

Spring 2013
Discipline: Religious Studies
RELB 1559-102: Religions of Asia
Lower Division
Faculty Name: Joseph Laycock

Class Time: A 1540-1655
Room: 2

Pre-Requisites: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will examine religious traditions originating in India, China, and Japan with a focus on specific regional contexts. It is often imagined that religious traditions take the same form over the world. In reality, religions are practiced on a local level where they are shaped by the politics, history, and folkways of the region. Through this regional approach, we will examine the way the texts, practices, and values of these traditions both change and are changed by the cultures they inhabit.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1. Demonstrate familiarity with the core beliefs, practices, figures, and texts of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism, and Shinto as well as indigenous and folk beliefs.**
- 2. Demonstrate an understanding of how these traditions blend with each other and with indigenous beliefs and practices in local Asian contexts.**
- 3. Demonstrate familiarity with the issues of authenticity, gender, and conflict as they relate to Asian religions.**

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

AUTHOR: Robert E. Van Voorst
TITLE: Anthology of World Scriptures
PUBLISHER: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning
ISBN #: 0495808792

AUTHOR: Thich Nhat Hanh
TITLE: Peace is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness
PUBLISHER: Bantam Books
ISBN #: 0533351397

AUTHOR: Octavio Paz
TITLE: In Light of India:
PUBLISHER: Harcourt Brace
ISBN #: 9780151002221

AUTHOR: Jane Iwamura
TITLE: Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religion and American Popular Culture
PUBLISHER: Oxford University Press
ISBN #: 9780199738618

AUTHOR: Diana Eck
TITLE: Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India
PUBLISHER: Columbia University Press
ISBN #: 9788120832664

All other readings will be made available electronically via the ship's intranet.

LIBRARY RESERVE LIST

AUTHOR: How to be a perfect stranger: the essential religious etiquette handbook
TITLE: Stuart M. Matlins and Arthur J. Magida
PUBLISHER: Skylight Paths Publishing,
ISBN #: 9781594732942
DATE/EDITION: 2010

METHODS OF EVALUATION

Class participation	10%
Midterm Exam, March 13:	20%
Oriental Monk Assignment, March 22	5%
Field Assignment Journal, April 17:	20%
8-12 page Research Paper, April 11	25%
Final Exam, April 14:	20%

GRADING RUBRIC

A= Consistently outstanding achievement in the course
B= Work of good to very good quality, but not consistently outstanding
C= Acceptable level of competence and basic understanding of material
D= Minimally adequate; student may not be ready for further related coursework
F= unsatisfactory and unworthy of credit

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

I will take attendance every day. Attendance and class participation will be factors in the overall evaluation of your work. Students should attend class everyday having done the reading and prepared for a vigorous discussion of the material. Students are also

expected to maintain a respectful learning environment. This means avoiding self-centered behaviors, especially playing with electronic gadgets.

HONOR CODE

Semester at Sea students enroll in an academic program administered by the University of Virginia, and thus bind themselves to the University's honor code. The code prohibits all acts of lying, cheating, and stealing. Please consult the Voyager's Handbook for further explanation of what constitutes an honor offense.

Each written assignment for this course must be pledged by the student as follows: "On my honor as a student, I pledge that I have neither given nor received aid on this assignment." The pledge must be signed, or, in the case of an electronic file, signed "[signed]."

FIELD WORK & FIELD JOURNAL

In this course, we have the opportunity to see other religions in action. Often the way that real people in real places really practice their religion is very different the way religious traditions are described in religious studies books, which are usually written by Westerners and speak in universals rather than specifics. Students are required to visit three or more religious sites associated with Asian religions and keep a field journal of what you see. It is strongly advised that you finish your fieldwork before we leave the port of Cochin, India.

Each journal entry should be 2-3 pages in length. State where you went, the date of your visit, what port it was, and what religious tradition the site is associated with. You should make field notes either during or immediately after your visit. When you adapt your notes to a journal entry, try to describe everything that you saw and did. What were people doing? How were they dressed? Were there women? Children? Did you talk to anyone? You are also encouraged to be reflective of your experience. How did it make you feel? Were you excited? Nervous? Shocked? Finally, how did your experience of this tradition compare to the description in your textbook? What was similar and what was different? At the end of the course, journal entries will be evaluated based on 1) Apparent effort in doing field work, 2) effective writing, 3) your ability to apply appropriate terms and concepts from readings and lectures to your own observations of religious practices and places of worship or reverence.

Before visiting religious sites on your own, it is highly recommended that you consult *How to Be A Perfect Stranger* by Stuart Matlins and Arthur Magida, on reserve in the ship's library. Many religious sites will expect you to remove your shoes before entering. As a rule of thumb, do not wear shorts or any clothing that might be considered "sexy" or provocative when visiting a sacred site.

One of these sites must be the required Field Assignment in Yokohama (see below). For the other two, choose from a list of suggested sites in each port, which can be found at the end of this syllabus. Sites not listed in the syllabus must be approved in advance to receive credit.

FIELD LAB: YOKOHAMA, January 27.

This field lab will take us to the shrine district of Kamakura to observe a variety of Buddhist and Shinto shrines. Students will be able to see the inclusive nature of religious diversity in Japan. They will also be able to experience a form of multi-site pilgrimage in which Japanese pilgrims walk from shrine to shine, often visiting holy sites of multiple religious traditions. Students are required to submit a 2-3 page field journal entry on this trip, demonstrating their knowledge of these three traditions.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF COURSE

ORIENTATIONS

Class 1, JANUARY 11: Introduction

Class 2, JANUARY 13: Why do Hawaiians leave offerings for Pele?

Readings:

- Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," pp. 87-125.
 - Herb Kane, *Pele: Goddess of Hawaii's Volcanoes*, pp. 5-14.
- **Due in class**** One paragraph: Why do Hawaiians leave offerings for Pele?

Port: Hilo

Class 3, JANUARY 17: What is Hinduism?

Readings:

- Van Voorst, "Chapter 2: Hinduism"

Class 4, JANUARY 19: What is Buddhism?

Readings:

- Van Voorst, "Chapter 3: Buddhism"

Class 5, JANUARY 23: What are Confucianism and Taoism?

Readings:

- Van Voorst, "Chapter 6: Confucianism"
- Van Voorst, "Chapter 7: Taoism"

REGIONS

Class 6, JANUARY 25: Why do Japanese go on the Henro?

Readings:

- Van Voorst, "Chapter 8: Shinto"
- Oliver Statler, *Japanese Pilgrimage* [selections]

Port: Yokohama and Kobe

Class 7, FEBRUARY 1

What is the role of folklore in China?

Readings:

- Xinzhong Yao and Yanxia Zhao, “Setting the Context” in *Chinese Religion: A Contextual Approach*, pp. 1-23.
- “Yu Conquers the Flood” in Ke Yuan and Kim Echlin, *Dragons and Dynasties*.

Ports: Shanghai and Hong Kong

Class 8, FEBRUARY 9

Why do people become mediums?

Readings

- Karen Fjelstad and Nguyen Thi Hien, “Introduction” and Kristen W. Endres, “Spirit Performance and the Ritual Construction of Personal Identity in Modern Vietnam” in *Possessed by the Spirits: Mediumship in Contemporary Vietnamese Communities*.
- *Recommended*: “CaoDai Concepts”

Class 9, FEBRUARY 11

How can one person save the world?

Readings

- *Thich Nhat Hanh*, Peace is Every Step.

Port: Ho Chi Minh City

Class 10, FEBRUARY 19

How should governments deal with controversial religions?

Readings:

- Michael Hill, “The Rehabilitation and Regulation of Religion in Singapore,” in James T. Richardson (ed.) *Regulation Religion: Case Studies from Around the Globe*, pp. 343-359.

Ports Singapore

Class 11, FEBRUARY 23

What is the relationship between Burmese monks and their community?

Readings:

- Susie Poppick, “The Last of the Saffron Monks,” *First Things* (January 2011)
- *Recommended*: Evan Osnos, “The Burmese Spring; Letter from Rangoon,” *New Yorker* (August 6, 2012).

Port: Rangoon

Class 12, MARCH 3

How should we look at Hindu Temples?

Readings:

- Diana Eck, *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*

Class 13, MARCH 5 What can India teach us about ourselves?

- Octavio Paz, *In Light of India*: pp. 35-66, 101-118, and 135-185.

Ports: Cochin

TOPICS IN ASIAN RELIGION

Class 14, MARCH 13

What is “Orientalism?”

Class Screening: “Edward Said: On Orientalism”

Readings:

Jane Iwamura, *Virtual Orientalism*

Class 15, MARCH 16

****Midterm****

Port: Port Louis

Class 16, MARCH 19

Why do Americans love Mr. Miyagi?

Readings:

- Jane Iwamura, *Virtual Orientalism* (continued)

Class 17, MARCH 22

How do Japanese religions shape the roles of Japanese women?

Readings:

- Marilyn F. Nefsky, “Liberator or Pacifier: Women in Japan,” in *Religion and Gender*, Ursula King, ed., pp. 291-310.
- ****Oriental monk assignment due in class****

Port: Cape Town

Class 18, MARCH 24

Why is Guanyin so popular?

Readings:

- Huang et al. “Gender and Sexuality” in *Chinese Religious Life*, Palmer et al, eds., pp. 107-123

Class 19, APRIL 1

How does Hinduism shape the role of Indian women?

Readings:

- Katherine K. Young, “Hinduism,” in *Women in World Religions*, Arvind Sharma, ed., pp. 59-104.
- Meera Subramanian, “Rewriting Indian Legends,” *The Revealer* (December 31, 2012).

Class 20, APRIL 4

Are there violent Buddhists?

Readings:

- Christopher S. Queen, “The Peacewheel: Nonviolent Activism in the Buddhist Tradition” in *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Non-Violence in Religious Traditions*, Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, ed., pp. 35-48.

- Richard Gombrich, “Is the Sri Lankan War a Buddhist Fundamentalism?” in *Buddhism, Conflict, and Violence in Modern Sri Lanka*, Mahinda Deegalle, pp. 22-37.

Port: Acra

Class 21, APRIL 11 Why do people join “cults?”

Readings:

- “Armageddon in a Tokyo Subway,” in Mark Jurgensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, pp. 102-117.
- Evan Osnos, “What’s with the Chinese Mayan-Doomsday Cult?” *The New Yorker* (December 19, 2012).
- ****Research Papers Due in Class****

Class 22, APRIL14 Final Exam

Port: Casablanca

Class 23, APRIL17 Presentations of Student Work

****Field Research Journals Due in Class****

ASSIGNMENTS

Research Paper:

Students must produce a research paper on local problem related to a religion originating in India, China, or Japan. Our last two class sessions will be spent discussing student projects. Ideally ideas for paper topics should emerge from field experiences in ports. Possible topics might include the history of interactions between different religions in a particular city or country, a custom or rite practiced in a given region, or the relationship between a specific religious tradition and a broader political or social issue.

Students are encouraged to approach their topic from an interdisciplinary perspective. When planning your paper, imagine how your topic might be approached by an anthropologist, a political scientist, a historian, a theologian, or an art historian.

Your paper should demonstrate a detailed knowledge of at least one religious tradition as well as the broader themes considered in this course. Evaluation will also be based on the depth of your research and analysis as well as the persuasiveness of your writing.

APPROPRIATE FIELD PROGRAMS

HILO, HAWAII

1. Search for offerings to the goddess Pele near Rainbow Falls or the Naha Stone. These are often left wrapped in banana leaves.

YOKOHAMA

1. Visit Kamakura where a number of important Buddhist and Shinto shrine are located.

2. Visit the Shomyo Temple and the Kanazawa-Bunko Museum. Pay special attention to the gardens, which are designed after the mandalas of Pure Land Buddhism.

KOBE

1. Ikuta Jinja. This is believed to be one of the oldest Shinto shrines in Japan.

2. Nagata Jinja. This shrine is home to the kami Kotoshironush-no-Okami, who helps businesses to flourish.

3. The Hyogo Daibutsu (great Buddha). Located at the Nofuku temple, this is one of the largest Buddha's in Japan.

SHANGHAI

****The Chinese New Year will fall on February 10. See if you can spot any preparations underway.****

1. City God Temple. This temple was originally built to honor the local god, Jinshan. In the 1950s it was appropriated as a Taoist temple.
2. Wen Miao, the greatest Confucian temple in Shanghai.
3. She Shan (Holy Mother of China) Cathedral. In 1863 Jesuit missionaries purchased an abandoned Buddhist monastery to create this Cathedral. It is now one of the largest Christian churches in East Asia.
4. Jade Buddha Temple. A traditional Chinese Buddhist temple that draws on both Zen and Pure Land traditions.

HONG KONG

1. Wong Tai Sin Temple. This famous Taoist temple is known for its fortune telling. See if you can observe someone practicing fortune telling. This is done by burning incense and shaking a bamboo cylinder to receive a “fortune stick” that is interpreted by fortune-teller.
2. Man Mo Temple. This temple is sacred to both Buddhists and Taoists. Look for the statues of Guan Yu, the legendary general, and Wen-Chang, god of culture and literature.
3. Po Lin Monastery. This monastery contains many Buddhist relics and is also the location of the Tian Tan “Big Buddha” statue.

HO CHI MINH CITY

****February 10 is also the Vietnamese New Year, Tet. People will likely be returning to Ho Chi Minh City from visiting their families in the countryside. See if you can observe any lingering decorations or speak to Vietnamese about their holiday.****

1. Giac Vien Pagoda. This is one of the oldest Buddhist temples in the city. It is dedicated to Kwan-Yin, the bodhisattva of compassion.
2. Visit the town of Tay Ninh, approximately 90km northwest of Ho Chi Minh City and see Cao Dai temple. This is the “Holy See” of Cao Dai, a Vietnamese religion that combines Buddhism with Chinese and Western religions. The Cao

Dai religion also reveres Thomas Jefferson as a saint! Tay Ninh is also near the Cu Chi tunnels, a popular tourist site.

SINGAPORE

1. Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple. This temple was built by Bengali laborers to honor the goddess Kali. Note the elaborate South Indian style of architecture.
2. Central Sikh Temple. Pay close attention to the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, and how it is treated by worshippers.
3. Thekcheng Choling. One of the only chances to see Tibetan Buddhist temple on this voyage. Thekcheng Choling offers free consulting in traditional Chinese medicine. See if you can observe a consultation.

RANGOON (Yangon)

1. Shwedagon Pagoda. This is the biggest tourist attraction in the city. It's big, it's covered in gold, and Rudyard Kipling wrote about it. Locals claim the pagoda has stood for 2600 years although historians dispute this. When you visit try to look beyond the shiny exterior. This pagoda has four relics believed to have belonged to ancient Buddhas who lived before Siddhartha Gautama. The temple also has "planetary posts" where visitors can make offerings depending on their horoscope. Finally, the temple has become a site for political protest. There is a lot going on here. Be a good anthropologist and see what you can pick up.
2. Musmeah Yeshua Synagogue. This is the only synagogue in all of Myanmar. The synagogue was built at the end of the nineteenth century when British colonialism brought Jews from Baghdad and Cochi to Myanmar. Today there are only a handful of Jews living in Myanmar, but the synagogue represents an interesting moment in the history of global Judaism.
3. Kyai Hti Yo Pagoda (Golden Rock). This site is about 160km outside of Rangoon. It is an enormous, precariously balanced rock covered in gold. It is said that anyone who sees it will immediately convert to Buddhism. In December/January this the site of important Buddhist rituals. You can either hike 11km from the base camp or take a car to within a mile of the summit.
4. Kaba Aye Pagoda. This site is 11km north of Yangon. It features a large cave which is replica of the cave in India where the first Buddhist council was convened. This should be very different from the larger and busier pagodas of the city.

COCHIN

1. Emakulam Shiva Temple. This temple is dedicated to Shiva and according to legend, was built by the hero Arjuna. Surrounding the main temple are shrines Rama, Hanuman, and other deities. Try to observe the priests offering their daily puja offering. This temple also has an active schedule of “temple arts” including classical dance, theater, and musical concerts.

2. Chottanikkara Temple. This is a temple to Devi, the great goddess. The goddess is worshipped in three different forms at different times of the day. The temple maintains a daily schedule of pooja offerings, which begin at 4 am and end at 8:45pm. People suffering from mental illnesses are also brought to this temple for healing.

PORT LOUIS

1. Seek out several Chinese pagodas and Tamil Hindu temples in Port Louis.

CAPE TOWN

TEMA (ACCRA)

1. The Hindu Monastery of Africa. This temple was created by Sindhi refugees who fled to Ghana after the partition of India in 1947.

CASABLANCA