INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIOUS STUDIES:
ASIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS

RELG 110
Professor DANIEL M. STUART

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Course Description

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 Objectives

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

- 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 two 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 midnight on every Wednesday.** 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**
- In-class Engagement — active engagement in the classroom forms an important part of the course. Meaningful contributions to class discussions and other in-class activities enhance everyone's learning experience. Consistent contributions can lift a student's final grade by as much as one full grade, e.g., from a B+ to an A. Students should feel free to discuss the quality of their class participation with the instructor at any point during the semester.

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?

Week 2—The Hindu Tradition
From Ritual to Metaphysics


Week 3—The Hindu Tradition (cont.)
Many Gods, Many Traditions

- *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: Aḥimsa: 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: *Kumare*)
- *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:


