

FYS: Asian Religions

Religious Studies 130EA
DePauw University - Fall 2008
2:50 -3:50 MWF – JSC 161

Instructor: Jason Fuller
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Office Hours: MWF 4-6 or by appointment

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the religions of Asia and to their academic study. In this course we will survey some of the core teachings, practices and institutions of Hinduism, Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, Shinto, Japanese Popular Religions, Taoism, Confucianism and Islam. Our twin goals will be to secure a basic understanding of the worlds of meaning that are created-, expressed-, and sustained by these religions and to learn how to reflect critically upon the function of religion in the lives of individuals and communities. We will begin the semester by reading selections from a classic theoretical text in the academic study of religion, Peter Berger's *The Sacred Canopy*. Berger will help us to orient ourselves toward a critical and analytical approach to religious phenomena cross-culturally. We will proceed by introducing ourselves to a number of religious traditions through primary and secondary literature as well as audiovisual material – the latter to get a sense of the ritual and material dimensions of religious expression globally. Most important will be the close reading and discussion of representative primary texts in English translation for each of the traditions under consideration. Over the course of the semester we will be introduced to a variety of methodological issues in the academic study of religion and we will address them as they arise naturally from our discussions of the material under consideration. By the end of the course students will have developed a *vocabulary* for understanding religious phenomena cross-culturally and with an inter-disciplinary focus.

Requirements

Class-time will be devoted almost exclusively to engaged discussion. Students will be expected to familiarize themselves with all material covered in the assigned readings. For students to participate meaningfully in discussions, reading assignments must be read before class. Student discussion facilitators will be assigned to lead discussion groups for particular classes.

The bulk of the grade (60%) will be distributed evenly over three exams. The final will be synthetic and cumulative but only in the sense that you will be expected to remember the BIG concepts from earlier portions of the course. I will identify these concepts and terms for you throughout the semester and you will be provided with a study sheet before each exam. The exams will always consist of one or two short essay questions and some mix of the following: short identification, fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, and/or matching.

Class participation will account for 20% of the final grade. Participation includes attendance and active participation in all discussions, providing quality feedback to the ideas of others and the demonstration

of adequate listening skills. Informal discussion will be evaluated based upon the ability to demonstrate good listening skills as well as active, keen and insightful contributions to conversation.

In order to facilitate discussions and to make sure that everybody is doing the reading and pulling their weight in the discussion groups I will give five quizzes over the course of the semester. Your best four quizzes will be counted. We will drop your lowest score. Each of the four quizzes will account for 2.5% of the final grade.

10% of the final grade will be based upon several short written assignments (2-3 pages each) to be completed outside of class.

Grading Considerations:

Class Participation:

'C' range: The student meets the basic requirements of participation. This student is usually prepared and participates once in a while but not regularly. This student's contributions relate to the texts and the lectures and offer a few insightful ideas, but do not facilitate a discussion. Failure to fulfill satisfactorily any of these criteria will result in a grade *below* a 'C'.

'B' range: This student participates consistently in discussion. This student comes to class well prepared and contributes quite regularly by sharing thoughts and questions that show insight and a familiarity with the material. This student refers to the materials discussed in lecture and shows interest in other students' contributions.

'A' range: This student is fully engaged and highly motivated. This student is well prepared, having read the assigned texts, and has thought carefully about the texts' relation to issues raised in class. This student's ideas and questions are substantive (either constructive or critical); they stimulate class discussions. This student listens and responds to the contributions of other students.

Grade distribution: Exam I: 20%; Exam II: 20%; Final Exam: 20%; Quizzes: 10%; Participation: 20%; Papers: 10%

Academic Integrity Policy

It goes without saying that students will be expected to live up to the highest standards of academic integrity in this course. Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please re-read the section on academic integrity in your *Student Handbook* or come and see me if you have any questions in this regard.

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).

Required Books:

Huston Smith, *The World's Religions* (Harper San Fran, 1991)
Prabhavananda and Manchester (trans), *Upanishads* (Signet, 2002)
Barbara Stoler-Miller (trans), *Bhagavad Gita* (Bantam, 1986)
Gil Fronsedale, *Dhammapada* (Shambhala, 2006)
Dalai Lama, *Essence of the Heart Sutra* (Wisdom, 2005)
Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind Beginner's Mind* (Weatherhill, 1973)
Thomas Cleary, *Code of the Samurai* (Tuttle, 1999)
Arthur Waley (trans), *The Analects of Confucius* (Vintage, 1989)
Gia Fu Feng and Jane English (trans), *Tao Te Ching* (Vintage, 1997)
N. J. Dawood (trans), *Koran* (Penguin, 2000)
John Moyne and Coleman Barks (trans), *Unseen Rain: Quatrains of Rumi* (Shambhala, 2001)

The books for this course may be purchased at Fine Print Books on Washington Street.

Semester Schedule:

Week 1

August 27: **Introductory Remarks: What is Religious Studies?**

Reading: None (first day of class)

August 29: **Why Study the World's Religions?**

Reading: Smith, pp. 1-11

Week 2

RELIGION AND COSMIZATION

September 1: **Religion and World Construction**

Reading: Berger, pp. 3-28

September 3: **Religion and World Maintenance**

Reading: Berger, pp. 29-51

September 5: **The Historical Milieu of 'The World's Oldest Religion' – Vedic Hinduism**

Reading: Vedic Hinduism Handout

Week 3

THE ORIGINS OF HINDU SOTERIOLOGY

September 8: **Human Desire and Paths to Liberation in Ancient India**

Reading: Smith, pp. 12-50

September 10: **The Nature of Self (Atman) and the Absolute (Brahman)**

Reading: *Upanishads*, pp. 13-41

September 12: **The Way of the Sannyasi: Meditation, Renunciation and Purification**

Reading: *Upanishads*, pp. 63-112

Week 4

DEVOTIONAL HINDUISM (Dualism/*dvaitavada*)

September 15: **Hindu Stages and Stations of Life**

Readings: Smith, 50-75; *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 1-18 and 147-154

September 17: **Karma, Discipline, Action and Knowledge**

Reading: *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 21-90

September 19: **Hindu Theism and the Idea of 'God'**

Reading: *Bhagavad Gita*, pp. 91-146

Week 5

THERAVADA BUDDHISM

September 22: **The Historical Buddha and the Four Noble Truths**

Reading: Smith, pp. 82-119

September 24: **The Path of the Elders**

Reading: *Dhammapada*, pp. xix-xxx and 1-52

September 26: **Sayings of the Buddha**

Reading: *Dhammapada*, pp. 53-107

Week 6

MAHAYANA BUDDHISM – I

September 29: **The Spread of Buddhism and the Rise of the Mahayana**

Reading: Smith, pp. 119-128 and 139-153

October 1: **Mahayana and Vajrayana Contexts through the Eyes of the Dalai Llama**

Reading: *Heart Sutra*, pp. 3-58

October 3: **Nirvana, Sunyata and the Proliferation of Buddhas**

Reading: *Heart Sutra*, pp. 59-138

Week 7

MAHAYANA BUDDHISM - II

October 6: **The Way of the Bodhisattva**

Reading: *Heart Sutra*, pp. 139-164

October 8: **Review and Synthesis Day for Hinduism, Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism**

October 10: **EXAM I**

Week 8

TAOISM

October 13: **The Idea of the Tao – Philosophical and Religious Context of an Ancient Religion**

Readings: Smith, pp. 196-219

October 15: **Lao Tzu and the Mysticism of the Tao Te Ching**

Readings: Poems/Chapters 1-40

October 17: **Politics, Compassion and Knowledge in Taoism**

Readings: Poems/Chapters 41-81

Week 9

October 20, 22, 24: **(NO CLASS - FALL BREAK)**

Week 10

CONFUCIUS and CONFUCIANISM

October 27: **Confucius and the Warring States Period**

Reading: Smith, pp. 154-194

October 29: **The Confucian Worldview (Philosophical, Practical and Religious)**

Reading: *Analects*, pp. 13-69

October 31: **The Analects**

Reading: *Analects*, pp. 102-122 (books 4-6) and 153-161 (book 11) and 171-179 (book 13) and 202-217 (books 16 and 17)

Week 11

ZEN BUDDHISM

November 3: **No Class** (Instructor at American Academy of Religion Conference – Chicago)

November 5: **Zen/Ch'an and East Asian Mahayana Buddhism**

Reading: *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, pp. 1-84

November 7: **Meditation and Liberation from the Zen Buddhist Point of View**

Reading: *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, pp. 85-170

Week 12

JAPANESE RELIGIONS

November 10: **The Way of the Kami**

Reading: Article from Encyclopedia of Religion on "Shinto," pp. 280-293

November 12: **Popular Japanese Religiosity**

Reading: Encyclopedia of Religion, "Japanese Religion," pp. 537-545

November 14: **Bushido**

Reading: *Code of the Samurai*, pp. 3-53

Week 13

November 17: **Bushido II**

Reading: *Code of the Samurai*, pp. 54-98

November 19: **Review and Synthesis of Taoism, Confucianism, Zen Buddhism and Japanese Popular Religion**

November 21 **Exam II**

Week 14

November (24, 26 and 28: **NO CLASS – SBL CONFERENCE and THANKSGIVING BREAK**)

Week 15

ISLAM: "ORTHODOX" and "MYSTICAL"

December 1: **The Life and Times of Muhammad**

Reading: Smith, pp. 221-268

December 3: The Life and Times of Muhammad II

Reading: Film Viewing of *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*

December 5: The Life and Times of Muhammad III

Reading: Film Viewing of *Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet*

Week 16

December 8: Five-Pillars Islam and the “Orthodox” Tradition

Reading: *Koran*, Suras 1,4,8,9,14,15,17,18,21,22, 23, 24, 28, 32

December 10: Islam in South Asia

Reading: *Koran*, Suras 35, 42, 45, 47,59,63,64,65,72,75,94,109,110, 111, 112, 113, 114

December 12: Mystical Islam

Reading: *Unseen Rain: Quatrains of Rumi*, Translated by Coleman Barks, pp. 1-83

Week 17

Take Home Final Due December 17th at Noon!

Slide Final Essays Under Door of Emison 205.