

REL3310 Introduction to Asian Religions
Spring 2025
Tuesday-Thursday 2:00-3:15
Chem & Physics 115

Professor: Dr Sasha Restifo

Contact: arestifo@fiu.edu

Office hours: Tuesday, 11am-12pm, and by appointment

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the major religious traditions of South and East Asia, including Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and Shintō. Students will explore the mythologies, doctrines, rituals, and contemporary social and political issues within these traditions. Learning will be facilitated through lectures, academic readings, primary texts in translation, videos, class discussions, and written essays. By the end of the course, students will have gained a comprehensive understanding of the historical and regional development of these key Asian religions, along with their foundational practices, ideologies, and social structures.

Requirements

This course will involve reading both primary sources and critical academic works. The primary sources consist of sacred texts and pre-modern narratives written by representatives of the respective religious traditions. The academic readings will include critical analyses by scholars of religion. Students are expected to come to class fully prepared, having completed all assigned reading

Objectives of the Course

1. Develop a working knowledge of ideologies and practices of Asian religions.
2. Learn to understand and analyze primary sources from premodern Asia.
3. Demonstrate an awareness of different worldviews and their impact on religious practitioners' choices and behaviors.
4. Identify key ethical principles of religious traditions.

Global Learning Outcomes

1. Students will be able to gather, evaluate, and analyze 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.

Grading

Attendance and participation	20%
5 reading responses (300 words)	20%
First essay (1000 words)	20%
Second essay (1000 words)	20%
Final essay (1200 words)	20%

Assignments

Reading Responses (300 words)

You will post five responses to questions pertaining to the assigned readings. The goal of this writing exercise is to urge you to engage critically with key arguments of the texts.

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.

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 a bibliography four weeks before the deadline.

Statement of Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is essential for both teaching and learning. All students must conform to the highest standards of academic honesty. You are required to be aware of proper citation practices and present only your original work. Be sure to read about the citing regulations here <https://library.fiu.edu/infolit/citations>, and consult me, should you have any doubts or hesitations about the ways of referencing or employing other sources (books, articles, conversations, discussions, pictures, etc.). Any form of cheating will be taken seriously.

Recommended Texts

Roy C. Amore, Amir Hussain, Willard Oxtoby (eds.) *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*. **5th edition**. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

All other readings will be available on Canvas.

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to change)

January 7: Introduction to the Course

January 9: What is Religion?

Weeks 2-4: Hinduism

January 14: Beginnings of Hinduism

January 16: From Ritual to Renunciation

January 21: Yoga and Salvation

January 23: Yoga and Meditation

January 28: Devotion for God

January 30: Women in Hinduism

Week 5: Sikhism

February 4-6: Faith and Practice

Weeks 6-7: Jainism

February 11: Karma and Intention

February 13: Women in Jainism

February 18: Limits of Nonviolence

February 20: Jainism in Modern World

Week 8: Spring Break:

February 25 & February 27 – NO CLASS

Week 9: The Buddha

March 4: The Buddha's Story

March 6: The Community

Week 10: Buddhism in South Asia

March 11: Early Buddhism

March 13: Buddhist Dharma

Weeks 11-12: Religions of China and Korea

March 18: Buddhism in China

March 20: Pure Land Buddhism

March 25: Confucianism

March 27: Daoism

Weeks 13-14: Religions of Japan

April 1: Shintō

April 3: Zen Buddhism

April 8: Current Issues in Eastern Traditions

Weeks 14-16: Religion and Politics

April 10: Hindu Identity

April 15-17: The Legacy of Colonialism

April 22: Is Yoga Hindu?