

College of Charleston
Department of Religious Studies
Summer 2011

RELS 298.T01: SPECIAL TOPICS- CONTEMPORARY DAOISM
Study Abroad Course in China
June 7-June 24, 2011

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Course Description

This class, taught in China, begins with an overview of the history of Daoism and of the situation of religion in modern China. The rest of the class will focus on the role Daoism plays in Chinese society today, including issues such as health, medicine and martial arts; women; the environment; monasticism; and politics.

Texts to bring to China:

Chinese religion: an anthology of sources edited by Deborah Sommer (**CRAS**)

Daoism and Chinese Culture by Livia Kohn (**DCC**)

Other articles- Please print these out, put them in a binder, and bring it to China (**OA**)

A notebook to serve as your journal

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.

Course Requirements:

Participation 25%

Students are expected to be active in all class discussions, lectures, and class trips.

2-3 pp. Historical Analysis 10%

Students will analyze assigned readings (see last page).

Memos 3 x 5% = 15%

Students will complete three out of four 1-2 page assignments (see last page).

Journal 25%

Students will write daily informal notes, focusing especially on how the readings, interviews and site visits add to the themes of the class. Paragraph or point form is fine. Personal opinions and questions are important elements of your journals. You must have at least one entry per reading unit. I will check the journal two or three times over the course of the trip.

5-6 pp. final essay 25%

Theoretical essay that synthesizes the reading material and travel experiences.
Assignment handed out by June 23, due via email by July 2, 5 pm

READING UNITS (and location where reading should be completed)

A. Introduction to Chinese history, geography, language, and cosmology (Charleston, April 26)

DCC ix-x, 1-7, 42-58, 209-213

B. Religion in 21st century China (Charleston, May 1)

OA #1 (Chan), 87-93 (the beginning until “Buddhism” section), and 100-107 (from “folk religion” to “some scenarios.”) (recommended: the rest of the article)

Memo #1 due May 1 in class

C. The rise of organized Daoism (Charleston/ In Flight, June 7-8)

DCC 61-98 (recommended: GD 91-112)

Historical Analysis Paper due June 7 at the airport (or June 5 via email)

D. The Quanzhen Monastic Institution (Beijing, June 11)

DCC 153-167; CRAS 199-210 (recommended: GD 113-138)

E. Daoism and Capitalism in China Today (Zhengzhou, June 12)

OA #2 (Ian Johnson)

F. Daoism, Confucianism, Gender, and Sexuality (Zhengzhou, June 13)

OA #3 (“Gender and Sexuality”); CRAS 105-112

G. Daoist Monks and Western Tourists (Mount Hua, June 15-16)

OA #4 (Palmer); OA #5 (Siegler/Palmer); OA #6 (Winn)

Memo #2 due June 15

H. Daoism and the State: A Historical Background (Louguantai, June 17-18)

DCC 100-126; OA #7 (“Social and Political History”)

I. The Body, Meditation and Inner Alchemy (Chengdu, June 19-20)

DCC 126-152; CRAS 3-6; OA #8 (“The Body”) (*see also RELS 205, unit J*)

Memo #3 due June 19

J. Daoism and the Environment (Dujiangyan, June 22)

OA #9 (“Cosmology and the Environment”); OA #10 (James Miller)

K. Daoism and the State in Recent History (Mount Qingcheng, June 23)

DCC 171-202; CRAS 303-316

Memo #4 due June 23

Paper Assignments

Memos should be between 1-2 pages—about 300-600 words long. They should demonstrate a solid understanding of the appropriate readings (listed below) as well as the relevant site visits or lectures. Memos should answer the questions specifically, make interesting connections (comparisons or contrasts) between readings, and provide original insights into the material. You do not need an introduction or conclusion: get right to your point!

The historical analysis paper should be double the length of the memo. It should quote more seriously and directly from the reading and present a sustained argument

For both kinds of assignments, you do not need a works cited page but please use in-text citation for direct and indirect quotes sources from the class. Please write clearly and carefully!

Memo #1 due in class in Charleston, May 1

What are the different ways that the Communist government has defined religion in China? Why has its definition changed? What are other possible definitions of “religion”?

History Analysis Paper due at the Charleston airport, June 7 (or emailed by June 5)

Between the 2nd and 5th centuries CE, many different kinds of Daoist communities developed. Name 2-3 of them and describe their differences. Does any idea or practice unite them?

Memo #2 due at Mount Hua, June 15

How does the encounter between Western spiritual tourists and Quanzhen monks at Mount Hua exemplify the predicament of modern spirituality in both the West and in China?

Memo #3 due in Chengdu, June 19

What is alchemy? In what ways has the “alchemical” metaphor been so prevalent throughout Daoist history? What is its appeal?

Memo #4 due at Mount Qingcheng, June 23

After briefly describing the “Cult of Mao” (1966-1976) and the “Qigong Movement” (1980s), discuss what features they have in common, and how, if at all, they relate to Daoism. What do these commonalities tell us about the role of religion in modern China? Do you think Maoism and Qigong are religious?