

THEO 299: INTRODUCTION TO RELIGIONS OF ASIA

Course Syllabus

Spring Term 2019

Instructor: Dung N. Duong, Ph.D (Boston University, 2001)

Professor of Religion and Philosophy, USSH (HCM city)

Class meetings: MONDAYS, 14:00 -17:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This is a survey course that will introduce students to the major tenants of the major religions in Asia, focusing on non-Abrahamic religions, and the religious practices of the peoples of China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and India. The religions examined will include the various forms of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Shamanism, and Hinduism as practiced in different countries.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- 1-Improve students' knowledge of Asian religions
- 2-Sharpen students' thinking about religious issues, both from personal and sociological perspectives
- 3-Enable students to analyze, compare, and contrast religious practices of the same religion in different countries
- 4-Give students an understanding of complex relationships between religion, culture, social practices, and politics in Asian contexts

EXPECTATIONS:

- 1-All students are expected to write a **one-page reflection** on the pre-given reading materials and send it to the instructor one day ahead of the class meeting.
- 2-**Class attendance** plays a major role in students' overall performance evaluation (10% of the final scores).
- 3-**Class discussion** (10%).
- 4-There will be **two comprehensive exams** (one mid-term, 30% and one final, 30%).
- 5-Students are expected to write a **research paper** on topics related to the course (20%).

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to the course. What is religion? Why should we study religion?

Week 2: Chinese traditional religions: Confucianism. On Confucian Religiousness.

Readings:

Tu Weiming, *Confucian Thought*, chapter VIII, "Neo-Confucian Religiosity and the Human Relatedness."

Tu Weiming, *Way, Learning, and Politics*, chapter 2.

Week 3: Chinese Buddhism

Readings:

Arthur F. Wright, *Buddhism in Chinese History*.

Week 4: Chinese Taoism

Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: Growth of a Religion*.

Week 5: Japanese Religions: Shinto

Readings:

H. Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion*, Part One.

Kuroda Toshio, "Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion." Mark R. Mullins et al. *Religion and Society in Modern Japan* (Asian Humanities Press, Berkeley, California, 1993).

Week 6: Japanese Religions: Zen Buddhism

Readings:

D.T. Suzuki, "Zen as Chinese Interpretation of the Doctrine of Enlightenment," Essay 2 in *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, First Series (Grove Press, New York, 1949).

Week 7: Japanese Religions: Tokugawa Confucianism

Readings:

Peter Nosco, "Introduction: Neo-Confucianism and Tokugawa Discourse," in Peter Nosco (editor), *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture* (University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu, 1997).

Week 8: Japanese Religions: New Religions

Remember! We have a one-hour midterm exam in this week.

James W. White, *The Sokagakkai and Mass Society* (Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1970), Chapter 10, pp. 215-246.

Week 9: Japanese Religions: New Religions

Harry Thomsen, *The New Religions in Japan* (Charles E. Tuttle Company, Tokyo, Japan, 1963), pp. 15-31.

Week 10: Korean Religions (Confucianism, Shamanism, Buddhism, and Christianity)

Earl H. Philip & Eiu Young Yu, *Religions in Korea: Beliefs and Cultural Values*, chapter 6.

Week 11: Vietnamese Traditional Religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism.

Cuong Tu Nguyen, *Zen in Medieval Vietnam*, Chapters 1 and 2.

Alexander Soucy, "Nationalism, Globalism and the Re-establishment of the Trúc Lâm Thiền Buddhist Sect in Northern Vietnam," in Philip Taylor (editor), *Modernity and Re-enchantment: Religion in Post-Revolutionary Vietnam* (Lexington Books, 2007).

Week 12: Vietnamese New Religions: Cao Dai, Hoa Hao Buddhism, the Cult of Mother Goddess

Phạm Quỳnh Phương, "Empowerment and Innovation among Saint Trần's Female Mediums," in Philip Taylor (editor), *Modernity and Re-enchantment: Religion in Post-Revolutionary Vietnam* (Lexington Books, 2007).

Week 13: Buddhism in South East Asia (Theravada Buddhism)

W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught* (whole book, PDF).

Week 14: Hinduism: RELIGION IN INDIA

Kim Knott, *Hinduism: A Very Short Introduction*.

Week 15: SUMMING UP: RELIGION IN ASIA

Remember! We have a one-hour final term exam this week!

