

Religions of the Eastern World

Religion 840:211:02

SPRING 2013

Prof. Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz

Class Location: HSB 204, Douglass Campus

Class Hours: Tuesdays & Fridays, 10:55 am - 12:15 pm

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:15-3:30pm, or by appointment

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DESCRIPTION

This course examines three major areas of Asian religious traditions: East Asian, South Asian, and the Buddhist traditions. Since it is not possible to offer a comprehensive overview of all important traditions in these areas, concentration will be on those traditions with continuing significant spiritual, philosophical, sociological, political, aesthetic and literary influence. More specifically, it is an introduction to some of the major Asian religious traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism (Taoism), but also to Sikhism, Jainism, and popular forms of these religions in the Asian world. We are interested in discovering how the sacred is depicted in their scriptures, and in comparing the diverse ways and methods through which humankind can achieve self-transformation. No religion ever exists in a vacuum or stays the same. Different historical, social, and cultural forces played a role in the rise and development of different religions, which then influenced these forces in return. In tracing this dialectical relationship, we want to pay equal attention to the philosophical and theological foundations of the religious traditions as well as their social functions and manifestations.

The following **REQUIRED** books are available at the Douglass Campus Bookstore. They are also on reserve at the Douglass library.

Miller, Barbara Stoler. *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Council in a Time of War* (Bantam, 1986) ISBN 0553213652

Roebuck, Valerie. *The Dhammapada*. (Penguin, 2010) ISBN 0140449418

Lau, DC. *Tao Te Ching*. (Penguin, 2003) ISBN 9780140441314

van Norden, Bryan. *The Essential Mengzi*. (Hackett, 2009) ISBN 0872209857

Additional **REQUIRED** readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be posted on Sakai.

Course Topics and Readings

Please do all reading in advance of the class for which it is assigned, and please bring all **primary** readings (including those posted in electronic form on Sakai) in print form to class. Failure to bring the necessary materials to class will negatively affect your participation grade.

- Tuesday, Jan 22 Introduction to Course and the Study of Religion
- Friday, Jan 25 Hinduism: The Vedas and Vedic Religion
Reading: *1. Gavin Flood, "Points of Departure" and "Ancient Origins" in *An Introduction to Hinduism*, pp. 5-50 (Chapters 1 and 2);
*2. *Rg-Veda*, 10.90;
*3. *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishads*, 3.9.1 - 3.9.9;
Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishads, 3.6;
Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishads, 3.8;
Bṛhadaranyaka Upanishads, 4.4.1 - 4.4.9
- Tuesday, Jan 29 In-class film: "330 Million Gods"
NOTE: Professor Birkenholtz will be away but there will be a required in-class assignment to accompany the film viewing.
Reading: *1. A short summary of the *Mahabharata*:
<http://www.san.beck.org/EC12-Literature.html#2>
*2. A short summary of the *Ramayana*:
<http://www.san.beck.org/EC12-Literature.html#1>
- Friday, Feb 1 Hinduism: Narrative traditions and dharma
Reading: *1. Gavin Flood, "Dharma," in *An Introduction to Hinduism*, pp. 51-53, 57-69;
*3. *Laws of Manu*, selections TBA
- Tuesday, Feb 5 Hinduism: *Bhagavad-Gita*
Reading: 1. *Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapters 1-6, pp. 23-72.
- Friday, Feb 8 In-class film: "Spiritual India"
NOTE: Professor Birkenholtz will be away but there will be a required in-class assignment to accompany the film viewing.
- Tuesday, Feb 12 Hinduism: *Bhagavad-Gita*
Reading: 1. *Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapters 7-12, pp. 73-112.
- Friday, Feb 15 Hinduism: *Bhagavad-Gita*
Reading: 1. *Bhagavad-Gita*, Chapters 13-18, pp. 113-146.

Tuesday, Feb 19	Hinduism: Deities and Darshan
Reading:	*1. Diana Eck, "The Deity: The Image of God," in <i>The Life of Hinduism</i> , edited by John Stratton Hawley and Vasudha Narayanan, pp. 42-52; *2. A Hindu Morning Ritual (Sakila's Puja): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARaNRTJPnpg .
Friday, Feb 22	Sikhism
Reading:	*1. "Sikhism" in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , ed by Willard Oxtoby, pp. 108-143. *2. Primary text selections from <i>Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol. 1</i> , edited by Ainslie Embree, pp. 501-510.
Tuesday, Feb 26	Jainism
Reading:	*1. "Jainism" in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , ed by Willard Oxtoby, pp. 146-175. *2. Primary text selections <i>Sources of Indian Tradition, Vol. 1</i> , edited by Ainslie Embree, pp. 58-75, specific selection TBA.
Friday, Mar 1	Buddhism: Life of the Buddha and The Four Noble Truths
Reading:	*1. "Buddhism" in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , ed by Willard Oxtoby, pp. 178-191. *2. "The Three Jewels" in <i>Buddhist Scriptures</i> , ed. Donald Lopez, pp. 101-104.
Tues Mar 5	Buddhism: The No Self and Dependent Arising
Reading:	*1. "Buddhism" in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , ed by Willard Oxtoby, pp. 191-198; 2. The <i>Dhammapada</i> .
Fri Mar 8	Buddhism: The <i>Dhammapada</i>
Reading:	1. The <i>Dhammapada</i> .
Tues Mar 12	Buddhism: Mahayana and Vajrayana
Reading:	*1. "Mahayana, The Second Vehicle" in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , ed by Willard Oxtoby, pp. 205-211; *2. "Vajrayana, The Third Vehicle" in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , ed by Willard Oxtoby, pp. 220-224; *3. "Practice" in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , ed by Willard Oxtoby, pp. 224-231 *4. Primary text selections TBA
Fri Mar 15	IN-CLASS EXAM #1

Tues Mar 19	NO CLASS –SPRING BREAK
Frí Mar 22	NO CLASS –SPRING BREAK
Tues Mar 26	Confucianism: Mytho-Historical Background
Reading:	*1. “Confucianism” in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , (Third Edition), edited by Willard Oxtoby, pp. 256-281.
Frí Mar 29	Confucianism
Reading:	<i>The Essential Mengzi</i> , Book I A&B
Tues Apr 2	Confucianism
Reading:	<i>The Essential Mengzi</i> , Book II A&B
Frí Apr 5	Confucianism and Taoism
Reading:	1. <i>The Essential Mengzi</i> , Book VIA *2. “Daoism” in <i>World Religions: Eastern Traditions</i> , (Third Edition), edited by Willard Oxtoby, pp.
Tues Apr 9	Taoism
Reading:	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> I-XXX
Frí Apr 12	Taoism
Reading:	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> XXXI-LX
Tues Apr 16	Taoism
Reading:	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> LXI-LXXXI
Frí Apr 19	In-class Film: TBA
	NOTE: Professor Birkenholtz will be away but there will be a required in-class assignment to accompany the film viewing.
Tues Apr 23	Chinese Religions: Popular Religion
Reading:	TBA
Frí Apr 26	Western Religions in the East: Islam
Reading:	*1. Karen G. Ruffle, “Islam in South Asia” in <i>South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today</i> , edited by Karen Pechilis and Selva Raj, pp. 192-221. *2. Primary text selections TBA.

Tues Apr 30	Western Religions in the East: Christianity
Reading:	*1. M. Thomas Thangaraj, "South Asian Christianity," in <i>South Asian Religions: Tradition and Today</i> , edited by Karen Pechilis and Selva Raj, pp. 160-191. *2. TBA
Frí May 3	IN-CLASS EXAM #2

Course Requirements

1. **Participation and punctuality.** You are expected to attend every class meeting. Regular attendance in class, careful preparation of course materials and participation in class discussions will be reflected in your participation grade. **It is important that you bring primary source materials to class.** You will be held responsible for materials covered in lectures, much of which goes beyond required readings. The lectures and discussions will also provide the necessary background and transitions between the various religious traditions. Your participation in class discussions will show how well you have understood the readings and where clarification is necessary. It is therefore essential to keep up with the reading assignments.
 - a. **Attendance.** Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.
 - i. An acceptable absence is one that is a) communicated to me suitably in advance or b) accompanied by a doctor's or dean's note. All other absences will be counted as unexcused.
 - ii. Each unexcused absence will lower your final grade by one point.
 - b. **Punctuality** is expected of all students and recurrent lateness will negatively affect your participation grade.
 - c. **In addition**, your participation grade may include the following: 1) short in-class writing assignments, 2) in-class/small group work, 3) film worksheets.
2. **Quizzes.** There will be periodic quizzes given throughout the semester, sometimes with advance notice, sometimes without. They will be given at the beginning of class and students will not be allowed to make up a missed quiz unless they provide a proper note from a dean or a doctor excusing their absence on the day of the quiz. Students who arrive late for class will not be given extra time to finish their quiz. Quizzes may cover any material leading up and including material prepared for class on the day it is given, as well as material covered in previous lectures.
3. **Exams.** There will be two exams. The first will evaluate your understanding of the material covered in the first half of the semester (i.e., the Indian traditions), and the second will evaluate your understanding of material covered in the second half of the semester (i.e., the Chinese traditions but also Western religions in the East). **NO** make-up

exams for missed exams will be given, unless a letter verifying an emergency is provided through the dean's office.

4. **Paper.** A final paper (4-5 pages) will be **due on May 8th at 10am**. Upload your paper via DropBox on the course Sakai site. More details will be given later in the semester.

Policies:

1. The class strictly follows the university policy on academic integrity. It is available at <https://TeachX.rutgers.edu/integrity/index.html>.
2. You may not reproduce any portion of the lectures, lecture notes, or PowerPoint presentations via any public forum (including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, blogs, etc.) without the written permission of Prof. Birkenholtz.

Student Evaluation

Participation:	10%
Exams:	50% (2 @ 25%/exam)
Quizzes:	15%
Paper:	25%
Grading Total:	100%