

RELS 205 Sacred Texts of the East

Dr. Lee Irwin
4-B Glebe Street, Room 201
Religious Studies Department, Fall 2015
E-Mail Address: IrwinL@cofc.edu (send a message!)
Office Hours: Tues & Thurs 1:45-3:00, Mon & Weds. 12:00-1:45
(or by appointment)

Course Description: This course will explore the foundational texts of the religions of India, China, Southeast Asia, and Japan. The traditions we will cover are: Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Confucian, Taoist, and Shinto, with the greatest emphasis on Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist written texts. We will take an inductive approach to each text tradition and through careful reading of texts, seek to determine core beliefs of each tradition established by those texts. We will consider historical context, spatial location, textual diversity, internal debates on interpretation, canon development, conceptual theories of the text, including text recitations, and the ritual care of texts. We will look at issues of oral versus written texts, image and symbol texts, and text transmission. No previous knowledge of these traditions is required for this course; this is a course on the hermeneutics of the texts and interpretations, not a survey of general beliefs and practices.

Books:

Harold Coward, Ronald Neufeldt, Eva Neumaier. *Readings in Eastern Religions* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press; **2nd edition**, 2006) ISBN-10: 0889204357

Randall L. Nadeau. *Asian Religions: A Cultural Perspective* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2014). ISBN-10: 1118471962.

Six Articles on-line at OAKS/RELS 205/Contents

Student Learning Outcomes (SLO): This course meets the requirements for General Education Certification based on the following two SLO, Outcome 1: Students analyze how ideas are represented, interpreted or valued in various expressions of human culture. Outcome 2: Students examine relevant primary source materials as understood by the discipline and interpret the material in writing assignments. These outcomes will be assessed in the final writing assignment (Paper #2, worth 15% of the final grade).

Requirements: Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions, missing more than three classes can result in a lower grade. The assignments in this course include the following: FOUR 15 minute quizzes (5% each = 20%), two short papers (15% each = 30%), Mid-Term (25%), and Final (25%). The papers will be 3-4 pages in length, each summarizing one article on OAKS and relating the theory of that article to the texts we are reading for that tradition. No excuses will be accepted for missed assignments or exams, such as over sleeping, lost books, or being stuck out of town. If you have a legitimate excuse, please talk to me before the scheduled assignment. Late papers will have severe reduction on the grade. All missing assignments will receive a failing grade.

Classroom Electronics: Students must TURN OFF all electronic devices before class starts; you are not permitted to engage in texting or reading electronic mail (etc.) while class is in session. If you have a computer for taking notes, you must ONLY take notes (no jumping to read email or surf the web, unless requested). Violation of this code will result in deduction of points from your final grade average.

Honor Code: Lying, cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the Honor Code and are not permitted at the College. A student responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure based on dishonesty. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration on papers-- working together without permission-- is a form of cheating.

Center for Student Learning offers academic support services for assistance in study strategies, speaking & writing skills, and course content. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call (843) 953-5635.

Disabilities: If you have a disability that qualifies you for academic accommodation, please present a letter to me from the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. Please discuss with me any special needs you may have. For more information regarding accommodation and the SNAP program, see: <http://www.cofc.edu/~cds/index.htm>

Grading Scale: Numerical/letter grades: A+ = 100-97; **A = 96-93**; A- = 92-90; B+ = 89-87; **B = 86-83**; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; **C = 76-73**; C- = 72-70; D+ = 69-67; D = 66-63; D- = 62-60; F = 59 or lower.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments must be done **BEFORE** the class for which they are assigned, not after; then you can follow the discussion, ask questions, and we can have an informed dialogue on the subject of the reading.

!! BRING YOUR *Readings in Eastern Religions* TO EACH CLASS !!

I. **Week One:** August 25, 27 “Sacred Books of the East”

A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, xi-xiv; *Asian Religions*, 3-17.

B. **Article, August 27:** “Max Müller's "Sacred Books" and the Nineteenth-Century Production of the Comparative Science of Religions.” N. J. Girardot, *History of Religions*, Vol. 41, No. 3. (2002), pp. 213-250.

II. **Week Two:** September 1, 3 Sacred Texts of India / Hinduism

A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 3-44;

B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 105-122.

III. **Week Three:** September 8, 10 Sacred Texts of India / Hinduism

A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 44-73, 81-96;
Asian Religions, 123-137.

B. **Article, September 10:** “Exorcising the Transcendent: Strategies for Defining Hinduism and Religion.” Brian K. Smith, *History of Religions*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1987), pp. 32-55

C. **QUIZ ONE**, September 10

IV. **Week Four:** September 15, 17 Early Buddhism

A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 113-147;

B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 141-163.

V. **Week Five:** September 22, 24 Sacred Texts of Buddhism

A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 197-194

B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 164-178.

C. Paper One Handout, September 24, Hinduism / Buddhism

- VI. **Week Six:** September 29, October 1 Sacred Texts of Buddhism
- A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 194-233.
 - B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 181-198.
 - C. **Article, October 1:** "Orality, Writing, and Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in the Mahayana." David McMahan, *History of Religions*, Vol. 37, No. 3. (Feb., 1998), pp. 249-274
 - D. **QUIZ TWO: September 29**
- VII. **Week Seven:** October 6, 8 Sacred Texts of Sikhism
- A. **PAPER ONE DUE: October 6** Hinduism and Buddhism
 - B. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 249-263
- VIII. **Week Eight:** October 13, 15 Sacred Texts of Sikhism
- A. **Article, October 13** "The Word as Guru: Sikh Scripture and the Translation Controversy." Verne A. Dusenbery, *History of Religions*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Sikh Studies. (May, 1992), pp. 385-402
 - B. **MIDTERM EXAM: October 15**
 - C. **FALL BREAK:** No class, October 20
- IX. **Week Nine:** October 22 Sacred (??) Texts of Confucianism
- A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 267-286.
 - B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 21-50.
- X. **Week Ten:** October 27, 29 Sacred (??) Texts of Confucianism
- A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 286-298.
 - B. **Article, October 29:** "The Religious Character of Confucian Tradition." Rodney L. Taylor, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 48, No. 1, (1998), pp. 80-107
- XI. **Week Eleven:** November 3, 5 Sacred texts of Daoism
- A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 301-313.
 - B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 61-101.
 - C. **QUIZ THREE:** November 5
- XII. **Week Twelve:** November 10, 12 Sacred Texts of Daoism
- A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 313-323.
 - B. **Article, November 12:** "Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy." Catherine Bell, *History of Religions*, Vol. 27, No. 4. (1988), pp. 366-392
 - C. **Paper Two Handout:** Confucianism / Daoism, SLO Assignment

- XIII. **Week Thirteen:** November 17, 19 Sacred Texts of Shinto
- A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 341-361.
 - B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 209-226.
 - C. **PAPER TWO DUE: November 17** Confucianism and Daoism
- XIV. **Week Fourteen:** November 24 Sacred Texts of Shinto
- A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 361-378.
 - B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 227-235.
 - C. **QUIZ FOUR:** November 24
- XV. **Week Fifteen:** December 1, 3 Concluding Thoughts
- A. Reading Assignment: *Readings in Eastern Religions*, 381-388.
 - B. Reading Assignment: *Asian Religions*, 239-245.
- B. FINAL EXAM: DECEMBER 10,**
8:00 AM (section 01, 10:50 T/Th)
AND
12:00 Noon (section.02, 12:15 T/Th)