

Exploring Japanese Religiosity

Section 1

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Office Hours	
Contacts (E-mail)	

【Course Outline / Description】

This course discusses characteristics of contemporary Japanese religiosity through examining the history, teachings and practice of major religious traditions, such as Shinto, Buddhism, new religions (e.g. Soka Gakkai) and Christianity. It has a special emphasis on Buddhism, and also covers how Islam is perceived in Japanese society.

Section 2

【Course Objectives/Goals/Learning Outcomes】

By the end of this course, students will be able 1) to explain basic teachings and practice of Shinto and major schools of Japanese Buddhism, 2) discuss the positions of new religions and Christianity within the history of religion in Japan, and 3) to analyze characteristics of Japanese religiosity citing concrete examples.

Section 3

【Class Schedule/Class Environment, Literature and Materials】

	Schedule of Instruction	Work outside of Classroom Activities
Lesson 1	Course introduction	Read the syllabus and prepare your thoughts and questions on the course.
Lesson 2	Are the Japanese religious?	Read Ellwood, Chapter 1
Lesson 3	Presentations of informal survey results	Conduct an informal survey on Japanese people's attitudes towards religion and prepare the results for presentation
Lesson 4	Workshop on Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples (presentation preparation)	Look up Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples in Osaka and beyond (Kyoto and Nara)
Lesson 5	What is kami?	Read Ono, Chapter 1; SJT, p.17-31
Lesson 6	Shinto shrines	Read Ono, Chapter 2; Ellwood, Chapter 3 (on shrines)
Lesson 7	Shinto rituals	Read Ono, Chapters 3
Lesson 8	Buddhism: an overview	Read Ellwood, Interlude (on Buddhism), and Amore, p.178-223 (handout)

Lesson 9	Early development of Buddhism in Japan and kami-Buddha amalgamation	Read Ellwood, Chapter 4 and SJT, p.114–119
Lesson 10	Heian Buddhism	Read Ellwood, Chapter 5 and SJT, p.125–133, 150–157, 175–180
Lesson 11	Pure Land traditions	Read Ellwood, Chapter 6 (on Pure Land), and SJT, p. 211–217, 227–230.
Lesson 12	Nichiren and Zen	Read Ellwood, Chapters 6 (on Nichiren), and 7, and SJT, p. 292–302, 306–311, 325–326
Lesson 13	Presentations on Shinto shrines	Prepare presentations
Lesson 14	Presentations on Buddhist temples	Prepare presentations
Lesson 15	Review: Shinto and Japanese Buddhism	Review the lessons so far
Lesson 16	Mid-term quiz and discussion on reading presentations	Prepare for the quiz
Lesson 17	New religions: an introduction	Read Inoue (handout)
Lesson 18	New religions (documentary and discussion))	Read Shimazono, and Baffelli (handouts)
Lesson 19	Characteristics of new religions	Read Ellwood, Chapter 10
Lesson 20	Christianity in Japan: an introduction and popularity of Christian weddings	Read Mullins, Lee, Fisch, and Lefebvre (handouts)
Lesson 21	Why is Christianity not believed widely in Japan?	Read Lee (handout)
Lesson 22	Islam in Japan: a historical overview	Read Obuse 2015 (handout)
Lesson 23	Experiences of Japanese Muslims	Read Obuse 2019 (handout)
Lesson 24	Priests and laity in Japanese temple Buddhism	Read Covell Chapters 4–5, and Jaffe (handout)
Lesson 25	Temple Buddhism (documentary and discussion)	Read Covell Chapter 6
Lesson 26	Mortuary rites in Japanese Buddhism	Read Covell 2009, and Rowe (handouts)
Lesson 27	Ascetic practices (documentary and discussion)	Read Rhodes (handout)
Lesson 28	Are the Japanese religious? (again)	Read Reader and Tanabe, Chapter 1 (handout)
Lesson 29	Experimental Buddhism	Read Nelson, Chapter 4 (handout)
Lesson 30	Course conclusion and instructions on the exam	Revise all the lessons

【Textbooks/Reading Materials】

Textbooks①

Introducing Japanese Religion
Robert Ellwood
Routledge

Textbooks②

Shinto The Kami Way
Sokyo Ono
Tuttle

Textbooks③

Japanese Temple Buddhism: Worldliness in Religion of Renunciation
Stephen Covell
University of Hawaii Press

Other readings will be provided by the instructor.

Section 4

【Learning Assessments/Grading Rubric】

Final Exam	…20%
Quizzes or Midterm Exam	…10%
Class participation	…55%
Presentations	…15%

Subject to change depending on the class size

Section 5

【Additional Information】

Class participation is very important on this course.

Reference Books①

Sources of Japanese Tradition, volume one: From Earliest Times to 1600, second edition
Wm. Theodore de Bary, Donald Keene, George Tanabe and Paul Varley
Columbia University Press

Reference Books②

The Simple Guide to Shinto
Ian Reader
Global Books

Other supplementary readings will be provided by the instructor.