

# Asian Religions in Practice

T, Th 3:00-4:45 p.m.  
 384 Mathematics and Science Center  
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 office hours: T Th 5:00 - 6:00 and by appointment

[Click here for the week-by-week schedule](#)

This course is an introduction to the practices of some of the major religious traditions of East Asia, including Hinduism and Buddhism, and also religious practices that are particular to China, Korea, and Japan. It is meant to serve as a complement to other OU courses, offered by Religious Studies and Philosophy for example, on these religions, but prior knowledge of these traditions is not required for this course. In the course of the term we will draw upon a variety of materials to understand how the practices of these religions have evolved over time. The primary goal of this course is to achieve a basic understanding of what practitioners "do" when they "do" these religions and what their goals are when they engage in religious practices. **It is essential that you bring the text or texts to class that contain the assigned readings for that week.** You must have your text available to refer to in class during discussions of the material contained.

## Course Materials

- Coward, Neufeldt, and Neumaier. *Readings in Eastern Religions* – ISBN 978-0889204355
- Kendall, Laurel. *Shamans, Nostalgia, and the IMF* – ISBN 978-08248339805

All other readings will be available on the Moodle course website or via OU Library online resources. Links to readings on the class meeting schedule are provided as a courtesy. In case of a non-functioning link, notify me and proceed to Moodle or the OU Library site and look up the reading directly. Remember that you **must print out the reading and bring it to class on the day it is assigned.** This syllabus follows the Pinyin system, but some of the readings follow the older Wade-Giles system. [A conversion chart can be found by clicking here.](#)

## Grading

**Grading for this course is as follows:**

### [religious practices analyses](#)

due weekly in class on Tuesday, treating one or another reading assigned that week 70% [\(see below for more information\)](#)

### [Asian religions on the internet presentations](#)

due last day of term 10% [\(see below for more information\)](#)

class participation 20%

**Class participation** means coming to class having done the day's assigned reading and being prepared to ask and answer questions, work in small groups, and discuss the subjects of the day. Needless to say, **you must attend class in order to participate.** As a practical matter, there are no excused absences for any reason, but the instructor recognizes that the occasional missed class may be unavoidable. One or two missed class meetings are not a problem so long as you are otherwise actively engaged in class. However, leaving early, consistently coming late, or **leaving the classroom in the middle of class** (except in case of genuine emergency) will be

considered absences, as will ringing mobile phones. Don't bring your mobile phone to class. **Failure to bring assigned reading materials to class will affect your class participation grade negatively as well.**

## Schedule

You are responsible for checking the course schedule frequently and keeping up to date on what reading and other work is required for a particular class meeting. **All reading and other work assigned for a given date must be completed prior to the class meeting on that date.**

## Papers

There are two types of written assignments for this course. One is a weekly "religious practice analysis paper." In these papers you will choose one or two of the readings assigned for the week you are submitting the paper, and you will do the following:

- Introduction  
Briefly introduce the content of the reading and give a little context. Context includes the religious tradition it originates from and what aspect of the tradition it relates to.
- Summary  
Summarize the content of the reading. What is it describing or showing, and how does it do it?
- Analysis  
Explain how the reading fits (or does not fit) with the religious tradition it arises from. If it is a description of a practice, explain what the practice does in the context of the religion. If it describes beliefs or principles of the religion, describe how a believer might practice those principles. Also, identify anything in the text that is unclear or doesn't make sense, and suggest hypotheses about what it might mean. As the term progresses, you are encouraged to include in your analysis comparisons and contrasts with practices in other traditions we have covered. You can use this as a way to highlight what the reading teaches about the religion it is associated with.

Papers **are due in class each Tuesday and must be 600 to 1,000 words in length. The lowest three grades of the term will be dropped** so that you can try different things and learn from mistakes.

### Paper format requirements

- double-spaced
- **stapled**
- 12 point Times New Roman font
- inch margins on all sides.
- numbered pages and that your name appears in the header or footer of each page.

Successful papers will be clearly and logically composed and free of grammar, usage, spelling, and typographical errors. **Proofread your paper** before you hand it in, and better yet, have someone else read it over and give you feedback.

For the **“Asian religions on the internet”** assignment, find at least two websites dealing with one of the religious traditions we have covered in this course, and based on what you have learned, evaluate them. You must choose at least one website that seriously misrepresents or contains errors concerning the content and practices of the religious tradition you are interested in, and at least one other should be a website that you feel provides useful and accurate information about the tradition you have chosen. You may evaluate your website's quality of content and ease of use, but for this assignment, content is more important than form. **Send your website selections to me via e-mail by the date indicated on the class meeting schedule so that I can make them available to everyone.** In 1500 to 3500 words, explain the weaknesses of the “bad” site and the strengths of the “good.” Papers effectively making use of course materials in the analysis of the sites will score higher

than those that do not. When you make use of a course reading, indicate where you are drawing your information from by indicating author and page number in parentheses, eg. (Kohn, 112). Include a bibliographic listing at the end of your paper of the sites you analyzed, and print out and attach the homepages (only! - not the whole site) of the sites you evaluated to your paper. This project is due on the date indicated on the class meeting schedule. Be prepared to discuss your findings in class at the end of the term. Papers must follow the same format and will be held to the same standard as the weekly analysis papers described above.

Click here for a listing of websites selected by class members for this assignment once this information is available.

## Academic Integrity

In completing these assignments, **you must do your own work** rather than buying, begging, borrowing, or stealing it from someone else. In particular, **relying on the internet as a source of information is a big mistake**. Any idiot can put something on the internet, and countless numbers have done so. If you plagiarize material from the internet, not only will you probably produce inferior writing, I will catch you and you'll get a zero anyway. Anything you can find on the internet I can too, and I have plenty of experience spotting fraudulent work. Punishment for plagiarism can range from a zero for the assignment to failure of the course. Simply put, plagiarism will not serve you well. [Click here for more information about what constitutes plagiarism \(and OU's academic integrity policy\).](#)

## Policy on Late Papers

I view the relationship between student and instructor as a cooperative one devoted to learning. Both student and instructor must uphold the relationship if it is to be successful. In practical terms, this means that the instructor has a right to expect prompt submission of papers, and the student likewise has a right to expect prompt evaluation and return of those papers. My policy, therefore, is that a paper is due on the date stated but may be handed in anytime before I finish grading them. **Once I finish marking a batch of papers, I will not accept any papers belonging to that batch.** Furthermore, I will not speculate about how long it will take me to grade a batch of papers, so don't bother asking. I often finish more quickly than I expect, so if you decide to hand in your paper after the due date, you do so at the risk of receiving a zero for the paper.

## Policy on technology use in the classroom

You may use electronic technology (computer, tablet, even smartphone) during class, but only for activity related to what is occurring in the classroom at the time. If you appear distracted or disengaged from classroom activity, I will ask you to turn off and put away the offending item, and your class participation grade will be negatively affected. Repeated violations of this policy may result in the banning of technology use in the classroom. In general, phones should be turned to silent mode or, preferably, turned off. Note that [it has now been shown that students who take notes using a computer perform more poorly than students who use a notebook and pen](#) (*Psychological Science*, June 2014 vol. 25 no. 6, 1159-1168).

## Students with Disabilities

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodations due to a disability in order to properly execute coursework should contact the [Office of Disability Support Services](#), ph.(248) 370-3266, and follow all DSS procedures. Students with documented disabilities are eligible for reasonable accommodations in this class. If you have a disability that affects your academic performance, it is strongly recommended that you make an appointment with me to discuss the accommodations you require once you have been evaluated by DSS. This must be done within the first three weeks of the semester.

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