

# INTRODUCTION TO THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA, CHINA, AND JAPAN



**RELIGION 2002 H**  
HONORS PROGRAM  
FRANKLIN COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
SPRING 2004

 **PROFESSOR RUSSELL KIRKLAND**

 [WWW.UGA.EDU/RELIGION/RK](http://WWW.UGA.EDU/RELIGION/RK)

 PEABODY HALL 221

 TWTU 3:30-4:00 and by appt.

*"Were one asked to characterize the life of religion in the broadest and most general terms possible, one might say that it consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto."*

— **WILLIAM JAMES** (1842-1910), *THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE* (1902)



## **THE PURPOSE OF THE COURSE**

The academic study of religion is a systematic exploration of the visions, values, and activities by which individuals and societies of past and present have understood and shaped their life-experiences. The goal of such courses is to promote a mature sensitivity to religious traditions, personalities, issues, and institutions, within their proper historical contexts. Such courses are not intended to persuade students either toward or away from any specific tradition, nor are they intended to serve as an element of any personal spiritual search in which students might already be engaged. Rather, the goal of such courses is for students to achieve an accurate understanding of certain cultures' religions *on those cultures' own terms*, and to evaluate those religions in a manner that is both *properly critical* and *properly sympathetic*. Should you want an experience that is "spiritually fulfilling" to you personally, please go to a religious center of your choice and practice there. You are in this course to study religion: if you wish to practice religion, you are in the wrong place.

This course does not pretend to be a comprehensive exploration of religion in all "non-Western" cultures, or even of religion in all Asian cultures. It will focus on several traditions that evolved in Southwest, South and East Asia: **Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism** and **Taoism**. The coverage of the course, while extensive, remains highly selective. Naturally, it will introduce

- ♦ major historical leaders of those traditions;
- ♦ many influential writings of those traditions;
- ♦ many important subtraditions within those traditions.

But in the final analysis, we will be working to understand the **key concerns and values** of each tradition, and to practice studying other cultures in an honest and unbiassed manner.

This course will also pay careful attention to the vast differences among the religious traditions of the non-Western world. Rather than attempting to identify characteristics of some supposed "non-Western mind" (much less some "primitive mind" or "Oriental mind"), we will pay careful attention to the vast differences in attitude and worldview among the world's cultures throughout history, and to their great variety of responses to variously identified issues of "life, the universe, and everything." We will also work to undo some of the misunderstandings that flourish in our society regarding non-Western religions.

Bear in mind that an introductory survey of this nature is *unlikely* fully to satisfy your curiosity about the

beliefs and practices of such cultures, much less to answer all your questions about “religion.” No one can learn to understand Hinduism or Buddhism or Taoism in a few weeks, nor can anyone master the challenges of cross-cultural interpretation in a single semester. It is for that reason that our department has a wide array of more advanced courses. You are encouraged to supplement what you learn in this course with other courses in non-Western religions.

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course. Changes and variations, as announced to the class by the instructor, may be necessary. All academic work must meet the standards contained in the document titled *A Culture of Honesty*. All students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing any academic work. You are also expected to take thorough notes in class. Whenever you miss class, it is your responsibility to check with classmates about what you missed—not to expect the instructor to give you a personal review or to excuse you for not having heard important announcements. You are welcome to chat with the instructor after class, during office hours, or at other arranged times. The time before class, however, is **NOT** a good time for **any** discussion.

The classroom is not a lunchroom: do your snacking and enjoyment of beverages before you come to class or after you leave. The classroom is not is also not a phonebooth, so please make sure that any phones that you bring into the building are turned off. In sum, it is your responsibility to refrain from activity that avoidably interferes with the learning process.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

1. To illumine the hermeneutic issues involved in understanding religion across cultures. Prof. Mark MacWilliams of St. Lawrence University calls this process “gaining cross-cultural religious literacy.”
2. To introduce basic elements of the religious traditions of India, China, and Japan.
3. To sample some of the cultural riches of India, China, and Japan by reading important selections from classic religious literature and more modern materials.
4. To demonstrate the diverse factors that affect human life by observing the influence of historic, geographic, and economic factors on the evolution of beliefs and practices in India, China, and Japan.
5. To illustrate that religious traditions evolve, and that such evolution can be understood by reference to historical, intellectual, cultural and existential phenomena.
6. To stimulate meaningful comparison, and contrast, of Asian traditions with those more familiar to students from their own cultural heritage. As Prof. Mark MacWilliams says, this means: “*To learn more about religion and about one's self. Max Müller, a famous historian of religions, once said, "One who knows one religion knows none." The same can be said about human life. One who knows only one culture or one way of living knows none. To know ourselves--who we are, who we could be--means we must know others. And to know others means we must study that which informs and guides their sense of self, society, and world. To study what people believe is ultimately real, good, beautiful, true, and the way they put this into practice is to study religion.*”



### **TEXTS**

The textbooks that are appropriate for this course deftly summarize all the pertinent data and put all the pertinent interpretive issues into proper critical perspective, without succumbing to the latent colonialistic biases that plagued twentieth-century presentations of such matters.

Regrettably, no such textbooks yet exist. It is thus impossible for a person of this century simply to pick up any of the currently available textbooks and learn to understand Asian religions—even at the most basic level—without the expert guidance of a knowledgeable professor who can correct such books’ errors and make good their deficiencies. That having been said, in this course you will be reading the better sections of two of the most nearly adequate textbooks now in print:

 David **Noss**, *A History of the World's Religions* (11<sup>th</sup> edition: 2003)

 Gary **Kessler**, *Eastern Ways of Being Religious*.

Another required text available in local bookstores (and on Reserve in the Library) is

 Herbert **Fingarette**, *Confucius—The Secular as Sacred*.

Perhaps the most important readings, however, are to be found in the Course **READER**, which you should pur-

chase at Bel-Jean's Printer (downtown, opposite the UGA arch).



## **REQUIREMENTS**



Regular attendance



**Timely** completion of **all** required readings [reflected in tests and papers]



One brief essay (3-4 pages) on an assigned topic 30% of course grade



One in-class test 30% of course grade



A final essay exam 40% of course grade

At the end of the course, borderline grades are *usually* rounded up, but in *all* such cases, the instructor may take into account *all* elements of your performance, *such as* the regularity of your attendance, the consistency of your performance, and the constructiveness of your class participation.

**NOTE:** The course **READER** also includes:

- ❖ "THE WRITING PROCESS AS PARTNERSHIP"
- ❖ "A GUIDE TO WRITING ACADEMIC PAPERS."

Following the advice provided there will help you write good papers in this course and other courses. See also:

1. UGA Writing Center, "Writing Resources":

<http://www.english.uga.edu/writingcenter/writing/index.html>

2. "Writing the Religion Paper": <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~compose/student/humanities/religion.html>.



## **THE ACADEMIC VALUE OF THE INTERNET**

Your instructor's **WEBPAGE** ([WWW.UGA.EDU/RELIGION/RK](http://WWW.UGA.EDU/RELIGION/RK)) includes many pertinent

- ❖ **STUDY GUIDES**
- ❖ FULL-TEXT **PUBLICATIONS**
- ❖ **LINKS** TO OTHER **GOOD SITES** ON NON-WESTERN RELIGIONS.

However, like many other good sites, this one has its limitations. First, it is quite outdated. Secondly, it has never provided all the material that even your instructor would like it to provide. And thirdly, it was not constructed, in the first instance, to serve as a pedagogical tool. Even such a website tries to fulfill different functions for different people: some are intended as professional connections for other scholars, others are designed to appeal to the general public. The latter may be more colorful or amusing, but are not necessarily more reliable or more informative. Remember to *think critically about what you are seeing*: many sites have an unexpressed agenda, just like movies and TV shows, and some may be well-intentioned but lacking in academic value. **SO BEWARE attempting to use the internet as an educational tool** — *particularly* in regard to non-Western religions — **without expert guidance**. Much of what you will find there is simply garbage. Remember that all a person has to do to create, for example, a website on "Taoism" is to set up the website: he or she does not have to really *know* anything about Taoism! And for psychological and/or economic reasons, some people construct such sites just to get attention, or to get a reputation that they have not bothered to earn through hard work or proven expertise. Newcomers can easily mistake such a site for a reliable resource. **With** a very few exceptions, responsible scholars do **not** put their research on the web. Few professors' webpages, for instance, even provide full bibliographic data telling you what they have published. And only a handful post unpublished research findings, or provide full-text reprints of any of their publications, the way that your instructor and a few others do on their own webpages. So despite the immense amount of *stuff* that you can find on the internet, it is unreliable as an educational resource.

Solid and reliable studies of non-Western religions generally appear **only** in your university **LIBRARY**, within the pages of **scholarly books and journals**. Such publications—**unlike internet websites**—undergo a careful **peer-review process**, by which today's knowledgeable authorities confirm the substance and value of good scholarship and screen out shoddy material. So **DO NOT** make the mistake of trying to "do research" on the web! Your instructor will recommend particular websites that are useful and dependable. But unless instructed otherwise, you should plan to do **all** of your research in your university **library**, informed by your instructor and guided by trained reference librarians.

# COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Readings listed in square brackets are **recommended**



## STUDYING OTHERS' "RELIGIONS"

**READER:** "ON THE ACADEMIC STUDY OF RELIGION IN AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES"

**Kessler:** 3-11a (top) [25-29] 29-35



## WHAT IS "RELIGION"?

**READER:** "A DEFINITION OF RELIGION"

[WEBPAGE: KIRKLAND, "DEFINING RELIGION"]

**Kessler:** 17-20



## DEFENDING THE GOODNESS OF CREATION: ZOROASTRIANISM

**Noss:** 354-362, 367b-370b



## "NO WAY EXCLUDED, NO WAY PREFERRED": THE RELIGIONS OF INDIA

### CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIAN THOUGHT AND RELIGION

**READER:** "HINDUISM"

🎬 **Film:** "330 Million Gods" (from *The Long Search*)

**Noss:** 80-81a, 102, 135b-138a, 139b-141a

**Kessler:** 39-51

### MYTH, RITUAL, AND REALITY IN THE *VEDAS*

**Kessler:** 51-54

**Noss:** 81a-89a, 90a-91



## "HINDUISM"

### PATHS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE: SAMKHYA AND YOGA

**Noss:** 106-109b, 112a-b, 116a-119a

**READER:** "SAMKHYA AND YOGA: TWO CLASSICAL HINDU 'PATHS OF INSIGHT'"

**Kessler:** 72-75b

**PATHS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE: *THE UPANISHADS***

**Noss:** 94a-101b

**READER:** "RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN ANCIENT INDIA"

**READER:** "THE *UPANISHADS*"

**Kessler:** 55-58

**PATHS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE: *VEDANTA***

**Noss:** 112b-113b, 119a-121a, 143a-144a

**READER:** "ADVAITA VEDANTA"

**Kessler:** 79-81

**RELIGION, MORALITY, AND SOCIETY IN TRADITIONAL HINDUISM**

**Noss:** 91a-94a, 101b-102a, 109b-112a, 113b-115b

🕒 **Film:** "330 MILLION GODS" (from *THE LONG SEARCH*)

**Kessler:** 58-59 [60-62] 76b-77b, 88-92

**"SEEING THE DIVINE"**

**Noss:** 115b-116a

**Kessler:** 93-96

**PATHS OF DEVOTION: *THE BHAGAVAD-GITA***

**Noss:** 121a-125b

**Kessler:** 67-72

**PATHS OF DEVOTION: *ŚIVA, VISHNU, KRISHNA, AND THE GODDESS***

**Noss:** 125b-128a, 129a-135b

**Kessler:** 77-79



**BUDDHISM IN INDIA**

**THE AWAKENED ONE: *GAUTAMA THE BUDDHA***

🕒 **Film:** "*The Footprints of the Buddha*" (from *The Long Search*)

**READER:** "THE ORIGINS OF BUDDHISM"

**Noss:** 164-172a, 174a-179a

**Kessler:** 99-100, 112-113a, 100-103a (middle), 118-123b (bottom)

**WALKING IN THE BUDDHA'S FOOTPRINTS: *THE TRADITIONS OF NIKAYA BUDDHISM***

**Noss:** 172a-174a, 179a-184, 186-188b, 189b-193b (bottom), 195a-b

**Kessler:** 116, 110a-111b (top)

**REACHING "BUDDHAHOOD" THROUGH WISDOM AND "COMPASSION": *MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM***

**READER:** "ELEMENTS OF MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM"

**Noss:** 188b-189b, 195b-197b, 202b-206a, 206b (bottom)-208a, 209a-212a

**Kessler:** 123b (bottom)-138a

**Kessler:** 103a (middle)-110a



## "THE THREE TEACHINGS ARE ONE": THE RELIGIONS OF CHINA

**READER:** "ELEMENTS OF CHINESE RELIGION"

**Kessler:** 163

**Noss:** 254, 259a-262a



### CONFUCIANISM

#### THE TRADITIONAL WAY: CONFUCIUS

**READER:** "THE FOUNDERS OF CLASSICAL CONFUCIANISM"

**Noss:** 265a (bottom)-266a (top), 288-304b

**Kessler:** 164-169b, 171-72a (top)

**Kessler:** 180a-184b ("The *Analects*" of Confucius)

**Fingarette:** vii-xi, 1-79

#### THE DEBATE ABOUT HUMAN NATURE

**Noss:** 309b-314a

**Kessler:** 169b-70a, 184b-185b

**READER:** "MENCIUS' EXPLANATION OF THE VIRTUES"

**Kessler:** 185b-187b (*Mencius*); 187b-189a (*Hsün-tzu/Xunzi*)

#### CONFUCIANISM AND "RELIGION"

**Kessler:** 209b (middle)-210

**Kessler:** 178a-179b (The *Chung-yung/Zhongyong* = "The Mean") [210b-12]

**Noss:** 320b-321



### TAOISM

**Kessler:** 227-28a, 235b-236

**READER:** "TAOISM"

**READER:** "THE HISTORY OF TAOISM"

**READER:** "TAO"

**READER:** "PEERING INTO THE UNSEEN TO DISCERN THE SUBTLE STRUCTURES AND CURRENTS OF THE WORLD: THE *I CHING*, YIN AND YANG, AND THE 'FIVE FORCES'"

#### "INTERNAL CULTIVATION"

**READER:** "THE *NEI-YEH*"

#### "THE WAY OF HEAVEN": THE *TAO TE CHING* / *DAODE JING* ("LAO-TZU" / LAOZI)

**Noss:** 266a-276a (top), 268a-273a

**READER:** "TAOISM AND EARLY CHINESE THOUGHT"

**READER:** "TAOISM AND CONFUCIANISM"

**READER:** "THE TAO TE CHING"  
**Kessler:** 236b-239a

**QUESTIONING "REALITY": CHUANG-TZU (ZHUANGZI)**

**Noss:** 273a-277a  
**Kessler:** 239a-242a  
**READER:** "THE USELESS WORDS OF CHUANG CHOU"

**CULTIVATING REALITY: LATER TAOISM**

**Kessler:** 250a-262a  
**READER:** "TRANSCENDENCE AND IMMORTALITY"  
**READER:** "LITERATI TAOISM"



**BUDDHISM IN CHINA AND JAPAN**

**CH'AN ("ZEN") BUDDHISM**

**Noss:** 197b-199b, 212a-b, 213b (bottom)-220a  
**READER:** "NEW TRADITIONS IN EAST ASIAN BUDDHISM: CH'AN BUDDHISM ('ZEN')"  
**READER:** "ZEN'S DEBT TO CONFUCIANISM"  
**Kessler:** 138a-142a  
**Visit:** <http://iriz.hanazono.ac.jp> (English);  
<http://sotozen-net.or.jp> (English);  
<http://www.ciolet.com/WWWVI-Zen.html>  
<http://www.zendo.com/eiheiji.html>.

**PURE LAND BUDDHISM**

🕒 **Film:** "*The Land of the Disappearing Buddha*" (from *The Long Search*)  
**READER:** "NEW TRADITIONS IN EAST ASIAN BUDDHISM: 'PURE LAND' BUDDHISM"  
**Noss:** 212b-213b (bottom)  
**Visit:** <http://www2.hongwanji.or.jp/english>;  
<http://www.shin-ibs.edu/library2.htm>; and  
<http://www.shindharmanet.com>  
Also: See "Glossary of Shin Buddhist Terms" at  
<http://www.shinranworks.com/readingtools/index.htm>.