

**College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Fall 2023**

RELS 118: Modern History of Religions
Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia
Tues, Thurs 1:40-2:55; EDUCATION CENTER 219

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler
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Office: 4 Glebe St., Second Floor
Office Hours: W 1-4 or by appointment (in person or on Zoom)

How has religion influenced the political, social, and economic transformation of East Asia from the 16th century to the present? We begin with important background information about Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism and Shinto, and popular religion. Then we examine how all those religions, plus modern permutations such as Maoism-as-religion and New Religious Movements (“cults”) have developed over the last 500 years of Chinese and Japanese history. This class will demonstrate how Modern East Asia was shaped by religious forces. We will pay special attention to issues of religious, racial, and ethnic prejudice.

This course will fulfill the **General Education Student Learning Outcomes for History:**

--Students demonstrate knowledge of history and awareness of the historical experience.

--Students situate primary historical records in their context and use sources to construct historical arguments.

These Student Learning Outcomes will be assessed in a graded 1–2-page written assignment that will take place in class on Nov 21.

This course will also fulfill **the first two Student Learning Outcomes for the REI (Race, Equity, and Inclusion)-Global requirement:**

--1: Students will describe how “race” is socially constructed and intersects with multiple forms of oppression in global contexts.

--2: Students will identify and analyze how social hierarchies manifest in relation to legacies of colonialism, white supremacy or structural oppression in historical and/or current global contexts

The Student Learning Outcomes for the REI (Race, Equity, and Inclusion) requirement will be assessed in **two** graded 1-2-page written assignment, the first due on Aug 31 and the second due on either Oct 24 or Nov 2.

This course will also count towards **The Religious Studies Major or Minor.** *

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There are **two** required books:

-- Thomas **DuBois**, *Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia*, ISBN: 9781107400405

-- Gene Yuen **Yang**, *Boxers & Saints*, ISBN: 9781596439245

There are also a few handouts, and **sixteen** required readings on OAKS. Print these out! **Please always bring the relevant book or printout to class.**

Course Requirements:

- * Participation and attendance including in-class group work: **10%**
- * Regular, timely posting on the OAKS discussion board: **6%**
- * A 1-page REI essay, due Aug 31: **6%**
- * Four out of six “surprise” quizzes, which will be announced the class before. (The two lowest quizzes will be dropped.): **4 quizzes x 5% =20%**
- * A historical primary text assignment, handwritten in class on Nov 21: **10%**
- * A 2-page REI essay, due either Oct 24 or Nov 2: **10%**
- * A midterm exam on Oct 5: **18%**
- * A final exam on Dec 7: **20%**

We will review and discuss each assignment before it is due. There will also be various opportunities to gain bonus marks by attending relevant lectures or films and writing short papers about them.

Expect emails from me the night before most classes with reminders, pro tips, and a preview of questions and issues we will be discussing in the next day’s class. I love getting reply emails!

All work must be original, and all sources correctly cited. No use of **GAI*** is permitted. The university’s honor code will be strictly enforced. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook, available online.

Absence Policy

Missing classes without an explanation will affect your in-class participation score since you cannot participate if you are not present! Further, students who have 4 or more unexcused absences will receive an automatic 0% for In-Class Participation.

Missing a small number of classes in the name of sensible health precautions (e.g. cold/flu symptoms, or getting tested after a COVID exposure) will not incur any penalties to your participation grade, as long as you keep me informed and keep up with your work outside of class. If you anticipate missing multiple classes for any reason—athletic commitments, health conditions, family or work obligations, travel, etc.—please get in touch with me to discuss options for keeping up.

RELS 118 is a fully in-person course. In general, it will not be possible to join the class by Zoom. If safety policy changes for the College as a whole, or I test positive, this class may pivot to remote learning in the form of synchronous Zoom sessions for everyone.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 87-89; B: 83-86; B-: 80-82; C+: 77-79; C: 73-76; C-: 70-72; D+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 61-62 F: 60 or below.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

Tues 8/22: What is this class about?

Read: Map and Language Handouts

Thurs 8/24: How and why do we study religion as a part of history?

Read: studyreligion.org; DuBois 1-5; OAKS #1 (Legitimation)

Tues 8/29: How and why do we study religion in East Asia?

Read: DuBois 5-14, 237-238

Thurs 8/31: What is Confucianism?

Read: DuBois 15-23; 36-52 OAKS #2 (Chinese Texts, first 4 pages)

First REI paper due

Tues 9/5: What is Daoism?

Read: DuBois 23-30; OAKS #2 (last 7 pages); OAKS #3 (Palmer, first 4 pages)

Thurs 9/7: What is Buddhism?

Read: DuBois 30-36; OAKS #4 (Buddhist Texts); First REI Handout

Tues 9/12: Catch up and Discussion

Thurs 9/14: What Is Shinto?

Read: DuBois 53-61, 111-113; 238; OAKS #5 (J. Thomas); OAKS #6 (Kojiki)

Tues 9/19: How did Buddhism become Japanese?

Read: DuBois 61-71; OAKS #7 (Nichiren)

Thurs 9/21: How and Why Did Christians Come to Japan?

Read: DuBois 72-93; Start watching: *Silence* (2016, dir: Scorsese, 161 mins.)

Finish *Silence* on your own (available to rent for \$3.99)

Tues 9/26: Discuss *Silence*/ How Does Buddhism strengthen the Japanese State?

Read: DuBois 105-113

Thurs 9/28: What is Zen?

Read: DuBois 113-122; OAKS #8 ("Koans"); Midterm Study Guide handed out

Tues 10/3: Catch-up and Midterm Review

Thurs 10/5: **Midterm exam in Class**

Tues 10/10: What is Apocalypticism?

Read: DuBois 123-141

Thurs 10/12: How did religion and modernity intersect in China?

Read: DuBois 142-151; Yang (first half)

Tues 10/17: **Fall Break**

Thurs 10/19: What was the Boxer Rebellion?

Read: Yang (second half); Second REI Handout

Tues 10/24: How did Shinto become militarized and nationalized?

Read: DuBois 151-160, 179-193; OAKS #9 (Ideology)

Listen: [Jolyon Thomas podcast](#)

Second REI paper "Option A" due ("Option B" due 11/2)

Thurs 10/26: What is "Confucian fascism?"

Read: DuBois 161-179; Third REI Handout

Tues 10/31: How did religion and politics intertwine in Tibet?

Read: DuBois 99-105; OAKS #10 (Buddhist Background)

Start watching *Kundun* (1997, dir: Scorsese, 135 mins.)

Finish *Kundun* on your own (available to stream on YouTube)

Thurs 11/2: How is religion important to post-1959 Tibetan history?

Read: OAKS #11 (Angmo)

Second REI paper "Option B" due ("Option A" due 10/24)

Tues 11/7: How did Marxism and Maoism impact China?

Read: DuBois 194-215; OAKS #12 (Cult of Mao)

Thurs 11/9: What is Qigong?

Read: OAKS #3 (p. 5-end) OAKS #13 (Quiet Sitting)

Tues 11/14: Why does religion look like in Japan today?

Read: DuBois 215-223; OAKS #14 (Raging Lust)

Primary Text Assignment Study Guide handed out

Thurs 11/16: Special Guest— Dr. Jolyon Thomas

Re-read: OAKS #6 and #14; **re-listen:** podcast from 10/24

Thurs 11/16 4pm: **Public lecture by Dr. Thomas on Japanese Buddhism**

Tues 11/21: **In-class primary text assignment**

Thurs 11/23 **Thanksgiving Break**

Tues 11/28: How did Asian Religions Become Globalized?

Read: DuBois 224-230; OAKS #15 (Soyen Shaku)

Thurs 11/30: What is Future of Religion in East Asia?

Watch: Various videos; Read: OAKS #16 (Uighurs)

Final Exam Study Guide handed out

Thurs 12/7 1-3pm: **Final Exam**

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Note: Students with documented disabilities who have been approved to receive accommodation through SNAP should feel free to discuss this during office hours. For more information, contact Disability Services at 953-1431.

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The Center for Student Learning has writing labs and can arrange individual tutoring for this particular class. Drop by, go to <http://www.cofc.edu/~csl/> or call 953-5635.

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Technology policy

Let's face it: technology breaks. **An issue you may have with technology is no excuse for late work.** You need to protect yourself by managing your time and backing up your work. **Turn your cell phone on silent when you come into class. Do not text in class.** If you bring a laptop to class, use it for class. I reserve the right to ask anyone with a laptop or tablet to use it to lookup something to help our class discussion. I also might check your screen to make sure you are not checking your friend's Instagram, etc.

How To Write Excellent Posts on the Discussion Threads:

Discussion boards can be found on OAKS (Select the Communication Tab, then Discussions). After you have done the reading for the day, (and, in two cases, watched the film) you may respond to my prompt. Look and listen carefully for the instructions each time as they may differ, but I will always be asking you to post a thoughtful response/analysis and to respond to others' posts in some way. *Bear in mind that discussion posts are primarily intended to foster discussion among the students. I will chime in now and then, but for the most part, the posts will be student to student. What is considered an "excellent" (deserving of an A grade) post?

Always observe proper "**Netiquette**" in your **Discussion Posts**:

- A) **Pay Attention to Your Words!** Thoughtful, critical, and even argumentative language is fine! BUT remember that there is no place in our classroom community for abusive, offensive, aggressive, or otherwise violent speech. Remember that you are not an anonymous commenter, but rather that you are part of a classroom community.
- B) **Remember that no one can hear your tone!** Remember, for example, that ALL CAPS is the equivalent of yelling! Engage in civil and respectful discussion by observing standard typographical and grammar rules in our discussion threads. Likewise, remember that sarcasm and dry humor can be wildly misinterpreted. Always strive for clarity!
- C) **Help each other.** If you notice a colleague has asked a question or written about a problem, jump in and offer assistance.

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*Have you decided on your major? If not, consider Religious Studies! College of Charleston Religious Studies graduates have gone on to diverse careers as stand-up comedians, as lawyers, as urban planners, as teachers all over the world etc.

If you are curious about the major, you are welcome to come talk it over with me. You can also contact Professor Zeff Bjerken, the department's Chair, directly at bjerken@cofc.edu. If you already have a major you like, consider talking with us about a minor or a double major!

***Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI)** tools are not permitted for any work in this class. If you use GAI tools, your actions would be considered academically dishonest and a violation of the College of Charleston's Honor Code and Code of Conduct. You may not engage in unauthorized collaboration or make use of ChatGPT or other GAI tools. Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, all writing assignments should be prepared solely by the student and without any assistance. Questions? Ask me! Developing strong competencies in this area will prepare you for a competitive workplace.