

SYLLABUS

RELI 200-01

Religions of China and Japan (Religions of India and the Orient*)

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Course level and type: Introductory-level undergraduate survey

Hours of Instruction: 3 hours/week x 14 weeks

Enrollment: 23 students

Last Taught: Spring 2001

Pedagogical Reflections: The goal of this course is to introduce undergraduate students -- most of whom are in their first or second years of study, and most of whom are not pursuing religious studies as their primary concentration - to the basic historical, conceptual, and ritual dimensions of religious traditions that are central to Chinese and Japanese cultures (including attention to the experiences of Chinese- and Japanese-Americans).

Lectures present, and to some extent duplicate, material also found in the Religions of Asia textbook. Individual primary source reading assignments from the Scriptures of the East anthology are kept short, to allow for close reading and discussion. Items from East Asian visual and musical cultures, as well as modern and contemporary films and nonfiction which depict East Asian religious traditions, are introduced, in order to de-hegemonize text to some degree. Whenever possible, elective opportunities to visit neighboring Chinese and Japanese religious institutions and relevant museum collections are made available. During the spring 2001 semester, several students chose to accompany me on visits to a Zen Buddhist center and a museum collection of Chinese and Japanese religious art.

In general, my students have responded well to textbook and primary source readings, and they are delighted to explore the visual and musical worlds of Chinese and Japanese religious traditions. The medieval Chinese novel *Seven Taoist Masters* is a huge success, and leads me to consider teaching this course entirely through literary materials (the poems of Basho, etc.). I am concerned that the weeks devoted to Christianity and new religious movements in China and Japan are a bit too compressed; the students barely begin to grasp the historical and cultural issues before we move along to something else. In a campus environment with very little ethnic diversity (apart from a small coterie of international students, who rarely take these sorts of courses), I was a bit anxious about introducing the experiences of Asian Americans, but the students responded generously and enthusiastically to the material, and those who visited a Zen Temple with me (patronized largely by white Americans, as usual) were able to make valuable connections between their field experience and the reading assignments.

Course Description

Religion remains a powerful and perennial force in human cultures. Whether we distance ourselves from religious institutions or embrace them, we cannot avoid the influence of religious ideas, practices, images, language, and values in our everyday life, work, and play. This is no less true of the peoples and cultures of China and Japan – yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

In this course, we will study the basic concerns, practices, beliefs, and texts of Chinese and Japanese religions, including Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Shintô, “folk” traditions, and new religious movements (including Christianity). Our goal is to learn to interpret these traditions for ourselves.

Classroom lectures, discussions, videos, classic works of literature, several contemporary films, and readings from primary sources will supplement textbook analyses and overviews. Reading assignments will average 75 pages per week. You should expect to spend 4-5 hours preparing for our 3 hours of class time each week.

Successful completion of this course satisfies the University’s general education requirement in religious studies or philosophy. There are no prerequisites for enrollment, but previous completion of RELI 101, “Introduction to Religion,” is highly recommended.

***A version of RELI 200 which focused on religious traditions of India and Tibet was taught in fall 2000, and will be offered again in fall 2001.**

Course Materials

The following required texts are for sale at the University bookstore:

- John Y. Fenton *et al*, eds., *Religions of Asia* (3rd ed.)
- James Fieser and John Powers, ed., *Scriptures of the East*
- Eva Wong, trans., *Seven Taoist Masters*
- *RELI 200-01 Reader*

ALWAYS BRING THE ASSIGNED TEXTS TO CLASS WITH YOU!

Course Requirements

- **Adherence to the *Student Rights and Responsibilities Statement*** found in the current University catalog, which forbids plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty.
- **Regular attendance and informed participation in class discussions.** No more than five excused absences will be allowed without penalty to your grade. After the fifth absence your final grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade for each additional absence, regardless of excuse.
- **Regular in-class pop quizzes** on key terms introduced in lectures and readings. Quizzes cannot be made up at a later date. Missed quizzes will result in a quiz average with fewer scores, which may impact your final grade negatively.
- **Three short (3-5 pages) analytical papers**, due on the dates indicated by the course calendar. Paper topics will be circulated at least a week before each paper is due; no reading assignments will be given for weeks during which papers are due. Grades of late papers will be reduced by 1/3 of a grade for each day late. Papers must be typed in clear standard English prose, double-spaced, and free of mechanical errors.

Grading

Class participation.....	20% of final grade
Pop quizzes.....	20% of final grade
Three analytical papers.....	60% of final grade

If you are a student with a disability, it is your responsibility to inform your instructor and register with the Office of Disability Services at least one week prior to a needed service so that reasonable accommodations can be made.

Course Calendar

Week 1 ***China, Japan, and “The Orient”: Myths and Realities***

- 1/17 Introductory session (no preparation required)
- 1/19 *Religions of Asia*, introduction
Video: *A Question of Balance* (in class)

Week 2 ***Chinese Religion Before Buddhism***

- 1/22 *Religions of Asia*, ch. 10
- 1/24 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 147-167
- 1/26 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 175-200

Week 3 ***Foundations of Chinese Buddhism***

- 1/29 *Religions of Asia*, chs. 7 & 8
- 1/31 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 73-97
- 2/2 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 98-111

Week 4 ***China Becomes Buddhist/Buddhism Becomes Chinese***

- 2/5 *Religions of Asia*, ch. 11
- 2/7 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 116-117, 168-169
- 2/9 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 200-207

Week 5 ***Life, Death and Destiny: “The Emperor’s Shadow”*** (Zhou Xiaowen, China, 1996, not rated)

- 2/12 Video: *The Emperor’s Shadow* (part one – in class)
 - 2/14 Video: *The Emperor’s Shadow* (part two – in class)
 - 2/16 Video: *The Emperor’s Shadow* (part three – in class)
- PAPER #1 DUE!**

Week 6 ***Three Visions of Chinese Spirituality: Integration and Disintegration***

- 2/19 *Religions of Asia*, ch. 12
- 2/21 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 169-174
- 2/23 J. Berling, “When They Go Their Separate Ways” (reader)

Week 7 ***The Way Is One***
2/26 *Seven Taoist Masters*, chs. 1-14
2/28 *Seven Taoist Masters*, chs. 15-29
3/2 **NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

MARCH 4, 6, 8: NO CLASSES – SPRING BREAK

Week 8 ***The Way of the Gods***
3/12 *Religions of Asia*, pp. 197-207, 212-216
3/14 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 211-224
3/16 H. Hardacre, “Religious Freedom Under State Shintô” (reader)

Week 9 ***Buddhism in Medieval Japan***
3/19 *Religions of Asia*, pp. 208-211
3/21 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 118-120
3/23 *Scriptures of the East*, pp. 120-123

Week 10 ***Contemporary Crisis, Ancient Tradition: “The Funeral”*** (Juzo Itami, Japan, 1984; not rated)
3/26 Video: *The Funeral* (part one – in class)
3/28 Video: *The Funeral* (part two – in class)
3/30 Video: *The Funeral* (part three – in class)
PAPER #2 DUE!

Week 11 ***Christianity in China and Japan***
4/2 J. Spence, “To God Through the Stars” (reader)
D. Bays, “The Growth of Independent Christianity in China, 1900-1937” (reader)
4/4 P. Wickeri, “The Church in China on the Eve of the 21st Century” (reader)
M. Mullins, “The Social Sources of Christianity in Japan” (reader)
4/6 **NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR AWAY**

APRIL 9, 11, 13: NO CLASSES – SPRING BREAK

Week 12 ***New Religious Movements in China and Japan***
4/16 **NO CLASS – EASTER BREAK**
4/18 B. Earhart, “The New Religions” (reader)
R. Young, “The ‘Christ’ of the Japanese New Religions” (reader)
4/20 Frank, “Falun Gong: Millenarian Movement, Meditation, or Tent Show?” (reader)
Li Hongzhi pronouncements (reader)

Week 13 ***Religions of China and Japan in America***
4/23 S. Chan, “The International Context of Asian Emigration” (HANDOUT)
4/25 V. Hori, “Sweet-and-Sour Buddhism” (reader)
I. Lin, “Journey to the Far West: Chinese Buddhism in America” (reader)
4/27 Video: *My America, or Honk If You Love Buddha* (part one – in class)

Week 14 ***From Asia to America: “My America”*** (Renee Tajima-Peña, USA, 1997; not rated)
4/30 Video: *My America, or Honk If You Love Buddha* (part two – in class)

