

East Asian Religions  
RLST 2130-01 TTH 1:00  
CC22 Office: CC 10  
Instructor: "Dr. Lola" Williamson  
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Meets "Comparisons" and "Traditions" RLST requirements

Course Description:

We will explore the religious traditions of East Asia, focusing on China and Japan. Beginning with an exploration of Confucianism, a cultural and religious tradition that provides the basis for the East Asian religious disposition, we will then move on to an exploration of Daoism, the yin of Confucianism's yang. (This will become clear in the course of the semester.) The third religion we will examine is Buddhism, which entered China from India as a missionary religion and over time became as pervasive to the religious landscape of East Asia as its native traditions. It developed into many different sects in both China and Japan. These would be impossible to explore in one short semester, so we will focus our attention on Japanese Zen Buddhism. The Japanese Shinto tradition and "New Religions" will be covered in class lectures. We will end with an investigation of Neo-Confucianism, which incorporated some aspects of the three traditions.

Although I refer to the "three teachings" of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism as religions, the category of religion in general, and particularly as it applies to Confucianism and aspects of Taoism and Buddhism, is contestable. Therefore, the guiding question of this course will be: In what sense can these traditions be called religious? We will attempt to answer this question by applying the categories of scripture, ethics, rituals, practices, commitment, beliefs, views, and soteriological goals across the different traditions.

Texts:

*On Philosophy in China* by Hyun Hochsmann  
*The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism* by Rodney Leon Taylor  
*Snow Flower and the Secret Fan* by Lisa See  
*Seven Taoist Masters: A Folk Novel of China* by Eva Wong  
*Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* by Suzuki (selections; PDF file emailed)  
*The Empty Mirror: Experiences in a Japanese Zen Monastery* by Janwillem van de Wetering  
Website: Internet East Asian Sourcebook:  
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/eastasia/eastasiasbook.html>

Goals for the Course:

- 1) To understand and be able to describe basic beliefs and practices of Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto, Buddhism (particularly Zen), New Religions, and Neo-Confucianism.
- 2) To come to appreciate religious and cultural traditions very different from our own.

- 3) To realize that even in that difference, there exist perennial human concerns that, when contemplated, draw humanity together.
- 4) To understand how the various religious traditions, though sometimes coming in conflict, most often interact and complement each other in East Asian countries.
- 5) To practice comparing one or more elements of religion across different traditions.

#### Attendance

You are expected to attend all classes. If you miss a class due to illness, family crisis, religious holiday, or Millsaps-sponsored travel, note the reason for your absence on the attendance sheet. My policy for a class that meets twice a week is that each absence after two will result in the final grade being reduced by one-third (i.e., B will become B- for three absences and C+ for four absences). However, I understand that there may be legitimate reasons for missing more than two classes, and if I know what those reasons are, I may make an exception to the grade reduction. **If you miss ten or more classes (about a third of the semester) for any reason, you should withdraw from the course or you will receive an F.** If the absences occur after the final day to withdraw without a grade (November 9), you should make arrangements for a medical withdrawal in order to avoid receiving an F.

Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period according to the schedule below. If you must miss class on the day of a test, presentation, or when an assignment is due, please notify me ahead of time.

You are expected to arrive to class on time. Role will be taken at the beginning of each class. If you are late, it is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet at the end of class and to note the reason for the tardiness. **If you do not do this, you will be marked absent.** If you must leave class early, see me before class and make a note on the attendance sheet of the reason and the amount of class time missed. Frequent tardiness or early dismissals may also adversely affect your grade.

#### Grading Scale

25 pt. scale: A (24-25) A- (23) B+ (22) B (21) B-(20) C+ (19) C (18) C- (17) D (16) F (15 or below)

#### Honor Code

The pledge signed by all students upon entering Millsaps College is as follows:

"As a Millsaps College student, I hereby affirm that I understand the Honor Code and am aware of its implication and of my responsibility of the Code. In the interests of expanding the atmosphere of respect and trust in the College, I promise to uphold the Honor Code and I will not tolerate dishonest behavior in myself or in others."

**Please write "Pledged" and sign your name to all papers, tests, quizzes, or other assignments.** This indicates that you have not given or received unauthorized aid on the assignment.

Students and faculty should report offenses to the Honor Code Council in the form of a written report. This account must be signed, the accusation explained in as much detail as possible, and submitted to the Dean of the College.

#### Course Evaluation

20% Journal

15% Participation

45% Three four-page essays (15% each)

20% Final seven-to-eight-page essay with bibliography using at least four class sources and at least two additional sources

**Journal:** The purpose of keeping this journal is to help you think through issues. It will be used in three ways: 1) In order to prepare for class discussion, you are to write at least a one-half-page reflection on the reading for every class. This is not a summary, but a reaction to any part of the reading that struck a chord with you, or it could be a reaction to the reading as a whole. It should be a thoughtful response that includes questions that you want to explore more. 2) Occasionally, I will give you specific questions to contemplate through writing, either in class or for homework. If it is for homework, it can substitute for the one-half page reaction. (In other words, you do not have to write more than one-half page for each class unless you want to.) 3) You may want to occasionally write down some thoughts after class about the class discussion. (This is not required.) I will sometimes ask you to do this during the last ten minutes of class. The journal will be turned in and graded at midterm and on the last day of class. Please keep class notes separate from the journal. I only want to read your own thoughts. It can be a combination of typed and hand-written, or it may all be hand-written. Please write the date and "before class," "in class," or "after class" at the top of each entry. It does not have to be formal writing, but you do need to convey that you have thought about the material. Putting time into the journal will help your participation grade, and the journal writing and participation together will help your thought process in writing essays.

**Participation:** Discussion will form a large part of the course. Your grade will be based on the following criteria: 1) Your comments must show that you have read and thought about the material. 2) You listen actively to others, are courteous in responding to others' comments, and you avoid dominating the conversation. 3) You demonstrate that you feel partly responsible for the success of class discussion rather than passively allowing the professor or fellow students to always take the lead.

**Short essays:** The first essay will be on an aspect of Confucianism that you find interesting. It must include some discussion of the ramifications of Confucian culture for women based on the novel *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*. It should also refer to at least two other class readings. The second essay will be on some aspect of Taoism and should include references and reactions to class readings. The third essay will be on Japanese Zen Buddhism with references again to class readings and possibly to the video. You may also include material from class lectures in these essays. I will be collecting possible questions and topics you are considering for the essay the week before the paper is due.

Final essay: This essay will synthesize material from the course by comparing a single theme across the traditions of Confucianism, Taoism, Zen Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism. You will choose an element of religion such as contemplative practice, ritual, reactions to suffering, or the goal of religious practice, and discuss how it is viewed or practiced in each tradition. You may want to argue in favor or against some of the traditions being categorized "religious." You may also want to show how the different traditions combine and/or complement each other within China or Japan. (Note that the additional sources outside of class material should be from peer-reviewed books or journal articles.)

**Class Schedule** Note that the schedule may need to be adjusted during the course of the semester.

### **Unit One: Confucianism**

#### Week 1

Aug. 28 Overview of course; discuss category of "religion"

Aug. 30 Hochsmann, 1-25; portions of *Analects* (emailed) read in class (Begin *Snow Flower*, complete 3-79 by Sept. 6)

#### Week 2

Sept. 4 Hochsmann, 26-54

Sept. 6 Hochsmann, 101-111

(Continue *Snow Flower*, complete 83-183 by Sept. 13)

#### Week 3

Sept. 11 Taylor, Ch. 1

Sept. 13 Taylor, Ch. 2

(Continue *Snow Flower*, complete 185-end by Sept. 20)

#### Week 4

Sept. 18 Taylor, Ch. 3

Sept. 20 Taylor, Ch. 4 (Hand in ideas for first essay.)

#### Week 5

Sept. 25 Discuss *Snow Flower and the Secret Fan*

Sept. 27 Essay One due

### **Unit Two: Taoism** (You may want to begin *Seven Taoist Masters* right away.)

#### Week 6

Oct. 2 Hochsmann, 55-68; Selections from *Daodejing*

Oct. 4 Hochsmann, 69-97; Selections from *Zhuangzi*

#### Week 7

Oct. 9 *Seven Taoist Masters*, 1-100 (Hand in ideas for second essay.)

Oct. 11 *Seven Taoist Masters*, 101-133 (Hand in journal.)

Week 8

Oct. 16 *Seven Taoist Masters*, 134-176

Oct. 18 Essay Two due

### **Unit Three: Buddhism**

Week 9

Oct. 23 No class; fall break

Oct. 25 Hochsmann, 121-138

Week 10

Oct. 30 Suzuki, selections emailed

Nov. 1 Wetering, 3-34 Video: *Zen Mind*

Week 11

Nov. 6 Wetering, 35-87 Guest speaker

Nov. 8 Wetering, 88-110 (Hand in ideas for third essay.)

Week 12

Nov. 13 Wetering, 111-146

Nov. 15 Essay Three due

### **Unit Four: Neo-Confucianism**

Week 13

Nov. 20 Class canceled as I will be at a professional conference

Nov. 22 No class; Thanksgiving break

Week 14

Nov. 27 Hochsmann, 139-181 (Hand in ideas for final exam essay.)

Nov. 29 Taylor, Ch. 5

Week 15

Dec. 4 Taylor, Ch. 7 (Hand in annotated bibliography for two outside sources.)

Dec. 6 Taylor, Ch. 8 (Hand in journal.)

### **FINALS**

Dec. 10 Final Essay Due by 4:00

Pronunciation Guide

Chinese (Mandarin spoken by 90% of the Chinese)

#### **Pinyin Wade-Giles Sounds Like**

x hs between s and sh

q ch' ch

c ts' ts as in "Tsetse fly"

zh ch soft j as in "déjà vu"

r j hold tongue in retroflex and strive for r

### **Aspirated/unaspirated**

chao/zhao ch'ao/chao chow/djow as in "ouch"

kao/gao k'ao/kao kow/gow as in "ouch"

pao/bao p'ao/pao pow/bow as in "bow-wow"

tao/dao t'ao/tao tow/dow

cao/zao ts'ao/tsao tsow/zdow

ei long a

ie long e, then short e

i u Very tricky! After retroflex (ch, sh, r, zh) sounds like retroflexed r; after ci, s, z, sounds like no vowel at all.

### **Examples:**

Laozi Lao Tsu

Daodejing Tao Te Ching

Qigong Ch'i Kung

Taiji T'ai Chi

Japanese is much easier. The vowels and consonants have consistent pronunciations that sound like English for the most part. They do have a "ts" as in Chinese, and "r" is pronounced more like a "d." All syllables receive equal stress.

### **Timeline for China**

Xia Dynasty 2205-1766 BCE (prehistoric; excavations in 1928)

Shang Dynasty 1766-1122 BCE (city-states; pictographic writing; oracle "dragon bones")

Zhou Dynasty 1122-221 BCE early: Western Zhou (peace); later: Eastern Zhou)

"Classical Era" 500-200 BCE

Warring States Period 403-222 BCE (regional warlords)

Kongzi (Confucius) 551-479 BCE

Mozi 480-390 BCE

Mengzi (Mencius) 370-290 BCE

Laozi Fourth century BCE? (Did he live?) "Father of Daoism"

Zhuangzi Third century BCE "Father of Daoism"

Xunzi Third century BCE (died 215)

Qin Dynasty 221-207 BCE (All of China united, but it lasted only as long as the very cruel emperor; Confucian books burned.)

Han Dynasty 206 BCE-220 CE (Confucian state orthodoxy)

Laozi deified in 166 CE

Series of shorter lived dynasties. 220-960 (Tang Dynasty 618-907)

Buddhism introduced in 4th c.; Buddhist schools develop in 6th and 7th c

Different schools of Daoism develop

Song Dynasty 960-1279

Two major Neo-Confucian schools develop: Rationalism or Reason School (Cheng Yi) and Idealism or Mind School (Cheng Hao)

Zhu Xi 1130-1200

Mushu, women's secret writing code, developed in Hunan Province c. 1,000

Yuan 1279-1368

Ming Dynasty 1368-1644

Qing Dynasty 1644-1911

Fictional character, Lily (in Snow Flower) born (1823)

Taiping Rebellion (1851-1864) (in Snow Flower)

Republic of China 1911-1949

(mainland)

Republic of China 1949-present

(Taiwan)

People's Republic 1949-present

of China

### **Timeline for Japan**

Japan "begins" c. 1,000 BCE (sense of self-identity; kami; fertility; seasonal festivals; clan structure; cultivation of rice c. 300 BCE) Prehistoric to sixth century CE similar

Taika Period 645-710 CE (emperor's power increases; aristocratic families)

Nara Period 710-784 (Chinese cultural influence; Shinto more organized; emperor is Shinto chief; Buddhism patronized)

Heian Period 794-1185 (Shingon and Tendai Buddhism; rise of bushi, or warrior class)

Medieval Period: c. 1185-1700 (feudal)

Kamakura Period 1185-1333 (Military rule-bushi; Shinto highly organized and eclectic; Pure Land, Nichiren, and Zen develop)

Muromachi Period 1333-1568 (civil wars; shogun government; patronage of Zen, ink painting, garden design, and tea ceremony)

Mamoyama Period 1568-1600 (reunifying Japan begins)

Tokugawa Period 1600-1867 (peace and national isolation; cities and merchant class; families required to belong to Buddhist Temple; shogunate in Edo-now Tokyo; arts and tea ceremony flourish; opens doors after 200 years of isolation at demand of American Commodore Matthew Perry in 1853)

Modern Period

Meiji Period 1686-1911 (Buddhist requirement dropped; Shinto is state religion; ban on Christianity dropped; emperor restored; nation-state; policy to become rich and powerful)

Taisho Period 1912-1925 (New Religions; Japan economic base of Asia)

Showa Period 1926-1989 (New Religions continue; imperialism, then allied occupation of Japan following WW II; democratic government and equality for women)

Heisei Period 1989-present (widespread secularism and religious indifference; controversy over "peace" constitution of 1947 vs. military role in international community; AUM cult releases sarin gas on subways in 1995)