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Rel 130E Introduction to Religion
Fall 2009

Religion has been a persistent element in human history. Even thoughtful, secular individuals often develop a way of thinking about the world that resembles religion, i.e., that provides a framework of ultimate meaning for their lives. In this course we will attempt to think systematically and comparatively about the function of religion in the lives of individuals and in society. We will begin by reading some material of a general theoretical nature that treats religion from the perspective of the roles that religious ideas, beliefs, rituals, practices and institutions play in human communities and in individual lives. We will then go on to examine a number of specific religious traditions, at certain critical moments in their histories, from this standpoint. These traditions include Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Christianity and Islam. Special attention will be given to the critical reading, in English translation, of religious classics from these traditions. A number of videos that aim to introduce these religious traditions in their social contexts will also be viewed during the semester.

Requirements for the course include: (1) preparation of assigned materials before class, attendance at each class session, and participation in class discussions; (2) completion of a number of two-page essays on aspects of the religions we will study; and (3) two in-class examinations during the term and a final examination. No late essays will be accepted, except in the case of documented emergencies. The essays should be typed. Class attendance, participation and the essays will count for 25% of the course grade. The three examinations will also each count for 25% of the grade. Students should be familiar with the "Academic Integrity" section of the *Student Handbook* (see the discussion of this topic at www.depauw.edu/univ/handbooks; go to "academic handbooks" and then to "academic policies"). Writing manuals that you may find useful in this class and other classes at DePauw include Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual*, Fourth Edition (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004) and Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

This course can be used as a general elective and to fulfill a Group 4 distribution requirement. It can also be applied toward the East Asian Studies and the Religious Studies majors.

BASIC TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS:

The following titles represent the major readings that we will be doing in the course. The books listed in bold print can be purchased at the University Bookstore. The texts marked with an asterisk (*) as well as other readings marked with an asterisk in the course outline can be found in the course packet. There will also be important materials distributed in class, and I will often set the contexts for our discussions in e-mail messages to you.

*Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969) (pb)

*Selected Upanishads from R. C. Zaehner, trans., *Hindu Scriptures* (London and Melbourne: Dent, 1966)

Barbara Stoller Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad Gita* (New York: Bantam Books, 1986) (pb)

* Selected chapters of *The Vimalakirti Sutra* from Robert Thurman, trans., *The Holy Teachings of Vimalakirti: A Mahayana Scripture* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976)

D. C. Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979) (pb)

D. C. Lau, trans., *Lao Tzu: Tao Te Ching* (New York: Penguin Books, 1963) (pb)

*A selection of the Ch'an or Zen teachings of the Chinese monk Lin-chi from Burton Watson, trans., *The Zen Teaching of Master Lin-chi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

Ian Reader, *Simple Guides: Shinto* (London: Kuperard, 2007) (pb)

*"The Gospel According to Mark" from Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The Oxford Annotated Bible* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1962)

*Selections from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, trans., *The Qur'an*, (Oxford University Press, 2004).

COURSE OUTLINE:

Each number in the following course outline represents a class session. Always bring the assigned reading material to class.

1. Course introduction. (8/26)
- 2-3. Self, society and religion. (8/28-8/31)

*Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, chapter one, "Religion and World Construction," pp 3-28, and chapter two, "Religion and Word Maintenance," pp. 29-51.

I. Religions of India.

A. Early Indian religion and the formation of early Hinduism or Brahmanism.

4. Two strains of early Indian religion: the Indus River Civilization and early Hinduism (Brahmanism). (9/2)

*Ainslie Embree, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Second Edition, Vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), pp. 3-28.
Review Berger on "ritual," pp. 40-41.

5-6. The Upanishads. (9/4-9/7)

*Embree, ed., *Sources of Indian Tradition*, pp. 29-39.

*Selected Upanishads excerpted from R.C. Zaehner, trans., *Hindu Scriptures* (London and Melbourne: Dent, 1966), pp. 165-167 (Isha), pp. 185-192 (Mundaka), and pp. 203-217 (Svetasvatara).

B. Aspects of classical Hinduism: Duty and devotionism.

7-8. The *Bhagavad Gita*: Caste duty and devotion to Krishna. (9/9-9/11)

Miller, trans., *The Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 1-13 (Introduction), pp. 23-113.

9. Video discussion: "Hinduism: 330 Million Gods" (9/14)

C. Buddhism.

10. The historical setting and life of the Buddha. (9/16)

*Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction*, Third edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 19-29.

11. Early Buddhism (Theravada, Southern or Hinayana Buddhism). (9/18)

*Robinson and Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion*, pp. 40-49, 56-63.

12. Video discussion: "Buddhism: In the Footprint of the Buddha." (9/21)

13-14. Mahayana Buddhism. (9/23-9/25)

*Robinson and Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion*, pp. 86-109.

*Robert Thurman, trans. *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti: A Mahayana Scripture* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press,

1976), pp. 1-6 (“The Message of Vimalakirti” by the translator) and pp. 24-33 and 56-63 (chapters 3 and 7).

15. Review. (9/15)

16. First examination. (9/30)

[No class Friday, Oct. 2]

II. Chinese religions.

A. Early Chinese religions.

17-19. From the ritual religion of ancient China to the founders of Confucianism. (10/5-10/9)

Lau, trans., *Confucius: The Analects*, pp. 9-22 (from the “Introduction”) and pp. 59-111 (translation).

20-21. Taoism. (10/12-10/14)

Lau, trans. *Lao Tzu: The Tao Te Ching*, pp. vii-xiv (the first few pages of the “Introduction”) and pp. 3-88 (translation).

Video: “Heart of the Dragon Series: Understanding”

B. Chinese Buddhism.

22. The introduction of Buddhism. (10/16)

*Robinson and Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion*, pp. 145-150.

23-24. Two popular Chinese Buddhist schools: Pure Land and Ch’an (Zen). (10/26-10/28)

* Robinson and Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion*, pp. 150-161.

*Burton Watson, trans., *The Zen Teaching of Master Lin-chi*, pp. 9-33.

25. Review. (10/30)

26. Second examination. (11/2)

III. Japanese religions.

27. Japanese religions: An overview. (11/4)

Paul B. Watt, "Japanese Religion"
<http://spice.stanford.edu/docs/127>

A. Shinto.

28. Early Japanese society and the formation of Shinto. (11/6)

Reader, *Shinto*, pp. 28-39. (optional: pp. 16-26)

29-30. The mythology of the *Kojiki*, and the *kami* (spirits). (11/9-11/11)

+Paul B. Watt, a short adaptation of the mythology of the *Kojiki*
Reader, *Shinto*, pp. 40-63.

31. Shinto shrines and *matsuri* (communal religious festivals). (11/13)

Reader, *Shinto*, pp. 78-93.

B. The introduction and spread of Buddhism and Confucianism.

32. Buddhism and Confucianism in the thought of Prince Shōtoku, and the spread of Buddhism thereafter. (11/16)

*William Theodore de Bary, ed., *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan* (New York: Vintage, 1969), pp. 255-265.
[Review Watt, "Japanese Religions"]

C. The Japanese tradition of blending Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism.

33-34. The 17th and 18th century movement known as "The Learning of the Heart." (11/18-11/20)

*Paul B. Watt, "The Buddhist Element in Shingaku," in *Buddhist Spirituality: Later China, Korea, Japan and the Modern World* (Herder and Herder, 1999), pp. 337-347.

*Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* (Free Press, 1985), pp. 133-147 ("Shingaku and Its Founder Ishida Baigan").

IV. Self, society and monotheistic traditions.

35-36. From the religion of Israel to early Christianity. (11/23 and 11/30)

[Thanksgiving break, Nov.25-29]

Review Berger, especially pp. 29-36 (top).

* "Scripture and Tradition in Christianity" in Corrigan, *Jews, Christians and Muslims*, pp. 26-39.

* "The Gospel According to Mark," *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, pp. 1213-1238.

37-38. Islam. (12/2-12/4)

* "Monotheism in Islam" in Corrigan, *Jews, Christians and Muslims*, pp. 134-151.

* Selection from *The Qur'an*, trans. by M.A.S. Abdel Haleem (Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. ix-xix and 396-429.

Video: "The Secret Mecca"

39-40. Review and reflection. (12/7 and 12/11)

[No class on Dec. 9]

Final examination: Tuesday, December 15, 8:30-11:30 a.m.