

Introduction to Asian Religions, **RELI 1303-001**  
J-Term 2020  
Daily 9:00 -12:00 and 1:00-4:00  
Hyder Hall 110

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Office hours: Daily 4-5

This course offers an introductory overview of the major religious traditions of Asia. The course will focus in particular on the religious and cultural trends expressed in South Asia (Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam) and East Asia (Confucianism and Daoism). Students will explore the historical development and transformations in myth, doctrine and ritual that occurred in these different traditions.

### **Student Learning Outcomes - Pillars**

#### *Philosophical and Religious Inquiry and Ethics – Level One*

1. Students will be able to describe, explain and/or employ some of the principles and theoretical methods of philosophy, religious studies, or ethics.

#### *Historical Contexts – Level One*

1. Students will be able to identify key events, actors, and evidence involved in defined historical period.
2. Students will be able to summarize the major continuities and changes that took place over time in defined historical periods.

### **Student Learning Outcome – Proficiencies and Experiences**

#### *Global Engagement*

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the material culture, underlying values, beliefs, or practices that are central to the culture(s) being visited and studied.

#### *Human Diversity*

Through personal experience with other cultures and communities, students will examine their own attitudes and beliefs arising from individual or group status, treatment, opportunities, or accomplishments.

### **Requirements:**

1. Attendance and participation (5%)  
Be here and join in the discussion.
2. Two Daily Quizzes based on the day's assigned reading (25%)  
For each class section where a reading is required there will be a quiz based on the material presented in the textbook. Each quiz will contain ten T/F, ten multiple choice, and five fill-in-the-blank.
3. Three Field-Trip Response Papers (two-to-three pages, 10%)  
See Assignment One below.
4. One religious art object project and presentation (15% and 5%)  
See Assignment Two below.
5. One Final Exam (20%)

### **Required Texts:** (available in the bookstore)

J. Esposito, *Religions of Asia Today* (second or third edition), *RAT in the schedule below*

*Disability Accommodations:* Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS). Students can call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/Provost/ALEC/DASS> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible, present a DASS Accommodation Letter, and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement.

*Religious Observance:* Religiously observant students wishing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their professors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)

*Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:* Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed scheduled examination or other missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

*Day 1*

Jan. 6 9-12 Introduction  
Readings: *RAT* 3-36  
1-4 Early Hinduism  
Readings: *RAT* 77-112

*Day 2*

Jan. 7 9-12 Modern Hinduism  
Readings: *RAT* 112-164  
1-4 Visit Vedanta Society

*Day 3*

Jan. 8 9-12 Early Buddhism  
Readings: *RAT* 169-211  
1-4 Modern Buddhism  
Reading: *RAT* 211-252

**Response Paper Due**

*Day 4*

Jan. 9 9-12 Visit Kadampa Buddhist Center  
1-4 Early Islam  
Readings: *WRT* 213-259

*Day 5*

Jan. 10 9-12 Modern Islam  
Readings: *WRT* 259-288  
1-4 Visit Richardson Mosque

**Response Paper Due**

*Day 6*

Jan. 14 9-12 Chinese Religion  
Reading: *RAT* 257-294  
1-4 Modern China  
Reading: *RAT* 294-342

**Response Paper Due**

*Day 7*

Jan. 15 9-12 Visit Crow Museum and DMA  
Reading: *RAT* 371-410  
1-4 Research object and write-up

**Art Object Review Due**

*Day 8*

Jan. 16 9-12 Student Presentations  
1-4 Final Exam

**ASSIGNMENT ONE:**

**Response Papers:**

We will be visiting three different religious communities during class and you need to write a response paper regarding these visits. In so doing you need to address four issues:

1. Describe what you saw, heard, experienced.
2. How does that relate to how Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, and religion in general are presented in the textbook and class?
3. What does this experience tell you about this tradition and religion in general?
4. How does it relate to your own understanding of religion?

**General:** Papers are to be two-to-three pages in length and must be typed (double-spaced, 1 in. margins, 12 pt font). The papers will be graded in increments of five (100, 95, 90, etc.). The instructor will evaluate the papers with these three criteria in mind: (a) Clear organization. A good paper displays a coherent paragraph-to-paragraph logic with smooth transitions between paragraphs, and a bad paper is a series of paragraphs in random order. (b) Proper spelling and grammar. Students will lose points for carelessness in either of these two respects.

**PAPER DUE DATES:**

Hindu Temple: January 8  
Buddhist Center: January 10  
Richardson Mosque: January 14

**ASSIGNMENT TWO:**

**Religious art object review and presentation:**

All Asian religions have their own distinctive material and visual culture, thus the aim of this project is to engage with this material. In particular, each student is to write about one religious

artwork (e.g. a Buddha statue, a Daoist painting, a calligraphic Quran) in terms of its specific history and how it relates to the course material.

To this end on January 15<sup>th</sup> all students need to visit the Crow Museum of Asian Art and/or the Dallas Museum of Art and find one Asian religious object that you want to write about. Once you have chosen the object, take a picture of it (which is to be included in your paper), then do some research on the history of the object and write a short paper explaining both its “theology” and how it was used and why. Then explore what it tells about that particular religious tradition.

**General:** Papers are to be two-to-four pages in length and must be typed (double-spaced, 1 in. margins, 12 pt font). The papers will be graded in increments of five (100, 95, 90, etc.). The instructor will evaluate the papers with these three criteria in mind: (a) Clear organization. A good paper displays a coherent paragraph-to-paragraph logic with smooth transitions between paragraphs, and a bad paper is a series of paragraphs in random order. (b) Proper spelling and grammar. Students will lose points for carelessness in either of these two respects. (c) Argument and evidence. The paper should have a thesis that is supported with evidence in regard to the chosen object. Be sure to provide citations for all quotations and for all paraphrases using an appropriate citation system (APA, MLA, etc.).

## **PAPER IS DUE JANUARY 15 BY MIDNIGHT**

### **Presentation**

On the morning of January 16<sup>th</sup> each student will do a short presentation describing and explaining the object they choose and what it tells about that particular religious tradition.