

840:211 RELIGIONS OF THE EASTERN WORLD

Spring 2012

Time and Place

Common Lecture, Wednesday, 9:50-11:10am, VD-211, CAC

Section 01 Monday, 1:10-2:30pm, HH-B5, CAC

Section 02 Monday, 2:50-4:10pm, HH-B2, CAC

Section 03 Thursday, 2:15-3:35pm, CDL-110, DC

Section 04 Monday, 12:35-1:55pm, HCK-119, D/C

Instructors

Dr. Thomas Myladil (Sections 01&02)

Dr. Thomas Selover (Section 03)

Dr. Jessica Vantine Birkenholtz (Section 04)

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.

F. Readings for Jainism, Sikhism, and Tibetan Buddhism posted on Sakai.

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: Exam 1=40%; Exam 2=30%). 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 2nd, 2012.
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. 1/18 *The Bhagavad-Gita* 1st – 6th Teachings (Myladil)
2. 1/25 *The Bhagavad-Gita* 7th – 12th Teachings (Myladil)
3. 2/1 *The Bhagavad-Gita* 13th – 18th Teachings (Myladil)
4. 2/8 Jainism and Sikhism, *Reading* on Sakai (Myladil)
5. 2/15 *What the Buddha Taught*, Chapters I&II (Birkenholtz)
6. 2/22 *What the Buddha Taught*, Chapters III&IV (Birkenholtz)
7. 2/29 *What the Buddha Taught*, Chapters V&VI (Birkenholtz)
8. 3/7 Tibetan Buddhism, *Reading* on Sakai (Birkenholtz)

1st Exam is held during the recitation session after the classes on Buddhism.

9. 3/21 *Mencius*, Book I A&B (Selover)
10. 3/28 *Mencius*, Book II A&B (Selover)
11. 4/4 *Mencius*, Book VIA (Selover)
12. 4/11 *Tao Te Ching*, 1-XXXVII (Selover)
13. 4/18 *Tao Te Ching*, XXXVIII-LXXXI (Selover)

2nd Exam is held during the recitation session after the classes on *Tao Te Ching*.

14. 4/25 *Shinto: The Way Home*, entire book (Myladil)

Book report is due on May 2nd, 2012 at sakai.rutgers.edu.