

Great Books in Asian Religions  
Religious Studies, Japanese Studies 1J03  
Term 1 – 2018/19

- Instructor: Dr. Mark Rowe
  - Office: 126 University Hall
  - Office Hours: Mondays 330 - 430, or by appointment
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- Lectures: Mon/Wed. 2:30 – 3:20 CNH B107
- Teaching Assistants: TBD
- Tutorials: See Mosaic

### **Description**

This course provides a broad introduction to certain foundational texts in several Asian religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Shintō. We will rely on translations of primary source material with some use of secondary scholarship, film, and multi-media. Subjects will include the creation of the world, the intersection of gods and humankind, suffering, enlightenment, poetry, past lives, war, revenge, love, and death. Students will not only gain broad knowledge of the religions of Asia but will also be encouraged to think critically about the role of religion in human history more generally. No previous knowledge of Asian religions is required for this course.

### **Requirements**

Two in-class quizzes 50%  
Online Assignment – 5%  
Interview someone about the meaning of life 15%  
Essay built on that interview – 30%

### **In-class quizzes – 25% each: October 14 and November 21 (Subject to change.)**

The quizzes will require students to identify and explain the significance of figures, topics, arguments, and quotations from the readings, lectures, and course webpage. Students will receive a list of key terms in advance of the quizzes.

### **Online Assignment – 5%**

Students are required to find and upload to the class webpage two paragraphs, a picture, and, if possible, video relating to the theme of this course. Examples could include a certain text, religious figure, festival, religious site, or holiday. There can be no duplication, so this assignment is on a first come, first serve basis. Check first to make sure someone has not already submitted the same material. Submissions will include a time stamp to identify order of submission. This is a shared project, if in doubt about the appropriateness of the material, please check with instructor before submitting. All submissions must be made by midnight on the day

of the second in-class exam – November 21. No late submissions allowed.

### **Interview Assignment 15% and 30%**

This assignment will consist of two parts. First you must interview a friend or relative about one of the fundamental questions we are examining in class. This question could be any of the following (other questions are possible in consultation with instructor):

- What is the meaning of life?
- What is the nature of the self?
- How does one best live a purposeful life?

Interviews will generally run from 30 to 60 minutes. The first part of the assignment is to provide a typed transcript of the interview. This is worth 15% and is due in class October 31<sup>st</sup>. The second part of the assignment is to write a 750-1000 word essay that summarizes the most significant aspects of the interview and connects them to a major theme (or themes) from class. This part is worth 30% and is due in class on December 5<sup>th</sup>. Further details and grading rubrics for both assignments will be provided in class. Late submissions will be penalized 1% per day of your total class grade.

### **There is no final exam in this course.**

Note: **THERE ARE NO BONUS ASSIGNMENTS FOR THIS COURSE.**

### **Your Responsibilities:**

You are responsible for all material on this syllabus and for making up missed films, lectures, and assignments. Course content and scheduling may change, all notifications will be made on the course web page and, when possible, in lecture and tutorial. Students are responsible for regularly checking the course web page.

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

### **The course website can be found on Avenue to Learn.**

Note: Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used.

Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

You are also responsible for bringing concerns about grading to the attention of your TA and myself in a timely manner. This means that if you have questions about your grade on a particular assignment or test, you must let us know within one week of the official posting

of that grade. Your concerns must be specific. Please do not come to us with: “I think I deserve a better grade,” or “I worked really hard.” Please also be aware that if you ask me to double check your grade on an assignment, there is just as much chance that your grade will go down as up.

### **Academic Dishonesty Statement:**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**If you are ever in a situation where you are not sure if what you are submitting constitutes plagiarism, contact me immediately.**

### **McMaster Student Absence Form**

#### ***Use of the MSAF***

The McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF) (<http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>) is a self-reporting tool for Undergraduate Students to report MEDICAL absences that last up to **THREE days** and provides the ability to request accommodation for any missed academic work (**that is less than 25% of the course grade**). Please note, this tool cannot be used during any final examination period. You may submit a maximum of ONE Academic Work Missed request per term. It is YOUR responsibility to follow up with your instructor immediately regarding the nature of the accommodation. If you are absent for more than 5 days, exceed one request per term, are absent for a reason other than medical, or have missed work worth 30% or more of the final grade, you **MUST** visit your Faculty Office. You may be required to provide supporting documentation. This form should be filled out when you are about to return to class after your absence.

### **Social Sciences Faculty E-mail Communication Policy**

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This

policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion. Email Forwarding in MUGSI: <http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>  
\*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link.

### **ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca). For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities.

### **Required Readings (available in Titles)**

- Puett, Michael and Gross-Loh, Christine. *The Path*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016.
- Narayan, R. K. *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.
- Kamo no Chome. *Hojoki Visions of a Torn World*.

Note: Ebooks are available online through Mills Library. Reserve Readings at Mills Library – Given the number of students in this class. It is advised that you get the reserve readings well in advance.

I will also place one or two copies of the required readings on reserve.

You are responsible for all material on this syllabus and for making up missed lectures. Course content and scheduling may change, all notifications will be made on the course web page and, when possible, in lecture and tutorial. Students should be checking the course page regularly for notices.

The course website can be found via Avenue to Learn.

### **Course Outline (subject to change)**

September 5<sup>th</sup> : Introduction and course overview

- Buy the books, then dream of reading them and growing evermore wise.

September 10<sup>th</sup> : Axial Age and Issues of Translation

September 12<sup>th</sup> : India Intro

- “Indian Religions: An Overview” by Jan Gonda

- “Indian Religions: Mythic Themes” by Wendy Doniger – Both readings are in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. 2nd ed. [E-Book]: Jones, Lindsay, ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2005. vol. 7: (4426-4431) and vol. 7: (4437-4445)

September 17<sup>th</sup> : Upanishads (selections)

- *The Early Upanisads: Annotated Text and Translation*. Patrick Olivelle. [electronic resource]. Isa Upanisad, Katha Upanisad, Mundaka Upanisad, Chandogya Upanisad Chapter 8. sections 7-12 (this begins on page 279)

September 19<sup>th</sup> : The Mahabharata and The Gita

- The Bhagavad Gita [Easwaran, Eknath.](#) [electronic resource]
- Chapter 2

September 24<sup>th</sup> : Ramayana

- Narayan, R. K. *The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic*. New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

September 26<sup>th</sup> : Ramayana (1980s Televised version)

- Finish reading *Ramayana*

October 1<sup>st</sup> : Buddhism

- “Buddhism” Richard Hayes. *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Vol. 1. [E-book].

October 3<sup>rd</sup> : *Dhammapada* (Selections)

- <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/index.html>  
<http://dharma.ncf.ca/introduction/sutras/dhammapada.html>

## READING WEEK

October 15<sup>th</sup> : First Quiz – In class.

October 17<sup>th</sup> : Jataka Tales (Selections)

- Shaw, *Jatakas: Birth Stories of the Bodhisatta*
- Available on course page

October 22<sup>nd</sup> : Buddhism in China

- “China” Mario Poceski. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. [E-book].
- *The Monkey and the Monk: An Abridgment of The Journey to the West* Edited by Anthony C. Yu. 2006 [Ebook].

October 24<sup>th</sup> : Journey to the West

- Finish reading *The Monkey and the Monk*.

October 29<sup>th</sup> : *Lotus Sutra* (Selections)

- <http://lotus.nichirenshu.org/lotus/sutra/english/watson/indxwatson.htm>

October 31<sup>st</sup> : *Vimalakirti Sutra* (Selections)

- [http://www.numatacenter.com/digital/dBET\\_Srimala\\_Vimalakirti\\_2004.pdf](http://www.numatacenter.com/digital/dBET_Srimala_Vimalakirti_2004.pdf)

**TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW IS DUE IN CLASS.**

November 5<sup>th</sup> : Confucius

- *The Path* - selections

November 7<sup>th</sup> : Daoism

- *The Path* - selections

November 12<sup>th</sup> : Japan

- “Japan” Carl Bielefeldt. *Encyclopedia of Buddhism*. [E-book].

November 14<sup>th</sup> : Early Japanese myths

- *Nihonshoki/Kojiki* (Selections)

November 19<sup>th</sup> : Class cancelled – Instructor away at conference.

November 21<sup>st</sup> : 2<sup>nd</sup> Quiz – In class.

**ONLINE ASSIGNMENT DUE AT MIDNIGHT.**

November 26<sup>th</sup> : *Ten Foot Square Hut*

- Kamo no Chome. *Hojoki Visions of a Torn World*.

November 28<sup>th</sup> : *Heart Sutra/Kōan*

- reserve
- rapping monk video

December 3<sup>rd</sup> : *Shōbōgenzō* (selections)

- [http://www.numatacenter.com/digital/dBET\\_T2582\\_Shobogenzo1\\_2009.pdf](http://www.numatacenter.com/digital/dBET_T2582_Shobogenzo1_2009.pdf)

December 5<sup>th</sup> : Wrap up

**FINAL ESSAY DUE IN CLASS.**

Final Exam – Nope.