dao De Jing"; Karyn Lai, chapters 5- 6, and 8</p>	4/4: Dao De Jing Presentation Day
Week 13: 4/9-4/11	<p>Chinese 4.0 and Japanese traditions</p> <p>Read: Berthong, <a href="https://iep.utm.edu/neo-conf/">https://iep.utm.edu/neo-conf/</a> (ALL); Japanese Traditions Document (ALL);</p>	<p>Due 4/12 at 11:59pm</p> <p>a) Major Essay 2</p>

	Kuroda Article on History of Shinto	
Week 14: 4/16-4/18	Japanese traditions and <i>Dao of Pooh</i>	4/19 Due at 11:59pm a) Quiz 3: Buddhism 4/18: Dao of Pooh discussion/presentation day
Week 15: 4/23-4/25	Review/Flex Days	Due 4/26 at 11:59pm b) SE2 c) Quiz 4: Chinese and Japanese
Final Exam Period: 5/1-5/8	All remaining Assignments Due on Thursday 5/2 at 11:59pm	<b><i>Major Essay 3 is due during final exam period time: 11:59pm on Thursday 5/2</i></b>