Course Description:
This course looks at how deities, cults, ideas, and practices spread from one place to another as part of a growing empire, a network of holy men, or a circuit of traders. Examples will be drawn from the Mediterranean and from Asia, including Hellenistic cults, Manichaeism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. The aim is to identify and analyze (a) the processes that occur when religion travel from one region to another, and (b) the role of these religions in creating new cultures shared across a wide area. The focus is mainly on pre-modern contexts, but comparisons will be made, especially toward the end of the course, with religious pluralism and globalization in the modern world. Attention will be given to conceptual tools such as 'syncretism', 'folk traditions' vs. 'high traditions', 'orthodoxy' vs. 'sect', and the formation of canon.

Course Requirements:
1. Prepared attendance in class meetings. Each student should come to class with written observations or questions for discussion. These will be turned in and, together with actual contributions to discussion, will cumulatively amount to 20% of final grade.
2. Two ca. 1000-word essays based on readings and discussion (20% each).
3. An in-class midterm exam (20% of final grade).
4. A one-hour final exam (20% of final grade).

Books for Purchase:
Richard C. Foltz, Religions of the Silk Road (Saint Martin's Press, 1999).
Antonia Tripolitis, Religions of the Hellenistic-Roman age (Eerdmans, 2002).

* Other readings (marked with an asterisk) will be made available as the term progresses.

Tentative Class Schedule (subject to revision as the term progresses)

Introduction

9-5 Merchants, soldiers, and monks: Taking religion on the road

Week 1 Mystery Cults and Hellenistic Religious Philosophies

9-10 Tripolitis, ch. I.A-B;
    * Koester, pp. 1-16, 31-36, 164-203, (Historical Survey; The Development of Greek Religion; The New Religions);
Week 2  Mithraism and Zoroastrianism

9-17  Foltz, chs. 1-2;
      Tripolitis, ch. ii;
      * Malandra, *An Introduction to Ancient Iranian Religion*, pp. 35-64, 71-72, 150-158

9-19  RLA, ch. 24 (Mithras Liturgy and *Sepher ha-Razim*).

Week 3  Hellenistic Judaism

9-24  Tripolitis, ch. iii;
      * Cansdale 1998;
      RLA, ch. 36 (4 Maccabees).

9-26  * Lubin 2002;
      RLA, chs. 9 (Talmud), 26 (Seal of the Merkevah).

Week 4  Early Christianity in the Late Antique World

10-1  Tripolitis, ch. iv.


Week 5  Gnosticism

10-8  Tripolitis, ch. v-vi;
      * Gnostic Gospels.

10-10  Reading Day (No Class Meeting)
      FIRST ESSAY DUE SUNDAY by 6pm (in my mailbox)

Week 6  Nestorianism and Manichaeism

10-15  Foltz, ch. 4;
      * Lieu 1998;
      RLA, chs. 12 (Cologne Mani Codex), 43 (Theology).

10-17  RLA, chs. 8 (Asceticism), 25 (Liturgy).

Week 7  Islam on the Silk Road
10-22  Foltz, chs. 5-7;  
   * Qur'an 1 (al-Fatiha), 2 (The Cow), 5 (The Spread Table), 30 (The Romans).

10-24  MIDTERM EXAMINATION

Week 8  Religions in Ancient India and the Mauryan Age

10-29  * Lubin, “Vedic Religion and Its Transformations”;  
   * Upanishads.

10-31  * Life of the Buddha;  
   * Edicts of Asoka.

Week 9  The New Brahmanism, Initiatory Sects, and the Royal Courts

11-5   * Lubin, “Arya Society and the Dharma of the Brahmins”;  
   * The Atharvashiras-Upanishad.

11-7   * Lubin, “Kings and Gods: State-Sponsored Temple Traditions”;  
   * excerpts from the Puranas.

Week 10  The Indianization of Southeast Asia

11-12  * Coedes, The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, chs. 2-4.

11-14  * Robinson and Johnson, “Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia”;  
   * Mahavamsa (Chronicle of Lanka) 1.12-43, 11-13, 24-25.

Week 11  Buddhism on the Silk Road / Chinese Culture

11-19  Foltz, ch. 3;  
   * The Questions of King Milinda.

11-21  Wright, ch. 1;  
   * Sources of Chinese Tradition, ch. 9.

SECOND ESSAY DUE IN CLASS

Thanksgiving Recess

Week 12  Buddhism Comes to China

12-3   Wright, chs. 2-4;  
   * Sources of Chinese Tradition, ch. 15.

12-5   Wright, chs. 5-6;  
   * Sources of Chinese Tradition, ch. 17.

FINAL EXAM
Occasional Readings (*more to come*)


**Relevant Links:**
- [Buddhism on the Silk Road](#) - a website of the British Library
- [Monks and Merchants](#) - a website of the Asia Society
- [Silkroad Foundation](#)
- [Silk Road Seattle](#) - a website of the Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, Univ. Washington
- [Bulletin of the Asia Institute](#) - "studies in the art, archaeology, numismatics, history, and languages of ancient Iran, Mesopotamia, and Central Asia and connections with China and Japan along the Silk Route"
- [Journal of Ancient Civilizations](#) - "a forum for the discussion of various aspects of the cultural and historical process in the Ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean world, encompassing studies of individual civilizations as well as common elements, contacts and interactions among them"
- [Zoroastrianism: An Ancient Religion of Iran and Its Diaspora](#)

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