

Shinto

Section 1

Instructor/Title	Elizabeth Kenney
------------------	------------------

【Course Outline / Description】

Mythology and manga, animism and anime: Shinto, the ancient religion of Japan, is still today an important part of the Japanese cultural imagination. Shinto is visible everywhere, and there are few Japanese people who do not have some contact with Shinto, many of them on a regular basis. Yet it is not easy to answer the question, What is Shinto? We will look at Shinto from as many perspectives as possible: religious, philosophical, anthropological, and political.

Next year, 2019, will be the last year of the Heisei Era. In an extraordinary move, the current emperor is resigning. Our class will pay particular attention to the history of the emperor system, its relationship to Shinto, and its role in contemporary Japan.

Shinto is often described as a nature religion. This is true—but it is not a complete definition of Shinto. Our class will explore other aspects of Shinto and, at the end of the class, come back to discuss Shinto as “nature worship.”

However Shinto is defined, there is no doubt that Japan is the place to study Shinto. Thus students are encouraged to explore Shinto in today’s Japan as part of their work for the course. Students will write a field report, usually based on one of the following: observation of a Shinto festival; extended observation of a Shinto shrine; interviews with at least ten Japanese people.

A look at the syllabus below gives precise information about the topics to be covered in class.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

After finishing this course, students will:

know Shinto deities, including ones that are important in Japan but not well known outside of Japan, e.g., Ebisu;

be able to discuss objects and activities in Shinto shrines;

have an admirable knowledge of the history of the Emperor and current issues surrounding his abdication;

be able to consider intelligently the political and religious issues connected to Yasukuni Shrine;

be able to talk far more knowledgeably than most of their friends about Shinto ideology in World War II;

discern previously unnoticed Shinto themes in anime and manga.

Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

Sept. 5 (W) Introductory meeting.

Sept. 7 (F) Purity and fertility. pp. 1-24. *Optional*: “Shinto” by Norman Havens.

Sept. 12 (W) *Kami*. pp. 85-106. “Priestly Traditions and Shamanic Influences,” Karen A. Smyers, *The Fox and the Jewel*.

Sept. 14 (F) This-worldly benefits: *ema* and *o-mamori*.
pp. 107-126. “The Providers of Benefits: Gods, Saints, and Wizards,” Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe, Jr., *Practically Religious*.

- Sept. 16 (Sunday) Field trip to Fushimi Inari Shrine. Date and time tentative.
- Sept. 19 (W) Shrine life. Be prepared to discuss the readings.
pp. 25-61. "Freedom of Expression: The Very Modern Practice of Visiting a Shinto Shrine," John K. Nelson, *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1996.

 Optional: pp. 62- 69. excerpt from *Ritual Practice in Modern Japan* by Satsuki Kawano University of Hawai'i Press, 2005.
pp. 70-84. "Warden + Virtuoso + Salaryman = Priest," John K. Nelson, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 1997.
 Optional: pp. 161-163. Shinto prayers.
- Sept. 20 (F) *Kojiki*. pp. 155-160. Samples of Japanese mythology.
- Sept. 26 (W) *Kojiki* and the afterlife.
- Sept. 28 (F) Dark gods: Daikoku and Ebisu.
- Oct. 3 (W) Test #1.
- Oct. 5 (F) Discussion. "Power spots and the Charged Landscape of Shinto," by Caleb Carter. *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. 2018:145-173. Hand-out. Also available online.
- Oct. 10 (W) The emperor. pp. 164-172. Readings on the Emperor, including article by Kurihara Akira on the emperor system.
- Oct. 12 (F) The emperor as god and ritualist.
- Oct. 17 (W) Several student presentations on the emperor and Japan's new era.
- Oct. 19 (F) Yasukuni Shrine. pp. 136. Shinto and politics. Read "The Salvation of Man" and "Basis for the Japanese government claim that Shinto was not a religion."
hand-out: John Breen, "Fine Words Indeed."
 Optional: pp. 127-141. "Religion and Conflict in Japan with Special Reference to Shinto and Yasukuni Shrine" by Michael Pye, *Diogenes*, 2003.
- Oct. 24 (W) Film: "The Sun."
- Oct. 26 (F) No class. Gaidai festival.
- Oct. 31 (W) Shinto thought during the Edo period.
- Nov. 2 (F) Motoori Norinaga. Be prepared to discuss the readings.
pp. 173-182 top. Motoori on (1) kami, (2) Amaterasu [in *Naobi no mitama*], (3) life and death.
- Nov. 7 (W) Hirata Atsutane.
pp. 183-186, writings by Hirata Atsutane.
pp. 187-205, "The Medium is the Message" by Wilburn Hansen, *History of Religions*, 2006.

- Nov. 9 (F) Discussion. Shinto ideology in the 20th century.
hand-out: excerpt from Walter A. Skya, *Japan's Holy War: The Ideology of Radical Shinto Ultrationalism*.
- Nov. 14 (W) Test #2.
- Nov. 16 (F) Monsters, monsterology, shape-shifters. Reading: chapter from *The Book of Yōkai*.
- Nov. 21 (W) Film. "Heisei Tanuki Gassen Ponpoko."
- Nov. 23 (F) Discussion of the Film.
- Nov. 28 (W) Insects: divine, dangerous.
- Nov. 30 (F) Shamanism and Shinto.
pp. 142-154. "The Ancient Sibyl," by Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow*.
- Dec. 5 (W) Student presentations. or Curses and magic.
- Dec. 7 (F) Discussion. Shinto, trees, ecology and ideology in Japan today.
Reports are due.
- Dec. 12 (W) Discussion: So what is Shinto?
reading: excerpt from *The Essence of Shinto* by Motohisa Yamakage.
- Dec. 14 (F) Student presentations.

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】
Readings will be provided.

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

2 tests, 25% each	50%
final exam	25%
field report	15%
participation	10%

Section 5

【Additional Information】

Class discussion is a vital part of the course.

This course is open to students at all levels.

Come to class every day. The lectures are crucial for the tests and final exam.

In other words, class attendance is crucial to doing well in this course.

The tests and final exam are heavily based on the lectures. You will also be tested on the readings.