

RELS 205.001 SACRED TEXTS OF THE EAST
Dr. June McDaniel
Spring, 2012

Office: 4 Glebe St, Room 101
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Texts: Handouts
Patton, trans. *The Bhagavad Gita*
“Tales of Durga,” comic book
Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi*
The Pocket Zen Reader
The Tao te Ching
Confucius, *The Analects*
Ali, trans. *The Qur’an*
Barks, trans. *The Essential Rumi*

Goals: This is a class on “great books”, sacred texts which have been important in many countries in Asia, and have influenced in the world as a whole. The major focus of the class will be reading these books, and gaining an understanding of their major ideas and their significance.

Grading: Grades will be based upon 2 tests, 2 papers, and a class presentation. Each will be worth 1/5 of the total class grade. Class participation and homework will be counted into your grade.

The passing grade is D-, or 60. Grades are not curved. They range as:

A	94 and over
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
F	below 60

- Attendance: There will be FIVE allowed absences. On the fifth absence, I shall note a warning on the attendance roster, that one more missed class will cause a student to be dropped. If you have any excused absences (illness, emergency), please let me know and I will cross them off. An additional point is given on the total grade for perfect attendance.
- Papers: Papers should be at least 8 full pages in length, typed, plus a title page and a bibliography page. Longer papers are fine, but shorter papers will have points deducted. The title page should have the paper title, your name, the class and section, and the date. They should have a bibliography of at least 3 books (internet homepages and encyclopedia sources do not count for these, though they may be added as extra sources. Do not use Wikipedia, or books for idiots or dummies). I shall hand out a writing guide to help in the organization of the papers.
- Paper 1: The first paper should examine any sacred text from one of the critical perspectives we have discussed in class: theological, psychological, social-cultural, political, phenomenological, feminist, Marxist, or others. You should include the basic questions: who wrote it, why it was important for people, its audience, its original language, its major ideas and your opinions on them. If the paper is late, 10 points will be deducted per class late. Paper 1 will be due Feb. 13th.
- Paper 2: On this paper, you have a choice- do either a traditional or non-traditional style of paper.
- Under the Traditional style of paper, option 1, you should explore a theme in three sacred texts, such as religious rituals, the relationship of religion to politics, or how to live a good life. Use direct quotes from your sacred texts to show how this theme is understood in each one.
- Under the Non-Traditional style of paper, option 2, you should write a fiction story based on a sacred text. Imagine that you are a character involved in it- perhaps a Hindu god, or a Confucian disciple, or the Buddha's wife, or a Taoist sage, or other character. Describe your life and adventures based on at least five ideas from the sacred text.
- Paper 2 will be due on March 28th.
- Presentation: There will be group presentations of sacred texts, in which each member of the group goes over a separate section of the text, or groups have a collection of texts which are related, and each person presents one of them. These may be sections of textbooks which we have not gone over in class, or new sources.
- Class participation will be counted into your presentation grade. It is important to give opinions about these books and what they say in class discussions.

SYLLABUS

Date	Topic	Assignment
1/9	Introduction	
1/11	Issues in studying texts	
1/13	The Background- Biblical Criticism	
1/16	NO CLASS- MLK DAY	
1/18	Hinduism- Vedas	Handout-Rig Vedic hymns
1/20	Vedanta Philosophy	Handout- Svetasvatara Upanishad
1/23	Dharma and Bhakti	Introduction, Gita
1/25	Bhagavad Gita	Gita, chaps. 1-5
1/27	Bhagavad Gita	Gita, chaps. 6-10
1/30	Bhagavad Gita	Gita, chaps. 11-18
2/1	Shakta Bhakti	Tales of Durga (comic book)
2/3	Yoga	Handout, Yoga Sutras
2/6	The yogic life	Autobiography of a Yogi, 1 st half
2/8	Gurus and miracles	Autobiography, 2 nd half
2/10	Jainism	Handout- Jain vows
2/13	Buddhism, Theravada	PAPER #1 DUE!
2/15	Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism	Handout- Diamond Sutra. Sutra of Transcendental Wisdom
2/17	Zen Buddhism	Pocket Zen Reader, pp. 1-100

2/20	Zen Buddhism	Pocket Zen Reader, pp. 101-218
2/22	TEST #1	
2/24	Confucianism	
2/27	Confucianism	Analects, first half
2/29	Confucianism	Analects, second half
3/2	Taoism	
3/5	SPRING BREAK	
3/7	SPRING BREAK	
3/9	SPRING BREAK	
3/12	Taoism	Tao te Ching, first half
3/14	Taoism	Tao te Ching, second half
3/16	Islam- background	
3/19	Islam	Qur'an, suras 1-20
3/21	Islam	Qur'an, suras 21-60
3/23	Islam	Qur'an, suras 61-114
3/26	Islam, guest speaker	
3/28	Sufism	Essential Rumi, first half of book PAPER #2 DUE
3/30	Sufism	Rumi book, second half
4/2	Sikhism	Handout, Guru Granth Sahib
4/4	TEST #2	
4/6	Presentation	
4/9	Presentation	

4/11	Presentation
4/13	Presentation
4/16	Presentation
4/18	Presentation
4/20	Presentation
4/23	Discussion: Sacred Texts, War, peace, and the future

Academic Integrity and the Honor Code: There is a zero-tolerance policy toward plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty in this course. This means that anyone caught taking credit for work that is not his or her own, or cheating in any other way, will receive a failing grade for the entire course, which will show up on the transcript as an XF grade. Students are expected to abide by the Honor Code of the College.