

Religion 212 - 001
RELIGIONS OF THE ORIENT

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Office Hours: TR 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. or by appointment

Spring 2008
STII 7
TR 10:30 – 11:45 a.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) An independent project chosen in consultation with the instructor. This may consist of a critical book review, a brief research-paper on a particular aspect of one of these religious traditions, or a report on some contemporary manifestation of these religious traditions. Paper (10 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:

Week 1 (Jan. 22- 24)

Introduction to the course. Defining and understanding Asian religions in the context of world religions and from the perspective of the study of religion.
Oxtoby, 1-11.

Week 2 (Jan. 29 – 31)

History and sources of Hinduism, Vedic Religion, The Upanishads.
Oxtoby, 13-32.

Week 3 (Feb. 5 - 7)

Classical Hinduism, Developments of Hinduism, Reform and Revival.
Oxtoby, 32-71.

Week 4 (Feb. 12 - 14)

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

Week 5 (Feb. 19 - 21)

The Sikh Tradition.
Oxtoby, 127-159.

Week 6 (Feb. 26 – 28)

The Jain Tradition.
Oxtoby, 161-197.

Week 7 (Mar. 4 - 6)

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

Midterm Examination March 5

Week 8 (Mar. 11 - 13)

Spring Break, March 10 - 16

Week 9 (Mar. 18 - 20)

The Buddhist Traditions: The Buddha and His Teachings (cont'd)
Oxtoby, 213-243. Theravada Buddhism

Week 10 (Mar. 26 - 27)

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

Week 11 (April 1 - 3)

East Asian Religions
Oxtoby, 317-352.

Week 12 (April 8 - 10)

Confucianism
Oxtoby, 352-382.

Week 13 (April 15 - 17)

Confucianism
Oxtoby, 352-382.

Week 14 (April 22 – 24)

Daoism/Taoism;
Oxtoby, 382-429.
Daoism; Extra readings distributed in class

Term paper due April 24

Week 15 (April 29 - May 1)

The Nature of Religion
Oxtoby, 431-469.

Final Exam: Wed. May 8, 10:30 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.