

Religious Studies 270
CHINESE RELIGIONS

Joseph Adler
O'Connor 204
adlerj@kenyon.edu
427-5290

Fall 2013
MWF 2:10-3:00 (Per. 7)
Ascension 126
Office hours: MWF 3-4, T 2-4
and by appointment

- [Links](#)
- [Selected handouts / readings](#)
- [Paper format guide](#)
- [Paper criteria](#)

This course is a survey of the major historical and contemporary currents of religious thought and practice in Chinese culture. Our aim will be to gain a richer understanding of some characteristic Chinese ways of experiencing the self, society, and the world. We will examine the traditional "three teachings" (Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism), as well as "popular religion," and the contributions of all four to Chinese culture. Specific themes will include ancestor worship, sacrifice and divination, religious ethics, meditation, longevity techniques, and the close connection between Chinese religion and politics. We will also look briefly at Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in China, the 20th-century repressions of religion, and the recent revival. During the last two weeks we will look into some contemporary religious movements in Taiwan. In each section we will attempt to identify those aspects of Chinese religion which are inextricable from traditional Chinese culture and those which are capable of crossing cultural boundaries. Classes are a mixture of lecture, discussion, and films.

Reading:

Available in Bookstore

- Joseph A. Adler, *Chinese Religious Traditions*
- Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 1
- Richard Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma: Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan*



"The Master said, 'Learning without thinking is in vain; thinking without learning is dangerous.'"



Laozi departing through the Western Pass.



Bodhidharma (Damo) in meditation.

Course Requirements and Grading:

1. Participation (15%). Regular attendance, timely completion of reading assignments, active participation in class discussions, and one short conference with me in my office *no later than Friday, September 20*. Grading criteria are as follows:

- A: Regular attendance (no more than 3 unexcused absences), regular contribution to discussion (at least once a week)
- B: Regular attendance, occasional contribution
- C: Too many absences OR too little contribution
- D: Too many absences AND too little contribution
- F: Other serious problems

Option: To supplement the *class discussion* portion of your participation grade for any week, you may turn in a written "reaction paper" (1-2 pages, typed, maximum one per week) containing your reactions to, reflections on, and/or questions about course readings, films, and lectures. These will be graded 1 (credit), 2 (good), or 3 (excellent) and will be returned within a week with comments. The best times to turn these in would be on Mondays, after we have completed a section.

2. Three short quizzes (10% each), consisting of short-answer questions.

3. Two short research papers (20% each), 6-10 pages plus bibliography (following the [Paper Format Guide](#); see also the [Paper criteria](#)). Each paper will make use of at least *two* books or articles outside of assigned class readings.

Paper 1:

- a) Classical Confucianism and/or Daoism due Mon., Sept. 30
- or b) Cosmology, Popular Religion, or Daoist religion Mon., Nov. 4

Paper 2:

- a) Chinese Buddhism Fri., Nov. 22
- or b) Neo-Confucianism, Western religions. or 20th century Fri., Dec. 13 (last day of class)

You must discuss your particular topic with me in advance at least one week in advance of the due date. There is a list of sample paper topics under [Selected handouts/readings](#).

4. Final exam (15%), Monday, Dec. 16, 1:30 pm: short-answer questions (like the quizzes) and one or two short essays (1 hour).

5. Notes:

- *Laptops* are not allowed in class unless Erin Salva says you need one (see below).
- *Cellphones* must be turned completely off.
- *Online readings* must be printed out and brought to class. This is because I want you to engage with the readings by marking them up with notes.
- No written assignments will be accepted electronically.
- If you have a disability that will affect your work or participation in this class, please contact Erin Salva, Coordinator of Disability Services, at 427-5453 or salvae@kenyon.edu, and speak to me individually, early in the semester, about any arrangements you will need.

COURSE SCHEDULE

**1 Aug 30-Sep 6 Introduction to the course
Religion in Chinese history
Shang and early Zhou religion**

Read: N Adler, *Chinese Religious Traditions (CRT)*, chs. 1-2
N de Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, pp. 3-40
N Richard von Glahn, "Ancestors, Ghosts, and Gods in Ancient China," pp. 19-28 [[Moodle](#)]

2 Sep 9-13 Classical Confucianism: The Way of the Sages

- ❖ The Mandate of Heaven and the Five Classics
- ❖ Confucius (Kongzi): humanity (*ren*) and ritual propriety (*li*)
- ❖ Mencius (Mengzi) and his theory of human nature

Read: N *CRT*, pp. 30-42
N *Sources*, pp. 41-63 (Confucius),
112-158 (Mencius)



Master Kong

3 Sep 16-20

- ❖ Xunzi: another theory of human nature
- ❖ "The Great Learning" (*Daxue*) and "The Mean" (*Zhongyong*)
- ❖ Filiality (*xiao*)
- ❖ Women in Confucianism
- ❖ Rites and Music

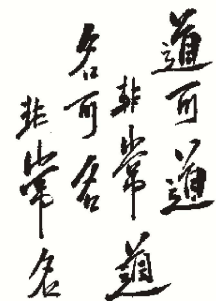
Read: N *CRT*, pp. 42, 63-67
N *Sources*, pp. 159-183 (Xunzi),
326-344 (*Xiaojing*, *Liji*, Great Learning, The Mean, sacrifice, music)
819 (bot.)-831 (women's education)
N Selections from *The Twenty-four Exemplars of Filial Piety* [[Moodle](#)]

4 Sep 23-27 Classical Daoism: The Way of Nature

- ❖ Laozi: *Daodejing*
- ❖ Zhuangzi

Monday:
Quiz 1

Read: N *CRT*, pp. 42-57
N *Sources*, pp. 77-111, 263-268, 386-390
N More passages from *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* [[Moodle](#)]



First line of the
Daodejing

5 Sep 30-Oct 4

Monday:
Paper 1a due

Han syncretism and Chinese cosmology

- ❖ *Qi, yin-yang, and Five Phases (wuxing)*
- ❖ *The Yijing*
- ❖ **Film:** "A Question of Balance"

Read: N CRT, pp. 58-63

N Robert Sharf, "The Five Phases and Correlative Thinking" [[Moodle](#)]

N Joseph Adler, "The Yijing" [[Moodle](#)]

N "The Hexagrams" / "On Consulting the Oracle" [[Moodle](#)]

N *Sources*, pp. 206-212 (Li Si),
235-242 (*Lüshi chunqiu*, Huang-Lao Daoism),
273-282 (medical theory, the six schools),
292-297 (Dong Zhongshu),
311-325 (Confucian canon, *Yijing*),
344-352 (three bonds, cosmology, time)



The 8 Trigrams and the Taiji symbol

6 Oct 7-9

Popular religion 1

- ❖ **Gods, ghosts, and ancestors**
- ❖ **Ancestor worship, divination, village festivals, and state religion**

Read: N CRT, pp. 102-107, 112-121

N van Glahn, "Ancestors, Ghosts, and Gods in Ancient China," pp. 29-44 [[Moodle](#)]

N Philip Clart, "Chinese Popular Religion" [[Moodle](#)]

N "Lord Kuan Manifests a Divine Presence..." (from Luo Guanzhong, *Three Kingdoms*) [[Moodle](#)]



A *dangki* (spirit-medium or shaman) flailing himself during a temple festival in Taiwan.

<< **October Break** >>

7 Oct 14-18

Popular religion 2

- ❖ **Film:** "To Taste a Hundred Herbs"

Read: N David K. Jordan, *Gods, Ghosts and Ancestors*, ch.4 (Divination) [[online](#)]

N Tam Wai Lun, "Communal Worship and Festivals in Chinese Villages" (from Palmer, Shive, and Wickeri, eds., *Chinese Religious Life*) [[Moodle](#)]

8 Oct 21-25 **Daoist religious experience and practice**
 ❖ Revelation, ritual, meditation, alchemy



Jindan,
 "Golden
 Elixir"

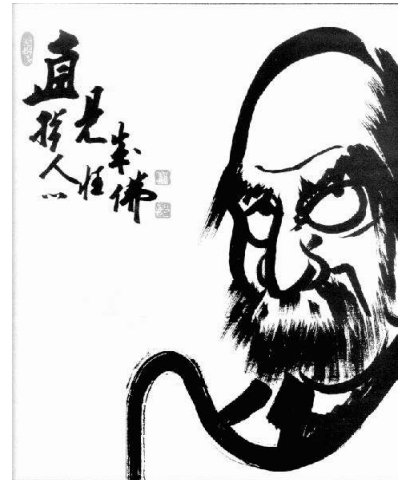
Read: N *CRT*, pp. 67-73, 97-99
 N *Sources*, pp. 392-414
 N Livia Kohn, "Laozi: Ancient Philosopher, Master of Immortality, and God,"
 "Daoist rites and meditation," "Training" [[Moodle](#)]

9 Oct 28-Nov 1 **Chinese Buddhism**

Monday:
 Quiz 2

- ❖ Basic concepts
- ❖ Mahayana

Read: N *CRT*, pp. 74-85
 N *Sources*, pp. 415-421 (and skim to 428),
 433-438 (doctrinal schools),
 444-455 (Tiantai), 471-476 (Huayan),
 585-586 (845 Suppression)



Bodhidharma: "Directly pointing to
 the human mind / Seeing one's
 nature and becoming a Buddha."

10 Nov 4-8 **Pure Land and Chan Buddhism**
 ❖ Film: "To the Land of Bliss"

Monday:
 Paper 1b due

Read: N *CRT*, pp. 85-89, 100-102
 N *Sources*, pp. 481-519, 522-536
 N Peter Gregory, "The Vitality of
 Buddhism in the Sung" [[Moodle](#)]
 N Paul Swanson, "Truth in T'ien-t'ai Philosophy" [[Moodle](#)]
 N Martine Batchelor, "Interpenetration" [[Moodle](#)]

11 Nov 11-15 **Neo-Confucianism: The Learning of the Way**

Monday:
 Quiz 3

Read: N *CRT*, 91-97
 N *Sources*, pp. 568-573, 583-585 (Han Yu),
 587-590 (Song revival),
 667-678 (Zhou Dunyi),
 682-684 (Zhang Zai),
 689-695 (Cheng brothers),
 697-705 (Zhu Xi)



朱熹
 Zhu Xi

12 Nov 18-22 **Western religions in China**

Friday:

- No class
- Paper 2a due
(may be e-mailed)

- Read:** N CRT, pp. 107-112, 121-125
 N Jonathan N. Lipman, "Living Judaism in Confucian Culture: Being Jewish and Being Chinese" [[Moodle](#)]
 N Daniel H. Bays, "The Chinese Church from the End of the Cultural Revolution to the Early Twenty-first Century" [[Moodle](#)]
 N Dru Gladney, "Islam in China: Accommodation or Separatism?" [[online](#)]

<< Thanksgiving Break >>

13 Dec 2-6 **20th-century critiques of religion in China; Religion and modernity in Taiwan (1)**

❖ **Film:** "The Gods Come Home"

- Read:** N Mayfair Yang, *Chinese Religiosities*, 11-34 [[Moodle](#)]
 N "The New Culture Movement" (Chen Duxiu, Hu Shi),
 "The Communist Revolution" (Mao Zedong),
 "A Reevaluation of Confucianism" (Li Zehou, Gu Mu) (from *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 2) [[Moodle](#)]
 N "Document 19" [[Moodle](#)]
 N Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma*: Preface, chs. 1-3

14 Dec 9-13 **Religion and modernity in Taiwan (2)**

- Read:** N Madsen, *Democracy's Dharma*: chs. 4-5, Conclusions

**Friday, Dec. 13: Paper 2b due
(my office by 5:00)**

Monday, Dec. 16, 1:30 pm: Final exam