



REL 3310

Introduction to Asian Religions

Section: U01

In Person

Fall Term 2026

Course Meeting Information

Day:	MWF
Time:	12 PM - 12:50 PM
Location:	Chem & Physics 115

Professor Information

Samani Pratibha Pragma

Roles: Primary Instructor

Email: sampragy@fiu.edu

Response Time: 1 Day

Phone: 305-348-7121

Office Hours: Tue 2-3 pm By Appointment

Office Location: SIPA 512

Department or Academic Unit: Department of Religious Studies

Course Prerequisites

Course prerequisites, if any, are listed below.

Course Description

This course will introduce students to a variety of religious traditions of South Asia (India, and Sri Lanka) and East Asia (China and Japan) including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Daoism and Shintō. Students will learn about the mythologies, doctrines, ritual practices, and current social and political issues of these traditions by listening to lectures, reading academic literature and primary sources in translation, watching videos, engaging in discussions, and writing essays. Upon finishing this course, students will have a solid understanding of the historical and regional developments of the key Asian religions with their basic rites, ideologies, and social structures.

Textbook and Course Materials

Nadeau, Randall L. Asian religions: A cultural perspective. John Wiley & Sons, 2014.

Required/Recommended: Required

Authors: Nadeau, Randall L.

Publisher: John Wiley & Sons

Publication Date: 2014.

Copyright Date: n/A

ISBN 10: n/A

ISBN 13: N/A

Chapters/Pages: Selected

Recommended Text Roy C. Amore, Amir Hussain, Willard Oxtoby (eds.)

World Religions: Eastern Traditions. Fifth Edition. Oxford & New York:

Oxford University Press, 2018.

Required/Recommended: Recommended

Authors: Roy C. Amore, Amir Hussain, Willard Oxtoby (eds.)

Publisher: Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press

Publication Date: 2018.

Copyright Date: 2018.

ISBN 10: n/A

ISBN 13: n/A

Chapters/Pages: All

Panther Book Pack

Get all required course materials for \$22 per undergrad credit hour through Panther Book Pack. You'll be charged automatically unless you opt out within 3 days after the add/drop deadline.

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Readings, Materials, and Open Educational Resources (OER)

Requirements

This course will involve reading both primary sources and critical academic works. Primary sources include sacred texts and narrative pre-modern literature authored by representatives of the religious traditions. Academic works include critical material of scholars of religion. You are expected to come to class having read all of the assigned readings.

Course Goals

Objectives of the Course

1. Develop a working knowledge of ideologies and practices of Asian

religions

2. Learn to understand and analyse primary sources from pre-modern Asia
3. Demonstrate an awareness of different worldviews and their impact on religious practitioners' choices and behaviours
4. Identify key ethical principles of religious traditions

Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives

Objectives of the Course 1. Develop a working knowledge of ideologies and practices of Asian religions 2. Learn to understand and analyse primary sources from pre-modern Asia 3. Demonstrate an awareness of different worldviews and their impact on religious practitioners' choices and behaviours 4. Identify key ethical principles of religious traditions

Expectations of the Course

1. Students will be able to gather, evaluate, and analyse new information
2. Students will be able to examine various phenomena from multiple perspectives
3. Students will express ideas in a clear and comprehensive manner
4. Students will be able to employ analytical writing and research skills in a variety of contexts

Assignments & Assessments

Assignments

1. *Reading Responses* (300 words)

In this course, you will be required to complete **five** discussion posts. In addition to your post, you will be responsible for replying to **two classmates**. In your replies to a classmate's discussion posts, I expect to see responses that clearly show your thought processes, critical thinking, and relevance to the original post. Please target your replies to those who have not received multiple responses already. *Note, if a discussion post has received more than 3 replies, respond to another student's post.* The goal of this writing exercise is to urge you to engage critically with key arguments of the texts. Be sure to submit your discussion post and responses to two classmates by the deadline.

2. *First and Second Essays* (1000 words each)

For these essays, you will receive a prompt three weeks before the deadline. Your essays should have a focused and well-defined argument supported by evidence from primary and academic sources.

3. *Final Essay* (1200 words)

For a final essay, you will either choose one of the two prompts or decide on a topic of your liking in conversation with me. Your essay should have a focused and well-defined argument supported by evidence from primary and academic sources. As part of the preparation for writing this essay, you will submit an essay plan and a bibliography four weeks before the deadline.

Grading

Attendance and Class Participation 20%

Reading responses (300 words) 20%

First Essay (1000 words) 20%

Second Essay (1000 words) 20%

Final Essay (1200 words) 20%

Schedule of Topics

Week -1

Monday, August 24: Orientation and Clarifying Concepts

- Knowing each other, course content, and requirements
- No readings

Wednesday, August 26: What is Religion?

- Introduction and Geography

Reading: *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 4-10

Friday, August 28: Current Issues in Eastern Religious Tradition

- Religion and Politics
- Religious Diversity and Interfaith Dialogue

Reading: *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 11-27

Week -2

Monday, August 31: Beginnings of Hinduism

- Is Hinduism a cultural construction?
- Maintaining the cosmic order
- Vedic Hinduism vs. Classical Hinduism

Readings:

(1) *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 30-44

(2) Primary source: from O'Flaherty (trans.) *The Rig Veda*

Wednesday, September 2nd: Hindu Deity

- Why many Deity
- Male and Female Deity
- Power of deity

Readings:

(1) *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 45-48

(2) Primary source: TBD

Friday, September 4: Ritual to Renunciation

- The Ultimate Reality
- Workings of karma
- Moral Law

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 75-96
- Primary source: from *Upaniṣads*
- Primary source: from the *Dharmasūtra* of Apastambha

Week -3

Monday, September 7 Labor Day no class

Wednesday, September 9: Hindu Yoga and Tantra

- Is yoga Hindu?
- Yogas as the path to salvation
- Postures, breathing, and meditation

Readings:

- David G. White, "Introduction: Yoga, Brief History of an Idea." (*Yoga in Practice*,

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 1-23

- Primary source: from Barbara Stoler Miller (trans.), *Yoga Sūtra* of

Patañjali

Friday, September 11: Hindu Festivals: Yearly Cycle

- Holi, Diwali, Navratri, Karva Chauth

Reading: *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 54-55.

Week -4

Monday, September 14: Time Cycle in Jainism

- **NOTE: First Reading Response Due**

Reading: See Canvas for assigned readings

Wednesday, September 16: Cosmological Aspects

Readings: See Canvas for assigned readings

Friday, September 18: Tirthankar Mahavira: Establishment of Jain Congregation

Readings:

- See Canvas for assigned readings
- Readings: Chapter 1 in *The Jains*, Paul Dundas (2002)
- Readings: Chapter 2 in *Understanding Jainism*, Lawrence A. Babb (2015)
- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 160-188.

Week -5

Monday, September 21: The Great Schism: *Digambara* and *Svetambara*

Reading: Chapter 2 in *The Jains*, Paul Dundas (2002)

Wednesday, September 23: Languages and Scriptures

- **NOTE: First Essay Due**

Readings:

- Chapter 3 in *The Jains*

- Chapter 2 in *The Jaina Path of Purification*
- Readings on Canvas: Royce Wiles (2005), "The Dating of the Jain Agam
-
- **Friday, September 25: Jain Temple and Art**

Readings: See Canvas for assigned readings

Week -6

Monday, September 28: Precept and Practice of Jain Monasticism

Reading: *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 175-182.

Wednesday, September 30: Diksha: Ceremony of Renunciation

Readings: See Canvas for assigned readings

Friday, October 2: Modern Jain Ascetics: Saman Order

Reading: Anton Zykov (2020), *Saman Śreṇī: Migration, Social Movement and Religious Change*. <https://doi.org/10.33063/diva-429494> Links to an external site.

Week -7

Monday, October 5: Jain Attitude Toward Animals

Readings:

- P S. Jaini (2000), "Fear of Food: Jain Attitudes on Eating."
- Christopher Key. Chappel (2001), "The Living Cosmos of Jainism: A Traditional Science Grounded in Environmental Ethics.

Wednesday, October 7: Karma Theory and Transmigration (samsara)

Readings: Chapter 8 in *The Jains*, Paul Dundas (2002) Pgs. 233–244

Friday, October 9: Color Theory: Concept of Emotion

- **NOTE: Second Essay Due**

Reading: Kristi Wiley (2000), "Colours of Soul: By-products of Activity or Passions?"

Week -8

Monday, October 12: Suicide or Religious Rite: Jain Art of Dying: Sallekhna/ Santhara

Reading/Documentary:

- Chapter 6 in *The Jains*, Paul Dundas (2002) P. 179–180
- Documentary - James Laidlaw (2005). A life worth living: fasting to death as telos of a Jain religious life.

Wednesday, October 14: Santhra: Controversies and Current Debate

Readings:

- Manisha Sethi (2015), "Ritual Death in a Secular State the Jain Practice of Sallekhana."
- *High Court Hearing between Nikhil Soni and Union of India & Ors.* (2015) <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/173301527/>
- Julie Mccarthy, "Fasting To The Death: Is It A Religious Rite Or Suicide?" (*NPR*, 2015) <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2015/09/02/436820789/fasting-to-the-death- is-it-a-religious-rite-or-suicide>

Friday, October 16: Movie on Santhara and class discussion

Week -9

- **NOTE: Third Reading Response Due**

Monday, October 19: Jainism in the Modern World

- Gandhi and Jainism

- Non-violence in politics

Readings:

- World Religions: Eastern Traditions, pp. 190-197
- On Canvas
- Paul Dundas, *The Jains*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Routledge, [1992] 2002), pp. 262-5.
- Watch

Living Jainism, by Kothari Kirti Stambh, 2018[https://](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMQ0ukEI81U)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMQ0ukEI81ULinks to an external site.



Wednesday, October 21: Preksha Meditation: History and Method

Reading: Samani Pratibha Pragya (2017) Prekṣā meditation : History and methods. PhD thesis. SOAS University of London. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25501/SOAS.00024340>Links to an external site.

Friday, October 23: Preksha Meditation: Practical Four Steps

Readings: See Canvas for assigned readings

Week -10

Monday, October 26: The Buddha's Life Story

- Birth, going forth, enlightenment

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 200-212
- Primary sources: Patrick Olivelle (trans.) Ashvaghosha's *Life of the Buddha*, canto 3

Wednesday, October 28: Early Buddhism

- Dharma
- The four noble truths and eightfold path
- The sangha

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 213-232
- Primary source: Patrick Olivelle (trans.) Ashvaghosha's *Life of the Buddha*, canto 11

Friday, October 30: Bodhisattvas and Merit Transfer

- **NOTE: Final essay Bibliography Due**

Reading: *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 234-235

Week -11

Monday, November 2 : Spread of Buddhism

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 200-223

Wednesday, November 4: Buddhism in China

- **NOTE: Fourth Reading Response Due**
- Buddha-Nature and Sudden Enlightenment

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 232-238
- Primary sources: from *The Platform Sutra*, *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra*

Friday, November 6: Pure Land Buddhism

- Historical Development

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 238-262
- Primary sources: from *The Three Pure Land Sutras*
- Confucius as a transmitter of tradition
- Devotion, loyalty, and empathy

Readings/Video:

1. *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 282-315
2. Video: "Healing and the Mind: The Mystery of Chi" (58 mins.) by Bill Moyers, 1993 <https://vimeo.com/33657129>

Week -12

Monday, November 9: Zen Buddhism

- Sudden and Gradual Enlightenment Koan Literature

Readings/Video:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 376-399
- Primary source: from Yoel Hoffmann (trans.) *Every End Exposed* (1977)
- Video: "The Marathon Monks of Mount Hiei" (57 min.) by John Stevens, 1988 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gq3O1g6_9Os

Wednesday, November 11: Veterans Day (No class)

Readings: See Canvas for assigned readings

Friday, November 13: Samata Meditation

& Vipasana Meditation

Readings: See Canvas for assigned readings

Week -13

Monday, November 16: Daoism

- **NOTE: Final Essay Bibliography Due**
- Philosophy vs. religion
- Self-cultivation

Reading: *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 315-357

Wednesday, November 18: Shintō

- **NOTE: Fifth Reading Response Due**
- Spirits and shrines

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 360-376
- Justin McCurry, "Japan ministers visit war shrine as South Korea calls for end to historical tensions" (*The Guardian*, 2022) <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/15/japan-ministers-visit-controversial-war-shrine-as-south-korea-calls-for-end-to-historical-tensions>

Friday, November 20: Sikhism Faith and Practice

- Guru Nanak
- Adi Granth (Guru Granth Sahib)
- Ethics

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 114-146
- Primary Source: Guru Nanak's poems (John Hawley & Mark Juergensmeyer (trans.) *Songs of the Saints of India*)

Week -14

Monday, November 23: Sikhism and Politics

- Indira Gandhi's 1984 assassination
- Thousands of Sikhs Dead

Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 147-157
- Patricia Gossman, *Report* (1990), pp. i-iii, 11-41, <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/INDIA918.PDF>
- Seemran Jeet Singh, "It's Time India Accept Responsibility for Its 1984 Sikh Genocide" (*Time*, 2014), <https://time.com/3545867/india-1984-sikh-genocide-anniversary/>

Wednesday, November 25-29: Thanksgiving Holiday Break (No class)**Week -15****Monday, November 30: Concept of Langer**Readings:

- *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, pp. 121
- Knowledge Meals, Research Relationships, and Postqualitative Offerings: Enacting Langar (a Sikh Tradition of a Shared Meal) as Pedagogy of Doctoral Supervision. [International Journal of Qualitative Methods](#)[Links to an external site.](#) DOI: [1177/16094069221097223](https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221097223)[Links to an external site.](#)

Wednesday, December 2, 5: –Class Presentations & Wrapping-Up**Examination Week****NOTE: Final Essay Due**

Policies & Resources

Before starting this course, please review the Policies & Resources Page in Canvas, which includes comprehensive information on various University and Course Level Policies such as:

- University Policies
- Accessibility and Accommodations
- Online Etiquette
- Technical Requirements and Skills
- Computer & Digital Literacy Skills
- Course Technology Accessibility Statements and Privacy Policies
- Academic Integrity
- Copyright Statement
- Nondiscrimination Statement
- Panthers Care & Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- Fair Use Policy

Nondiscrimination Statement

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