

**College of Charleston**  
**Department of Religious Studies**  
**Fall 2018**

**RELS 348: Asian Religions in America**  
Tues & Thurs 9:25-10:40; Ed Center 219

Instructor: Dr. Elijah Siegler  
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Office Hours: Wed 11-3 or by appointment

This “grad school style” seminar traces the history of various Asian traditions (especially Buddhism, Hinduism, and Daoism), as they become part of the American religious landscape. Modes of transmission to be examined include immigration, mission work, literature, and mass media. Students will learn about the history of specific Asian nationalities’ experience in the U.S. and about the assimilation and appropriation of their religions. We will read excerpts from primary works by missionaries, gurus, and monks, as well as by basketball coach Phil Jackson, martial artist Bruce Lee, and hip-hop pioneers the Beastie Boys. Along the way, students will be introduced to important concepts in the study of religion and will have the opportunity to research a local Asian religious group.

**Required Texts:**

1. Anne **Fadiman**, *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, Revised Edition 2012 ISBN-10: 0374533407
2. Andrea **Jain**, *Selling Yoga* ISBN-13: 978-0-19-939024-3
3. David A. **Palmer** and Elijah Siegler, *Dream Trippers* ISBN-10: 0-226-48484-X
4. Richard **Seager**, *Buddhism in America*, Revised Edition 2012 ISBN: 0231159730
5. Thomas **Tweed** and Stephen Prothero, eds. *Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History* ISBN-13: 9780195113396

There are also required short readings on OAKS. Please print these out!

Please always bring the relevant book or printout to class.

**Assignments:**

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

\* Participation and attendance including small group discussion, random attendance checks, and in-class writing assignments: **15%**

\*Lead discussion for one class, by introducing all of the readings for that day, asking the class questions, and facilitating discussion: **5%**

- \* Four 3-4 pp. papers (two will be presented in class): 10% each x 4= **40%**
- \* A rewrite and expansion of one of the four short papers, making it a 7-8 pp. thesis-driven essay, due on 11/29: **20%**
- \* Take a comprehensive final exam on 12/11: **20%**

NOTE: Failure to hand in any one component of the course will result in a failing grade for the class. The fourth unexcused absence will result in being dropped from the class

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. Students can find a complete version of the Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook, available online.

**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 8/21: Opening Perspectives

Read: Handout-- "Why I Am a Heathen"

### Thurs 8/23: Defining "Asia," "America," and "Religion"

Read: Tweed 1-10, 13-14; Seager (9-17), 39-50

### Tues 8/28: Two Key Concepts: Representation and Transnationalism

Read: OAKS- Iwamura; Palmer 9- 26

### Thurs 8/30: Introduction to Buddhism in America: Who Is a Buddhist?

Read: Tweed 16-18; Seager 18-38; OAKS—Nattier

### Tues 9/4: Asian Religions in America until 1924

Read: Tweed 25-27, 35-38, 61-64, 70-78, 98-100; (OAKS—Maffly-Kipp)

### Thurs 9/6: The World's Parliament of Religions

Read: Tweed 127-131, (131-137), 137-140, (371-376); OAKS— Seager

### Tues 9/11: Japanese Shin Buddhism and the Internment Camps

Read: Seager 73-91; Tweed 324-328, 159-177; OAKS — Okihiro

### Thurs 9/13: Zen and the Beginnings of a Counterculture

Read: Tweed 191-193, 218-221, 261-264, 342-345, 353-357; Seager 112-114, 119-124

### Tues 9/18: Vietnamese and Nichiren Varieties of Buddhism

Read: Tweed 268-270, 281-285, (315-319), 388-391; Seager 195-203, 233-238, (92-101)

**"Buddhist Identity" Editorial Paper Due**

Thurs 9/20: The Tibetan Milieu

**Special Guest: Dr. Zeff Bjerken**

Read: ARADH 264-268, 319-322, 349-351; (Seager 137-157); OAKS-- Lopez

Tues 9/25: Sex & Gender in American Buddhism

Read: Seager 217-225; Tweed 274-277; OAKS —Oppenheimer

Thurs 9/27: Asian Religions and African-Americans

**Special Guest: Dr. Mari Crabtree**

Read: TBA

Tues 10/2: Daoism in America

Read: Tweed 21-22, 339-341; Palmer 64-79, 82-100

Thurs 10/4: Asian Religions in America go back to Asia

Read: Palmer 146-165, 173-178

Tues 10/9: How scholarship influences Asian religion in America

Read: Palmer 179-183, 187-191, 194-197, 213-217, 219-221

Thurs 10/11: Introduction to Hinduism and Yoga in America

Read: Tweed 14-16, 289-294; Jain 1-19

Tues 10/16: Asian Religions and Refugee Resettlement

**Special Guest: Dr. Shyam Sriram**

Read: OAKS—Borja: OAKS- Sriram

Thurs 10/18: Authenticity and Fakery in American Hinduism

Read: Tweed 178-181; OAK-- “*Kumare* Reviews”; Jain 20-41

Tues 10/23: Guru Movements in America

Read: Tweed 181-185, 241-248, 251-256; Jain 42-72

Thurs 10/25: The Ethics and Economics of American Postural Yoga

Read: Jain 73-129

Tues 10/30: Dialogue and Hybridization I— Jewish Buddhists

Read: Seager 257-262; Tweed 369-371; OAKS-- Cadge

Thurs 11/1: Dialogue and Hybridization II— Christianity and Asian Religions

Read: Seager 253-257; Tweed 303-306, 362-365, 376-377; Jain 130-157

Tues 11/6: Fall Break (Storm Make Up Day)

Thurs 11/8: The Hmong

Read: Fadiman Chapters 1-6 (Chapter 7)

Tues 11/13: Shamanism in America

Read: Fadiman Chapters 8-9 (10) 11-12

Thurs 11/15: Religion and Healing in Asian America

Read: Fadiman Chapters 13-14 (15-16) 17- Afterword; OAKS-- Fox  
**“Hospital Policy” Paper Due**

Tues 11/20: Paper workshop

Read: (Palmer 265-273)

Thurs 11/22: Thanksgiving!

Tues 11/27: Possible Futures

Read: Seager 264-280, 61-71; Jain 158-173; Palmer 238-250

Thurs 11/29: What Have We Learned?/ Final Exam Review

Read: Palmer 251-263

**Final Paper Due**

Tues 12/11: 9-11AM: Final Exam

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.

The Center for Student Learning has writing labs and can arrange individual tutoring for these particular assignments at <http://www.cofc.edu/~csl/> or 953-5635

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### **How to Act Like You’re in Grad School**

Come to every class, despite the absence of an attendance policy.

Don’t text, email, twitter etc., during class (in fact, put away all cell phones and laptops).

Participate in discussion (with high quality, informed comments that show engagement with the reading).

During discussion, don’t be afraid to sharply (but respectfully) disagree with your classmates’ and your professor’s opinions.

Do all the reading, despite the absence of quizzes and tests. Read carefully, and take notes while you read.

Meet with the professor during office hours.