This course on comparative religion examines three East Asian views of how human, animals, society, and nature are related within their respective worldviews. Specifically, it examines episodes involving the slaughter and consumption of oxen as it is found in key passages in the texts of three classical Chinese and Japanese figures: Mencius the Confucian who praises King Xuan for his compassion in sparing the life of the sacrificial ox but criticizes him for replacing the ox with a sheep; Zhuangzi the Daoist who extols the virtue of Cook Ding who greatly impresses King Wen Hui with his ability to carve up an ox without dulling his knife for nine years; and Shinran the Pure Land Buddhist who specifically identifies butchers as mired in karmic suffering for depending upon killing sentient beings for their livelihood, yet also embraces them as the objects of cosmic compassion. We will also examine the work of Temple Grandin, professor animal sciences at Colorado State University, who out of her deep bond with the suffering cattle being sent off to slaughter, invented a system to minimize their fear and pain.

Requirements

1. Attendance: Required. Students can have one unexcused absence without penalty. Each class missed thereafter without prior permission will result in 1/2 grade penalty for the course grade.

2. One short paper, and two medium-length papers: There will be one short paper (1 page) and two medium-length papers (2-3 pages) based on topics that will be provided by the instructor.

3. Journals. Students will maintain a weekly journal of their learning process, containing reflections on the readings, discussions, and assigned papers. These journals will be collected at various points in the course and returned with comments.

4. Presentation: Students will make a presentation on the readings for one of the section meetings. The presenter should not summarize the reading but should use the presentation to discuss why the selected ideas/passages in question are important for understanding the reading and proceed to explain as well as raise questions about these ideas/passages.

   The primary purpose of these presentations is to launch the discussion, not to demonstrate breadth of knowledge or to lead the discussion. Each presenter will prepare a handout with 2 questions and brief, corresponding quotations from the readings. More detailed instructions will be provided on the course web site.

5. Final paper: Each student will hand in a final paper of 7-9 pages (A longer final paper of 10-12 pages will be required for those who have registered for REL507). Suggested topics will be provided. Students may choose to create their own topics with the consent of the instructor. In the case of the latter, a one-paragraph description of the topic must be submitted by email to the instructor one week prior to the due date.

6. Late policy on written assignments: Three grace days total will be allotted excluding the final paper for which no extensions will be given. For the short papers, a cumulative total of three late days will be allowed without penalty. Thereafter, each late day will result in a two-point deduction from the course grade. Weekends are not counted against the grace days.

Grades

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short paper I: Jan 12</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Paper I: Feb 2</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium Paper II: Feb 23</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper: Mar 9</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Journal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
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Required Texts


Course Reader, REL 407/507 The Bull in the China Shop.

(RT = Required Text from the Bookstore. CR = Course Reader article; CR1 = Course Reader, first article.)

Week 1: Jan 5: Introduction: Course Themes & Aims
Background of the “Oxen” Motif in Mencius, Zhuangzi, and Shinran.

Week 2: Jan 12: Animal Ethics: Rights, Utility, & Contracts; Hunter-Gatherer, Sport Hunting, Agribusiness

Recommended Reading: Fuchs, “Enhancing the Divine Image” (CR4); Martin Forward & Alam, “Islam” (CR5).

Week 3: Mencius & King Hsuan: The Confucian Sage & the Misplaced Compassion of the King.

Week 4: Jan 26: Zhuangzi & Cook Ding: The Daoist Oxen Carver and the Confused King


Reading: Temple Grandin, Thinking in Pictures (RT).
Special class visit, and mandatory evening lecture attendance, Lillis 282, 7:30 p.m.

Week 7: Feb 16: Shinran, Karmic Evil, and the Outcasts: Peasants, Fishermen, Grave Diggers, and Butchers
Readings: Taitetsu Unno, trans., Tannisho (RT); Mark Unno, “The Nembutsu of No-Meaning and the Problem of Genres” (online: see course web site); Akira OMINE, “Probing the Japanese Experience of Nature” (CR21); Chapple, “Noninjury to Animals: Jaina and Buddhist Perspectives” (CR7).

Week 8: Feb 23: Tour of S-Bar Meat Packing Plant
Readings: Rowlands, Animals Like Us, (CR9).

Week 9: Mar 2: Coffinman: A Pure Land Buddhist Mortician in comparative context:
Readings: Shinmon AOKI, Coffinman (RT); Berkson, “Conceptions of Self/No-self” (CR20).

Week 10: Mar 9: Film: Departures. Concluding Discussion. Final papers due in class.