

840:211 RELIGIONS OF THE EASTERN WORLD

Spring 2010

Time and Place

Common Lecture, Thursday, 9:50-11:10am, SC 135, CAC

Sec. 1 Monday, 1:10-2:30 p.m., HH-B5, CAC (Myladil)

Sec. 2 Monday, 2:50-4:10 p.m. HH-B2, CAC (Myladil)

Sec. 3 Thursday, 2:15-3:35 pm, Davison 122, D/C (Selover)

Instructors

Dr. Thomas Myladil

Dr. Thomas Selover

Course Description

This course examines three major areas of Asian religious traditions: East Asian, South Asian, and the Buddhist traditions. Since it is not possible to offer a comprehensive overview of all important traditions in these areas, concentration will be on those traditions with continuing significant spiritual, philosophical, sociological, political, aesthetic and literary influence. More specifically, it is an introduction to some of the major Asian religious traditions, such as Confucianism, Daoism (Taoism), Hinduism, Buddhism, and Shinto. We are interested in discovering how the sacred is depicted in their scriptures, and in comparing the diverse ways and methods through which humankind can achieve self-transformation. No religion ever exists in a vacuum or stays the same. Different historical, social, and cultural forces played a role in the rise and development of different religions, which then influenced these forces in return. In tracing this dialectical relationship, we want to pay equal attention to the philosophical and theological foundations of the religious traditions as well as their social functions and manifestations.

Required Texts

A. *The Bhagavad Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War*, translated by Barbara Stoler Miller. Bantam.

B. *What the Buddha Taught*, by Walpola Rahula, Grove Press.

C. *Mencius*, translated by D. C. Lau. Penguin.

D. *Tao Te Ching*, by Lao Tzu, translated by D. C. Lau. Penguin.

E. *Shinto: The Way Home*, by Thomas Kasulis. Hawaii.

Course Requirements

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| 1. Two Exams | 70% |
| 2. One Book Report | 20% |
| 3. Class Attendance and Participation | 10% |
1. There will be two in-class exams, covering Indian and Chinese traditions respectively (70% of the final grade with 35% each). These exams are not cumulative.
 2. There will be one book report on the last textbook, *Shinto: The Way Home* (20 points). Basically, you should follow this structure: identify the central thesis and discuss how the author presents it by summarizing the author's argument in every chapter. Please do not

write it as an opinion paper. Summary of the book is the most important part of the book report. You must either use MS Word or convert your document to the pdf format if you use some other software before submitting it sakai.rutgers.edu by May 5th, 2009.

3. **Class Attendance and Participation (10% of the final grade):** You are expected to attend every class meeting. Every session missed, without proper explanation provided through the dean's office, will result in 1 point reduction of your final grade. You will be held responsible for materials covered in lectures, much of which goes beyond required readings. The lectures and discussions will also provide the necessary background and transitions between the various religious traditions. Your participation in class discussions will show how well you have understood the readings and where clarification is necessary. It is therefore essential to keep up with the reading assignments.

Policies

* **NO** make-up for missed exams will be given, unless a letter verifying an emergency is provided through the dean's office. Any permissible make-up must be arranged with the individual instructor of your section.

* The class strictly follows the university policy on academic integrity. It is available at <http://TeachX.rutgers.edu/integrity/index.html>

Grading System

A=100-90, B+=89-87, B=86-80, C+=79-77, C=76-70, D=69-65, F=64 and below.

Incompletes, i.e., "T" grades, will not be given under normal circumstances.

Topics of the Weekly Lectures and Reading Assignments

1. 1/21 *Gita* 1st – 6th Teachings (Myladil)
2. 1/28 *Gita* 7th – 12th Teachings (Myladil)
3. 2/4 *Gita* 13th – 18th Teachings (Myladil)
4. 2/11 *Buddha* Chapters I&II (Myladil)
5. 2/18 *Buddha* Chapters III&IV (Myladil)
6. 2/25 *Buddha* Chapters V&VI (Myladil)

1st Exam during the recitation session of the 7th week

7. 3/4 *Mencius*. Book I A&B (Selover)
8. 3/11 *Mencius*. Book II A&B (Selover)
9. 3/25 *Mencius*. Book VI A (Selover)
10. 4/1 *Tao Te Ching* I-XXX (Selover)
11. 4/8 *Tao Te Ching* XXXI-LX (Selover)
12. 4/15 *Tao Te Ching* LXI-LXXXI (Selover)

2nd Exam during the recitation session of the 13th week

13. 4/22 *Shinto* Chapters 1-3 (guest lecture by Hiroshi Obayashi)
14. 4/29 *Shinto* Chapters 4-6 (Selover)

Book report is due on May 5th, 2009 at sakai.rutgers.edu.