

Religion and Modernity in East Asia: Continuity and Reinvention

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Modernity has brought with it such great challenges to the East Asian religious traditions that even the word 'religion' (宗教) itself had to be re-invented. In this seminar we will investigate the fascinating ways in which the religions of the region both participated in the creation of unique modernities, as well as re-invented themselves in order to creatively adapt to contemporary trends. Each week will be dedicated to examining a particular subject matter through a broad international and multi-religious perspective. Topics will range from the engagement of East Asian religions with modern nationalism and violent conflicts to their flirtations with science and technology;

from their negotiations with current democratic, socialist and capitalist values to their impact on the region's fashionable gastronomic and popular culture; and from their dialogue with contemporary gender politics to their involvement in the leisure and tourist industries. In addition, attention will be given to the fascinating and rather successful attempts to globalize East Asian religions and propagate them in the West. Aside from looking at the modern restructuring of the traditional religions of Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, Shamanism, and Shinto, we will also examine the successes and failures of Christianity in 20th and 21st-century East Asia, as well as some of the controversial hybrid new religious movements and cults that sprang up in the region.

Unless all participants are fluent in Hebrew, all weekly reports and class discussions will be conducted in English.

Class Timetable:

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
October 20	Introduction: Asian Religions in the Contemporary World	
October 27	Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in East Asia: An Overview	

November 3	The Modern Reinvention of Asian Traditions	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hobsbawm and Ranger, <i>The Invention of Tradition</i>, 1983, pp. 1-14. 2. Jason Josephson, "The Invention of Japanese Religions." <p>Choose one: Anna Sun, "The Contemporary Revival and Reinvention of Confucian Ritual Practices." Or: Klaus Antoni, "Religion and Commercialization: The Shinto Wedding Ritual (shinzenshiki) as an "Invented Tradition" in Japan." **Documentary: Monk by Blood</p>
November 10	Asian Religions Between Capitalism and Socialism	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Max Weber, <i>The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism</i>, 1906, chapter 1. 2. James Shields, "Blueprint for Buddhist Revolution: The Radical Buddhism of Seno'o Girō (1889–1961) and the Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism."
November 17	Asian Religions and Democracy	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kim Dae Jung, "Is Culture Destiny? The Myth of Asia's Anti-Democratic Values." 2. Lee Seung-Hwan, "Asian Values and Confucian Discourse." 3. Chenyang Li, "Missing Links in the China Model."
November 24	Asian Religions Encounter the West	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Edward Said, <i>Orientalism</i>, 1979, pp. 1-15 (9-23). 2. Jorn Borup, "Zen and the Art of Inverting Orientalism." <p>Choose one: Richard Seager, "American Buddhism in the Making." Or: Robert Neville, "The Short Happy Life of Boston Confucianism." **Documentary: A Zen Life</p>
December 1	Asian Religions' Involvement with Modern Violence	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wellman and Tokuno, "Is Religious Violence Inevitable?" 2. Brian Victoria, <i>Zen War Stories</i>, chapter 5: "Zen Master Dogen Goes to War." <p>Choose one: Michael Jerryson, "Appropriating a Space for Violence: State Buddhism in Southern Thailand." Or: Vladimir Tikhonov, "Militarized Masculinity with Buddhist Characteristics: Buddhist Chaplains and their Role in the South Korean Army." **Documentary: The Face of Buddhist Terror</p>

December 8	Asian Religions and Modern Gender Issues	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ann Heirman, "Buddhist Nuns: Between Past and Present." 2. Laurell Kendall, "Korean Shamanism: Women's Rites and a Chinese Comparison." <p>Choose one: Eunkang Koh, "Gender Issues and Confucian Scriptures: Is Confucianism Incompatible with Gender Equality in South Korea?"</p> <p>Or: Ann Gleig, "Queering Buddhism or Buddhist De-Queering."</p>
December 15	Asian Religions Meet Modern Science	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Dalai Lama, "The Big Bang and the Buddhist Beginningless Universe." 2. MBSR Brochure 3. Bernard Faure, "Can (and should) Neuroscience Naturalize Buddhism?" <p>**Documentary: Doing Time, Doing Vipassana</p>
December 22	Christianity in Modern East Asia	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Chengpang Lee and Myungsahm Suh, "State Building and Religion: Explaining the Diverged Path of Religious Change in Taiwan and South Korea, 1950–1980." 2. Andrew Eungi Kim, "Pentecostalism in Korea: Shamanism and the Reshaping of Korean Christianity." <p>**Documentary: The World's Largest Church</p>
January 29	Asian Religions and Popular Culture	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jean Baudrillard, "The Precession of Simulacra." 2. James McGrath, "The Desert of the Real: Christianity, Buddhism, and Baudrillard in the Matrix Films and Popular Culture." 3. Joel Gruber, "The Dharma of Doctor Strange: The Shifting Representations of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism within a Comic Book Serial."
January 5	Asian Religions and Tourism	<p>Required:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Courtney Bruntz and Brooke Schedneck, "Theoretical Landscapes of Buddhist Tourism in Asia." 2. Uri Kaplan, "Images of Monasticism: The Temple Stay Program and the Re-branding of Korean Buddhist Temples." 3. John Nelson, "Freedom of Expression: The Very Modern Practice of Visiting a Shinto Shrine."
January 12	New Religious Movements in East Asia 1	<p>Required:</p>

		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Haruki Murakami, <i>Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche</i>, excerpts (pp. 224-233, 277-303, 360-364). 2. David Palmer, "Modernity and Millennialism in China: Qigong and the Birth of Falun Gong."
January 19	New Religious Movements in East Asia 2 Course Conclusion.	Required: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Don Baker, "The New Religions of Korea." ** Documentary: Married to the Moonies

Student Responsibilities and Grading Structure:

***** This is a reading intensive seminar. There are no final exams or end papers, but continuous reading, writing, and presenting during the semester.**

1. Attendance and participation 20%

Mandatory attendance in at least 80% of the classes.

2. Weekly reports on the readings 40%

This course is reading intensive. Each week students will read 2-3 academic articles or book chapters and write a paragraph or two discussing, analyzing, and possibly critiquing some of the ideas put forth in the readings. These short reports will be uploaded to the course website the day before each class until 17:00. They will provide some food for thought to be later discussed together in the classroom. All reports should be written in English.

Grading will be as follows: 11-12 reading reports- 40 points, 10 reading reports- 36 points, 9 reading reports 32 points, 8 reading reports 28 points, etc.

3. Two Class Presentations 40%

Each student will make a 20-25 minutes class presentation summarizing the week's readings twice during the semester. The presentations will be graded based on time efficiency, clarity, and summation of main points. Presenters will also be expected to raise a few questions for further discussion.