

REL 407/507 *The Bull in the China Shop: The Oxen at the Intersection of Nature, Society, & Religion*

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Tuesdays 2:00 p.m. – 5:50 p.m.; Office hours Thursdays 12:05 p.m. – 1:35 p.m. PLC 812

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

Short paper I: Jan 12	5%	Journal	10%
Medium Paper I: Feb 2	15%	Presentation	10%
Medium Paper II: Feb 23	15%	Discussion	10%
Final paper: Mar 9	35%		

Required Texts

- Aoki, Shinmon. *Coffinman: The Journal of a Buddhist Mortician*. Trans. Wayne Yokoyama. Anaheim: Buddhist Ed Ctr., 2004.
- Grandin, Temple. *Thinking in Pictures: My Life in Pictures*. Expanded edition. NY: Vintage, 2006.
- Lau, D. C., trans. *Mencius (Mengzi)*. NY: Penguin, 2005.
- Unno, Taitetsu, trans. *Tannisho: A Shin Buddhist Classic*. Honolulu: Buddhist Study Center Press, 1997.
- Watson, Burton, trans. *Zhuangzi: Basic Writings*. NY: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Course Reader, REL 407/507 *The Bull in the China Shop*.

Weekly Schedule: REL 407/507 The Bull in the China Shop, Winter 2010

(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

Paper 1 due in class.

Readings: Lloyd, “The Good Hunter” (CR1); Armstrong, “General Intro – Animal Ethics: A Sketch,” (CR3); Garner, “Rights, Utility, Contractarianism and Animals,” *Animal Ethics* (CR2); Kheel, “The Killing Game” (CR6); Ivanhoe, “Confucius,” *Confucian Moral Self Cultivation*, 9-17 (CR13).

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.

Readings: Lau, trans., *Mencius*, 1-263 (focus pages: *Mencius* 1A7); Ivanhoe, “Chinese Self-Cultivation and Mencian Extension” (CR14); Behuniak, “Human Virtue in the Sacrifices” (CR15). Recommended Reading: Ivanhoe, “A Happy Symmetry: Xunzi’s Ethical Thought” (CR16).

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

Readings: Watson, trans., *Zhuangzi*, 1-196; Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi on Skepticism, Skill, and the Ineffable Dao” (CR17); Dunayer, “Nonspeciesist Philosophy,” *Speciesism*, 123-134 (CR8).

Week 5: Feb 2: Zhuangzi & Hunting in Tiao-ling Park: The Confused Daoist & Hunting the Dao. Paper 2 due in class.

Readings: Watson, trans., *Zhuangzi*, 197-377; Watson, trans., *Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 134-5, 218-9 (CR18); Ivanhoe, “Zhuangzi’s Conversion Experience” (CR19).

Week 6: Feb 9: Temple Grandin, *Thinking in Pictures*.

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

Paper 3 due in class.

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.