Course Description
This course will explore the religious visions, values, and practices by which people from China and Japan have understood their life experiences. One goal of this course is for you to gain an accurate understanding of the religions that are practiced in China and Japan on those societies’ own terms, and to evaluate those traditions in a manner that is both sympathetic and properly critical. We will consider representative material drawn from Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Shamanism, Shinto, Christianity, and the “New Religions” of Japan. However, the course is not intended to be a chronological survey. Rather than aiming at breadth, the course is designed around major conceptual themes: East Asian religions as “invented traditions;” their views of nature and the cosmos; death, the afterlife, and ancestor veneration; meditation and the solitary lives of mountain hermits; religious experience and conversion; and ritual and its worldly benefits. We will examine the relationship between religion, the family, and social hierarchies, the role of women in religious practice, the transformation of foreign religions to fit native worldviews, and the effects of modernization and technology on traditional religions.

The course will begin in China, one of the world’s oldest civilizations, and then shift to Japan at mid-semester. We begin with forms of divination and ancestor worship that appeared some 3,500 years ago in China, and end with religious debates over the topics of abortion and organ transplantation in Japan today and the 1995 sarin gas attack by members of Aum Shinrikyo. Readings cover a wide variety of primary and secondary materials and we will watch many films and documentaries, which illustrate how religious ideas and practices are woven into Asian social life. Through lecture and discussion we will consider the extent to which conversion from one tradition to another is possible and how, given the myriad doctrines and practices encountered in Asia, one might go about defining the word “religion.” We will see that Chinese and Japanese religiosity tends to have different emphases than the Judeo-Christian traditions of the West. The course will call into question our common distinctions between self and society, church and state, and religion and spirituality.

Course goals
• to gain empathy for the visions, values, and practices that have shaped East Asian civilizations
• to become aware of the diversity of religious traditions there and the dynamic process of borrowing, conflict, and interaction between them
• to foster critical thinking about the interpretive issues raised by the study of religious texts
• to formulate an argument and express it concisely in a short essay

This course also satisfies the General Education Student Learning Outcomes:
1) Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted, and valued in various expressions of human culture;
2) Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments.

These Two General Education learning outcomes will be assessed on essay #3 on Satomi Myodo’s autobiography Journey in Search of the Way (for 8% of grade).

There is no course prerequisite for this class or any knowledge presumed about Asian cultures and religions. Students must have a desire to read challenging and unusual materials, and to engage in conversation and writing about these readings. Readings cover a wide variety of primary and secondary materials that address the themes of the course, including a novel, a spiritual autobiography, a travelogue about the mountain hermits of modern China, and excerpts from sacred texts.

There are Four Required Texts available at the CofC Bookstore and on reserve at Addlestone Library:
1) Endo, Shusaku. Silence $11.95
2) Fingarette, Herbert. Confucius: The Secular as Sacred $15.50
3) Myodo, Satomi with Sallie King, trans. Journey in Search of the Way $29.95
4) Porter, Bill. Road to Heaven: Encounters with Chinese Hermits $16.95
There are also required Electronic Readings (ER), pdf of scholar’s articles and selections from Asian sacred scriptures, available on OAKS under RELS 248, which registered students can access after they login to MyCharleston (http://my.cofc.edu). Please print each ER article and bring it to class.

Course Requirements

• Read assigned materials prior to class and active participation in class discussion
It is strongly recommended that you read the entire weekly assignment before we study the topic in class. This will help you understand the lectures, and you can then go back and study specific readings in more detail as well as your class notes. When there is an assignment from the Electronic Reserve material (i.e. ER#1-32) you should print it out and bring to class with you on the day that we will discuss it.

Whatever you get out of this course is directly related to how much you put into it. Please come to class with ideas and questions that can help our class engage in meaningful discussion. Asking questions, raising concerns, and offering your own ideas during class discussions are a crucial part of this course. A number of documentary and feature films will be shown in class because this is the best substitute for a direct cultural experience of Asian religions. The films too will serve as a basis for discussion and you will be expected to view them critically as carefully crafted images that are used to communicate a particular point of view.

• Attendance records will also be kept for each class. There will be 3 allowed absences; 4 or more absences will negatively affect your grade. After 8 absences, you will be dropped from the class. If you have excused absences (illness, emergency) please contact the Undergraduate Dean’s Office to document the reason for your absence. You are responsible for making up any absences and for contacting me when you miss a quiz or exam; please get any notes on missed lectures from classmates.

• Weekly Reflection Cards (15%)
Every class marked with a RC# (reflection card) you are to bring to class a thoughtful reflection related to the assigned reading for that class. The reflection should be written on a 3x5 card and be based on a topic or issue that you have found puzzling, thought provoking, challenging, or interesting. Your reflections and questions should raise issues or express concerns about the topic that you find important, and they should demonstrate your critical thinking about the assigned reading material.

• 3 Short 2-page Essays (#1 = 5%, #2 = 7%, and #3 = 8%, for 20% of final grade)
You will write three short papers in response to questions related to the reading assigned for that week. These essays will require that you read and analyze the literature closely, formulate an interpretation, and express it concisely in 2 pages. The essays are due in class on the day we will discuss the assigned topic. Late essays are not accepted since the topic will be discussed in class.

• 6-page Essay on an assigned topic due on 4/10 (20% of grade)
You will write a 6-page essay on one of 3 assigned topics. It is due without fail on April 10 in class. I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, please call 843.953.5635 or visit http://esl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/

• Two quizzes in class on 2/11 and 4/17 (5% each, 10% total)

• Midterm exam on February 27 (15% of grade) and Final Exam (20% of grade)
The quizzes and exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions, and the identification and explanation of key scriptural passages. The two exams will also include essay questions that will require you to synthesize the themes of the course, and compare and contrast the various religious traditions. Review sheets will be provided beforehand. If you miss a test and provide a legitimate excuse, I do give makeup tests, but they are harder than the original test. An unexcused missed test counts as a 0.

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. A student found responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty.
Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

The following abbreviation will be used: **ER#1** refers to the first assignment in the electronic reading material available on OAKS in MyCharleston; **RC#1** refers to the first reflection card due in class.

1/9 Organization of Course: Review syllabus, Introduce Religious Studies, Brainstorm about Religion

**Week 1**  
**Introduction to the Study of East Asian Religions**

**Preview:** Nan-in, a Japanese Zen master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a college student who came to inquire about Zen. Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor’s cup full, then kept on pouring. The student watched the overflow until he could no longer restrain himself.

“It’s full! No more will go in!”

“Like this cup,” Nan-in replied, “you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?”

1/14 The Academic Study of Religion: The Social Construction of Reality and Religion  
**RC#1 due in class**  
Clips from *The Truman Show* (1998)

1/16 Viewing Asian Religions: Does “Religion” exist in China or Japan before contact with the West?  
**RC#2 due**

**Week 2**  
**Early Chinese Worldview: Cosmology, Yin & Yang, the Dao, and Drunk Spirits**

*Shi jing*, ode 209: “The rituals are completed; the bells and drums have sounded. The pious descendant takes his place; the officiating announcer cries: *The ancestral spirits are drunk!*’

[....] The musicians come in and play so that blessings will follow. Your food is set out: no one is left unsatisfied; all are happy. Drunk and satiated, both lesser and greater bow their heads: ‘The spirits enjoyed the wine and food; they will give the lord long life. Very gracious, very timely, everything completed—many sons and grandson, the patrilineal line continued uninterrupted.’”

1/21 Chinese Cosmology, Divination, and Spirits: Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors  
*(ER#6: “The Spirits of Chinese Religion,” pp. 3-7, 21-36; ER#7-8: “Preamble” and “Deities and Ancestors in Early Oracle Inscriptions”)*

1/23 Inventing “Confucianism”: Who was Kongzi and how did he become “Confucius?”  
*(Confucius: The Secular as Sacred, pp. 1-36)*  
**RC#3**

**Week 3**  
**Classical Confucianism**

*Lunyu/Analects I.1:* The Master said, “Studying, and from time to time going over what you’ve learned—that’s enjoyable, isn’t it?”

1/28 Kongzi on Personal Cultivation: Getting Social Norms “Rite”  
*(Confucius: The Secular as Sacred, pp. 37-79)*

1/30 Lessons for Confucian Women  
*(ER#9-10: “Pan Chao’s Lessons for Women” and “Confucianism”)*  
**RC#4**

**Week 4**  
**Classical Daoism: Going with the Flow of the Dao, Dreaming of Butterflies**

Once upon a time Zhuangzi dreamed that he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting about happily enjoying itself. He didn’t know that he was Zhuangzi. Suddenly he awoke and was palpably Zhuangzi. He did not know whether he was Zhuangzi who had dreamed of being a butterfly or a butterfly dreaming that he was Zhuangzi. Now, there must be a difference between Zhuangzi and the butterfly. This is called the transformation of things.
Week 5  Indian Buddhism Comes to China
Manjushri asked the Buddha: "Blessed One, by how many names have you turned the wheel of the Dharma in the world?" The Buddha said: "I have called myself empty, being, suchness, dharmata, permanence, impermanence, god, demon, mantra, and great mantra. In such a way, by means of hundreds of thousands of names, I have benefitted living beings." When the meaning of this is fully grasped, how can there be discord between different schools of thought?

Week 6  Chan/Zen Buddhism: Creeds, Stories, Poems, and the Hermit Life
The body is the Bodhi tree, The mind is the Bodhi tree,
The mind is like a clear mirror. The body is the mirror stand,
At all times we must strive to polish it, The mirror is originally clean and pure;
And must not let the dust collect. Where can it be stained by dust?

Week 7  Daoist Mountain Hermits
Zhuangzi (Chapter 11): “Let your mind be still and pure. If you want to live forever, don’t exhaust your body or its vitality. Your eyes should see nothing. Your ears should hear nothing. Your mind should know nothing. Let your spirit take care of your body, and your body will last forever. Concentrate on the inside. Ignore the outside. Knowledge will only harm you.

2/14  The Status of the Feminine and Women in Daoism
(ER#6, pp. 7-13; ER#11-12: “Lao tzu’s Tao Te Ching” and “Taoism”)

2/6  Daoist Mysticism and Self-Cultivation: Wandering on the Way
(ER #13: Selections from Zhuangzi’s Wandering on the Way)  RC#5

2/11  Buddhism Becomes Chinese: Matching Concepts with Daoism, Conflicts with Confucians
(ER#6, pp. 13-20; and ER#14: “Buddhism Becomes Chinese”)

Quiz #1 in class on Classical Confucianism and Daoism

2/13  Chinese Buddhist Family Values: The Tale of a Monk who Rescues his Mother from Hell
(ER#16: “Maudgalyayana”) Images: Scroll Paintings of the Chinese Netherworld

Essay #1: What motivates Maudgalyayana (Ch. Mulien) to rescue his mother from hell? What might the purpose of this story be? How does this story advance Buddhist doctrinal and ideological claims for its Chinese audience?

2/18  Chan Creeds, Myth, and History: Patriarchs in Search of a Tradition

2/20  Encountering Chan Hermits Living in Mountains Amongst White Clouds

2/25  How the Way is One (or Won) according to Daoist Mountain Hermits
(Road to Heaven, pp. 35-59, 208-220)  RC#7 Clips from Amongst White Clouds

2/27  Midterm on Chinese Religions
(No reading, study review sheet for exam)

3/4-6  Spring Break—(Slip into Silence over Spring Break!)
Week 8  
**Japanese Shinto: Japan’s Indigenous Religion or an Invented Tradition?**

ER#24 p. 33: The area in which our investigation will take place makes nonsense of that conventional distinction hitherto observed by most western writers on Japanese religion, the separation of Shinto from Buddhism. Shinto, with its liturgies, rituals, and myths, has been usually treated in isolated purity, unadulterated by Buddhist elements. The Buddhist sects have likewise been described according to doctrines respectably based on scriptures with their proper place in the Buddhist canon. The large area of religious practice common to the two, in which the worshipper is scarcely aware whether the deity he is addressing is a Shinto kami or a [Buddhist] bodhisattva, has been either ignored or relegated to various snail patches with pejorative labels such as superstition, syncretism, or magic.

3/11 Japanese Myths of Origins: Purity and Pollution  
(ER#20-21: “Shinto Mythology” and “Women and Sexism in Shinto”)  
**RC#9**

3/13 “Shinto” as an Invented Tradition, not Japan’s “Native” Religion  
(ER#22: “So What is Shinto?” and Silence)

Week 9  
**Buddhist and Christian Interactions in Japan: Contestation and Conversion**

*The Proclamation on the Expulsion of Christian Padres* (1614): “Those Christian padres and their followers oppose the laws of the government. They disparage the Ways of the Gods and mock the True Dharma. They dispense with righteousness and defile virtue. Following the example of a condemned criminal [Jesus], they become excited and run to join him. They direct worship and rituals toward him. This example of martyrdom they take to be the consummation of their sect. If this is not heresy, then what is? They are truly the enemies of the gods and Buddhas.

3/18 The Buddhists’ Persecution of Christians in Japan  
(ER#23: “Deus Destroyed;” Silence)  
**RC#10**

3/20 Christian Conversion and Apostasy in Japan  
(Finish Silence)  
**Essay #2 due in class:** In *Silence* is Rodrigues saved or damned by his apostasy when he steps on the fumi? Why does Rodrigues feel the sudden “onrush of joy” mentioned at the end of Chapter 10?

Week 10  
**Japanese Women as Shamans and Spirit Mediums: The Story of Satomi-san**

*Satomi Myodo*, p. 14: “The vision vanished; the voice ceased. But the psychological effect continued vividly, guiding me forcibly and casting a definite hue over every aspect of my daily life. My mind was abnormally strained. I felt a thrill of adventure in embracing this ‘sacred mystery,’ as if I were soaring to the edge of a distant, towering mountain. The ‘sacred mystery’ was the ‘vow of the kami,’ which I must not betray. I felt that if so much as one word of this leaked out, the demonic powers would instantly profit, the vow would lose all efficacy, and I would plunge headlong into hell!”

3/25 Women as Shamans and Sibyls: The Ecstatic Journey to the Otherworld  
(ER#24: “The Bridge” and “The Ancient Sibyl)  
**RC#11**

3/27 Satomi-san’s Spiritual Search: Spirit Possession, Hallucinations, and a Breakdown  
(*Journey in Search of the Way*, 3-50; **optional** 163-186)

Week 11  
**Japanese New Religions after the Meiji Restoration**

*Satomi Myodo*, p. 58: “Alone, acting as my own guide, I tried to revive these phenomena. I was always able to revive this day’s experience at will.... In this manner, I wandered from the True Way and fell to the level of mystery monger, chasing vainly after marvels.
4/1 Satomi-san’s Satori: Returning “Home” to Zen  
*(Journey in Search of the Way, 51-65; 71-79; 93-111; optional 198-206)*  
**Essay #3:** In her autobiography, Satomi Myodo records her impassioned search for enlightenment and her intense, personal religious experiences. She experiments with various spiritual techniques and has several dramatic experiences. However, she fails to find any lasting satisfaction until she meets her Zen master and practices Zen. What does she gain from her Zen practice? How does she re-evaluate her spiritual quest?  

4/3 What’s so new about Japanese “New” Religions?  
(ER#25: “Turning to the Gods in Times of Trouble” and “Spirits, Satellites and a User-Friendly Religion”)  
**RC#12** Film: *The Yamaguchi Family*  

Week 12  
**Death and Dying in Japan Today: Technology’s Impact on Religion**  
**Noda Junko, psychiatrist:** “Even when the body is dead, the soul remains in each organ of the body for quite a while, so in brain death, when the body is still warm, I don’t find it possible to think about taking organs out. Anyway, I don’t think we really understand what is going on in the brain at death, and a death that can only be understood by a doctor isn’t death as far as I am concerned. The distance between doctors and patients is growing greater because of technology, and I think this causes a lot of distrust.”  

4/8 Japanese Debates Over Brain Death and Organ Transplants  
(ER#26: “Preamble,” “Technology as Other,” “Social Death and Situated Departures”)  
**RC#13**  

4/10 Remembering the Dead in the Age of Video: Record of a Funeral  
(ER #27: “The Funeral”)  
**6 Page Essay Due!** Film: Juzo Itami’s *The Funeral…a Deadly Comedy*  

Week 13  
**Memorializing the Passing of “Children:” New Rituals for Fetuses, Dolls and Pets**  
**Narushima Etsuo:** “Perhaps the Japanese are unique in their custom of propitiating the spirits of material objects and living beings that were useful in the lives of humans. Perhaps this is connected to folk beliefs. Rituals and monuments such as memorial rites for needles and grave mounds for whales are deeply familiar to us Japanese people. As we know from memorial rites for needles, the Japanese perform memorial rites even for inanimate objects. Animal memorial markers too are the product of Japanese spirituality.”  

4/15 Buddhist Rites to Memorialize the Spirits of Aborted Fetuses  
ER#28-29: “Indebtedness and Comfort” and “The Cult of Jizo”)  
**RC#14**  

4/17 Post-Modern Pet Cemeteries & Memorial Rites: Commodification or Humanization of Animals?  
(ER#30: “Introduction” and “Vengeful Spirits or Loving Spiritual Companions?”)  
**Quiz#2**  

Week 14  
**Religion and Violence: Is Aum Shinrikyo a “Religion” or a “Cult”?**  

4/22 Apocalyptic Violence in the New Age, and Nostalgia for an Idealized Spiritual Homeland  
(ER#31-32: “In the Wake of Aum” and “Conclusion: Mystery, Nostalgia and the Shifting Sands of Continuity”)  
**RC#15**  

Final Exam Schedule  

4/26 Saturday  
Section 02 (T/R 10:50)  
8:00-11:00 am in ECTR 219  

4/29 Tuesday  
Section 01 (T/R 8:00)  
8:00-11:00 am in ECTR 219
Week 1: Introduction to the Study of Religions

Week 2: The Ancient Way of Chinese Religions

Week 3: Classical Confucianism

Week 4: Classical Daoism

Week 5: Indian Buddhism Comes to China
15. Skip this one!

Week 6: Chan/Zen Buddhism
Week 8: Japanese Shinto

Week 9: Buddhist and Christian Interactions

Week 10: Japanese Women as Shamans and Spirit Mediums

Week 11: Japanese New Religions

Week 12: Death and Dying in Contemporary Japanese Culture

Week 13: Memorializing the Passing of “Children”

Week 14: Religion and Violence

Articles for Term Papers
Terms and Concepts for the Study of Chinese and Japanese Religions

Note: These are technical terms that you must know in order to do well on the two quizzes and exams. Keep this list handy as you read the assignments and write down their definitions and meanings. This list is subject to change: sarvam anityam or “everything is impermanent,” as Buddhists say.

Chinese Religions

“Three Teachings,” popular religion, Heaven (Tien)/Earth?human realms, macrocosm/microcosm
Dao, chi/qi, yin-yang, sympathetic resonance, tortoise shell divination, ancestor worship
K’ung tzu/Kongzi, Confucius, Matteo Ricci, “Confucianism as universal, rational humanism
Analects, Legalism, Legalist (ru), jen/ren, li, Five Relationships, filial piety
Lao zi/Lao tzu, Dao as “unhewn log” & “embryonic fetus,” laissez-faire rule, wu-wei
Chuang tzu/Zhuang zi, relativity of all categories, epistemological skepticism, solipsism
Six rebirth realms, Avici hell, supernatural bureaucracy, Mulien, Ghost Festival, postulant
Sangha as field of merit, Inexhaustible Treasury, Sutra
Chan, emptiness, Two Levels of Truth, Mahakashyapa, Bodhidharma, Hui neng vs. Shen hsiu
Platform Sutra, Patriarch, mind-to-mind transmission, sudden vs. gradual enlightenment
Non-dual truth, Bodhi tree, Buddha nature, master-disciple karmic bond, Chan “boot camp”
Koan, Han shan, Wang Wei, Chungnan/Zhongnan mountain hermits, shamanism

Japanese Religions

Kojiki, Nihongi, kami, Izanami & Izanagi, Amaterasu, purification rituals, Yomi
Shinto, Motoori Norinaga, Tokugawa, Meiji Restoration, State Shinto, kami kaze
Kirishitan, Francis Xavier, Fabian Fucan, Shimabara rebellion, fumie, apostasy, Deus, Dainichi
O-Bon festival, miko medium vs. ascetic ecstatic, spirit possession as catharsis, initiation kutsu
Sincerity, cold water asceticism, Kannon Bodhisattva, 7th-8th Consciousness, Rinzai vs. Soto Zen
Sanbokyodan Zen, “recognition” vs. “enactment” models of enlightenment, mu koan, satori
Yamaguchi family, genze riyaku, butsudan, kaimyo, ritual construction of personhood/identity
Organ harvesting, muenrei vs. uenrei spirits, mizuko kuyo, Jizo, pet memorials, butsudan
Aum Shinrikyo, Asahara Shoku, gedatsu, guru worship, messianic pessimism, millenarianism

Terms for the Academic Study of Asian Religions

Bracketing, empathy, religious “founders,” orthopraxy vs. orthodoxy, invented tradition
Social construction of reality, legitimation, Chinese society as patriarchal, patrilocal, patrilineal
Cosmology, “magick of charisma,” performative utterance, syncretism, polemic, apocryphal
Shame vs. guilt, “Sinification,” exegesis, proselytize, apocryphal, antinomian, iconoclast
Reification, purity vs. pollution, ineffable, kitsch

But keep in mind…

the profound words of Daoist Master Zhuangzi (Chuang tzu) on language:

A rabbit-snare is for catching rabbits; once you’ve caught the rabbit, you can forget about the snare.
A fish trap is for catching fish; once you’ve caught the fish, you can forget about the trap.
Words are for catching ideas; once you’ve caught the idea, you can forget about the words.
Where can I find a person who knows how to forget about words
so that I can have a few words
with him?