

**INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES:
ASIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS**

RELG 110
Professor DANIEL M. STUART



Meetings: TBD
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Course Overview

This course introduces students to the subject of religion through an exploration of the religious texts, practices, and beliefs of Asian traditions. We will cover the foundational normative teachings of Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, as well as the way such traditions are practiced on the ground, in historical and contemporary contexts. Students will learn to read ancient religious texts critically, and to analyze how ethical and metaphysical suppositions, based in religious traditions, powerfully influence contemporary social and political activities.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to identify the basic characteristics, concepts, and terminology of five Asian religious traditions. They will be able to analyze the way in which the data of Asian religious traditions challenges many traditional western approaches to the study of religion. Students will learn to read texts critically, and be able to demonstrate critical thinking skills orally and in writing.

Required Texts

- Oxtoby, Willard G and Roy C. Amore. 2010. *World Religions: Eastern Traditions, Third Edition*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mehta, Gita. 1994. *Karma Cola*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Links to Course Readings on Blackboard (See Bibliography below)

Course Requirements, Grading Breakdown

- **20% Class Participation**—This includes regular attendance and completion of short written responses to weekly readings. **Attendance is mandatory, and if you miss more than five class sessions, you will lose 5% of your participation grade for every additional class missed.** The reading responses will be submitted on Blackboard, and will be based on writing prompts posted on Blackboard. **Responses are due by 9pm on every Thursday.** A response should be between 100 and 150 words in length. These short reflections provide a valuable opportunity to think about the assigned readings prior to our last class discussion of each week. They will be graded on a credit/no credit basis. Only responses submitted on-time will be accepted.
- **50% 5 Short Answer Quizzes**—These will be in-class quizzes, primarily devoted to identifications of relevant terminology, at the end of each topic unit. **Quiz dates are: TBD**
- **30% Comprehensive Final Exam; Date of Final Exam: TBD**

Note taking: Laptops and electronic devices are **NOT** permitted in class. This means that you **cannot** use your cellphone, smartphone, PDA, etc. If you use any such device during class time, you will be asked to leave and be counted as absent. Students should take notes using pen/pencil and paper.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity: As students at USC, you are bound by the University of South Carolina Honor Code. All work produced for RELG 110 must be your own. The professor does not tolerate cheating or plagiarism under any circumstances. **By enrolling in the course and accepting the terms of this syllabus, you indicate your acceptances of this policy.** Instances of cheating will immediately result in a zero for the assignment, and the professor reserves the right to pursue more drastic action with the Office of Academic Integrity and the University administration.

Class Schedule and Assigned Readings

Week 1—*The Academic Study of Religion*

- *Introductory Class: Religion, Culture, and the Making of Meaning; East and West, Of What Do We Speak?*
- *The Academic Study of Religion: J. Z. Smith 1998, pp. 269-284; Olson 2011, pp. 1-17*

Week 2—*The Hindu Tradition*

From Ritual to Metaphysics

- *Vedic Culture: Oxtoby and Amore, pp. 30-39; Oxtoby, 2002 p. 25; Heehs 2002, pp. 39-55 (Film: *Altar of Fire*)*
- *The Self in Question: Oxtoby and Amore, pp. 39-55; Olivelle 1996, pp. 148-157*

Week 3—*The Hindu Tradition (cont.)*

Many Gods, Many Traditions

- *Action and Society: Olivelle 2005, pp. 94-107; Stoler Miller 1986, pp. 29-61*
- *Classical and Local Hinduisms: Oxtoby and Amore pp. 55-69 and pp. 72-99; QUIZ #1 (Film: *Forest of Bliss*)*

Week 4—*The Jain Tradition*

Ethics and Non-violence

- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 146-160; *Sources of Indian Tradition (I)*, pp. 58-75
- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 160-175; *Sources of Indian Tradition (I)*, pp. 76-89

Week 5—*The Jain Tradition (cont.)*

Attachment, Death, and Renunciation

- Dalrymple 2009, pp. 1-28; Mehta 2006, pp. 535-575
- Tobias 1991, pp. 5-23; QUIZ #2 (Film: *Ahimsa: Non-violence*)

Week 6—*The Buddhist Tradition*

The Story of Awakening

- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 178-193; Jayawickrama 2000, pp. 76-101
- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 193-224

Week 7—*The Buddhist Tradition (cont.)*

Psychological Coincidences

- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 224-248
- Obeyesekere 1985, pp. 134-152

Week 8—*The Buddhist Tradition (cont.)*

Buddhism and the Work of Culture

- Mitchell and Jacoby 2014, pp. 177-188 and pp. 211-221
- Dalrymple 2010, pp. 142-170; **QUIZ #3**

Week 9—*The Confucian Tradition*

Action and Personhood

- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 256-274
- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 274-289; *Sources of Chinese Tradition (I)*, pp. 41-63

Week 10—*The Confucian Tradition (cont.)*

Life as Ritual

- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 289-294; *The Great Learning*, Legge 1971 [1893], pp. 355-381
- Tu Wei-ming 1999, pp. 27-39; **QUIZ #4**

Week 11 —*The Daoist Tradition*

Leaving No Traces

- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 294-304; *Laozi*: Lau 1989, pp. 57-77
- *Zhuangzi*: *Sources of Chinese Tradition (I)*, pp. 95-96; Watson 1996 [1964], pp. 27-63

Week 12—*The Daoist Tradition (cont.)*

The Way and the World

- Oxtoby and Amore pp. 304-313; *Sources of Chinese Tradition (I)*, pp. 392-414
- Porter 1993, pp. 16-23 and 60-86; **QUIZ #5**

Week 13—*When West comes East and East comes West*

Karma Cola

- *Karma Cola*, pp. 3-41 (Film: *Kumaré*)
- *Karma Cola*, pp. 95-110, pp. 143-159, and pp. 182-193

Week 14—*When West comes East and East comes West (cont.)*

Beyond Religion?

- *Beyond Religion*, pp. ix-20 (Film: *Dhamma Brothers*)
- *Beyond Religion*, pp. 21-39

FINAL EXAM: TBD

Sources from which readings are excerpted for access on Blackboard:

- Sources of Indian Tradition*. Edited by Ainslie Thomas Embree, Stephen N Hay and William Theodore De Bary. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- Bstan-'dzin-rgya-mtsho. *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011.
- Legge, James. *Confucian Analects: The Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean*. New York: Dover Publications, 1971.
- Dalrymple, William. *Nine Lives: In Search of the Sacred in Modern India*. New York, 2010.
- Heehs, Peter. *Indian Religions: A Historical Reader of Spiritual Expression and Experience*. New York: New York University Press, 2002.
- Jayawickrama, N.A. *The Story of Gotama Buddha (Jātaka-nidāna)*. Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 2000.
- Lau, D. C. *Tao Te Ching*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1963.
- Olivelle, Patrick. *The Law Code of Manu*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Mehta, Suketu. *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. New York, 2004.
- Miller, Barbara Stoler. *The Bhagavad-gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*. New York: Bantam Books, 1986.
- Mitchell, Donald W. and Sarah Jacoby. *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*.
- Obeyesekere, Gananath. "Depression, Buddhism, and the Work of Culture in Sri Lanka." In *Culture and Depression, Studies in the Anthropology and Cross-cultural Psychiatry of Affect and Disorder*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985.
- Olivelle, Patrick. *Upaniṣads*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Olson, Carl. *Religious Studies: The Key Concepts*. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Porter, Bill, and Steven R. Johnson. *Road to Heaven: Encounters with Chinese Hermits*. San Francisco: Mercury House, 1993.
- Smith, Jonathan Z. "Religion, Religions, Religious." In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*. Edited by Mark C. Taylor. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Tobias, Michael. *Life Force: The World of Jainism*. Asian Humanities Press, 1991.
- Tu, Wei-ming. "Self-Cultivation As Education Embodying Humanity." *The Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy* (1999).
- Watson, Burton. *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1964.