

840:211 Religions of the Eastern World Summer 2014

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Course Description

This is an introductory course on Eastern religions. More specifically, it is an introduction to Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shinto. These religions played a pivotal role in the formation of the culture, philosophy, religiosity, and spirituality of Asia. Emphasis is on classical traditions, since this provides a solid foundation upon which students are then able to pursue further independent study of more recent developments. The course will focus on the central texts of these religions and will explore their enduring influence. The many translations of several of these texts into Western languages attest to their appeal beyond the Eastern world.

Required Texts

1. *The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, translated by Barbara Miller. Bantam Books.
2. *What the Buddha Taught*, by Walpola Rahula. Grove Press.
3. *Mencius*, translated by D.C. Lau. Penguin Books.
4. *Tao Te Ching*, by Lao Tzu, translated by D. C. Lau. Penguin.
5. *Wabi-Sabi*, by Leonard Koren. Imperfect Publishing.

Course Requirements

1. Attendance (15% of final grade)

Attendance is required. You will lose two points on every day you miss class unless a medical proof or a written proof of an emergency is provided.

The format of the course would be a combination of lectures and class discussions. It is very important that you complete the reading assignment for each class. Since some materials in the lecture are not necessarily covered in the required texts, it is highly recommended that you take notes during the lecture. Of course, questions are always welcome.

2. Two exams (70% of final grade)

There will be two exams: a mid-session exam on June 16 and the final exam on July 3.

3. Book Report (15% of Final grade)

The book report is on the book, *Wabi-Sabi*. Basically, you should follow this structure: identify the central thesis of the book and after summarizing every chapter discuss how the author presents the central thesis in every chapter of the book. Please do not write this report as an

opinion paper. Summary of the book is its most important part. The report should be entirely based on this book. Do not use any other material (e.g. material from internet) to write this book report. It should be about four pages long (MS word or pdf format, font size 12 and double-spaced). The report has to be submitted on sakai.rutgers.edu by 11 p.m. on June 27. There will a penalty for late-submission.

Grading System

A=100-90, B+=89-87, B=86-80, C+=79-77, C=76-70, D=69-65, F=64 and below. Incompletes, i.e., “T” grades, will not be given under normal circumstances.

Schedule and Readings

May 27-28	Introduction, Hinduism, <i>Bhagavad-Gita</i> , (1 st – 5 th teachings)
May 29, June 2	<i>Bhagavad-Gita</i> , (6 th – 10 th teachings)
June 3-4	<i>Bhagavad-Gita</i> , (11 th – 18 th teachings)
June 5, 9	Buddhism, <i>What the Buddha Taught</i> , I-III
June 10-11	<i>What the Buddha Taught</i> , IV-VI
June 12	Japanese Religions, <i>Wabi-Sabi</i>
June 16	Mid-session Exam
June 17-18	Confucianism, <i>Mencius</i> , Book 1, A&B
June 19, 23	<i>Mencius</i> , Book II, A&B; Book VII, A&B
June 24-25	Taoism, <i>Tao Te Ching</i> , I-XXX
June 26, 30	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> , XXXI-LX
June 27	Book Report due (Sakai)
July 1	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> , LXI-LXXXI
July 2	Reading day
July 3	Final Exam