

Religion 212 - 003
RELIGIONS OF THE ORIENT

Prof. Cuong Tu Nguyen

Office: Robinson B451

Office Phone: (703) 599-1749

Email: ctnguyen1@cox.net

Office Hours: MR 3:00 p.m - 4:00 p.m. or by appointment

Summer 2008

R A208

MTWR 12:00 – 2:15 p.m.

A survey of the major religious traditions of India, China, and Japan that include Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism, followed by a consideration of the varieties of religious practice and belief which developed from these and other traditions. The main thrust of the course is the study of the fundamental cosmological assumptions and philosophical significance of the major religious traditions of Asia. Emphasis will be on the way of thinking, understanding of the world, human nature, and society which have been developed through these traditions and their functions in shaping the cultures and societies of Asia.

Texts:

Willard G. Oxtoby, *World's Religions: Eastern Traditions*

Recommended Readings:

The Bhagavad Gita (any translation)

The Tao Te Ching (any translation)

The Dhammapada (any translation)

Requirements:

1. This is a lecture and discussion course. You should read all reading assignments carefully before coming to class in order to understand the lectures and to participate in class discussion. Occasionally, short videos on certain aspects of these religions will be shown in class.
2. A mid-term examination that consists of several brief identifications and two essay questions (40%).
3. A short reflection on the meaning of religion drawing on the last chapter of Oxtoby's book. Reflection (4 -6 pages) must be typewritten, double spaced (20%).
4. A final examination, similar in format and method of administration to the mid-term but proportionally longer (40%).

"... religious membership, which is practically never the result of a well-reflected choice and yet is one of the fields in which fanaticism and intolerance are found in the most stupid, inhuman, and violent forms."

Alain Daniélou, *Virtue, Success, Pleasure & Liberation: The Four Aims of Life in the Tradition of Ancient India.*

CLASS SCHEDULE:

May 19 - 20

Introduction to the course. Defining and understanding Asian religions in the context of world religions and from the perspective of the study of religion.

History and sources of Hinduism, Vedic Religion, The Upanishads.

Oxtoby, 1-32

May 21 - 22

Classical Hinduism, Developments of Hinduism, Reform and Revival.

Oxtoby, 32-71.

May 27 - 29

Hindu Rituals, Hindu Experience Today.
Oxtoby, 71-125.

June 2 - 3

The Sikh Tradition.
Oxtoby, 127-159.
The Jain Tradition.
Oxtoby, 161-197.

Midterm: June 4

June 5 - 9

The Buddhist Traditions: The Buddha and His Teachings, Theravada Buddhism
Oxtoby, 199-243.

June 10 - 11

Mahayana Buddhism, Buddhism in the Modern World
Oxtoby, 243-315.

June 12

East Asian Religions
Oxtoby, 317-352.

June 16

Confucianism
Oxtoby, 352-382.

June 17 - 18

Daoism/Taoism;
Oxtoby, 382-429;
The Nature of Religion
Oxtoby, 431-469.

Paper due: June 18

Final Exam: June 20