

RELS 205 Sacred texts of the East

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Religious Studies Department, Spring 2008
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Office Hours: Mon & Weds 2:00-4:00, Tues 2:00-4:00
(or by appointment)

Course Description: This course will explore the foundational texts of the religions of India, China, Southeast Asia, and Japan. The traditions we will cover are: Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Confucian, Taoist, and Shinto, with the greatest emphasis on Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist written texts. We will take an inductive approach to each text tradition and through careful reading of texts, seek to determine core beliefs of each tradition established by those texts. We will consider historical context, spatial location, textual diversity, internal debates on interpretation, canon development, conceptual theories of the text, including text recitations, and the care of texts. We will also look at issues of oral versus written texts, image and symbol texts, and text transmission. No previous knowledge of these traditions is required for this course; this is a course on the hermeneutics of the texts and interpretations, not a survey of general beliefs and practices.

Books:

Fieser, James and John Powers. Editors. *Scriptures of the East*. NY: McGraw-Hill, 2004.
Korgan, Diane. *The Best Guide to Eastern Philosophy and Religion*. NY: Renaissance Media, Inc., 2001.

E-Reserve: 6 articles, ON-LINE at, Library Homepage (click on) * E-reserves * Electronic Reserves and Reserve Pages * Pages by Department, Religious Studies * RELS 205, Irwin *

Requirements: Students are expected to attend all classes and participate in class discussions, missing more than three classes can result in a lower grade. The assignments in this course include the following: FOUR 10 minute quizzes (5% each = 20%), two short papers (15% each = 30%), Mid-Term (25%), and Final (25%). The papers will be 2-3 pages in length, each summarizing one article on E-Reserves and relating the theory of that article to the texts we are reading for that tradition.

No excuses will be accepted for missed assignments or exams, such as over sleeping, lost books, or being stuck out of town. If you have a legitimate excuse, please talk to me before the scheduled assignment. Late papers will have severe reduction on the grade. All missing assignments will receive a failing grade.

Honor Code: Lying, cheating, and plagiarism are violations of the Honor Code and are not permitted at the College. Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly to the Dean of Students. A student responsible for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure based on dishonesty.

Grading Scale:

Numerical/letter grades: A+ = 100-97; A = 96-93; A- = 92-90; B+ = 89-87; B = 86-83; B- = 82-80; C+ = 79-77; C = 76-73; C- = 72-70; D+ = 69-67; D = 66-63; D- = 62-60; F = 59 or lower.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments must be done **BEFORE** the class for which they are assigned, not after; then you can follow the discussion, ask questions, and we can have an informed dialogue on the subject of the reading.

!! BRING YOUR ANTHOLOGY OF EASTERN SCRIPTURES TO EACH CLASS !!

Reading Assignments:

- I. **Week One:** January 10 Introduction to Sacred Texts of the East
 - A. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 1-7; Morgan: 13-40.
- II. **Week Two:** January 15 / 17 Sacred Texts of India / Hinduism
 - A. **E-Reserve, Jan 15:** "Max Müller's "Sacred Books" and the Nineteenth-Century Production of the Comparative Science of Religions." N. J. Girardot, *History of Religions*, Vol. 41, No. 3. (2002), pp. 213-250
 - B. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 8-29; Morgan:41-57
- III. **Week Three:** January 22 / 24 Sacred Texts of India / Hinduism
 - A. **QUIZ ONE:** January 22
 - B. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers:29-54; Morgan:59-95; 277-291
- IV. **Week Four:** January 29 / 31 Hinduism / Early Buddhism
 - A. **E-Reserve, Jan 29:** "Exorcising the Transcendent: Strategies for Defining Hinduism and Religion." Brian K. Smith, *History of Religions*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1987), pp. 32-55
 - B. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 72-97; Morgan: 97-131
- V. **Week Five:** February 5 / 7 Sacred Texts of Buddhism
 - A. **QUIZ TWO:** February 5
 - B. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 98-125; Morgan: 133-158; 261-275
- VI. **Week Six:** February 12 / 14 Sacred Texts of Buddhism
 - A. **Paper One Handout:** Hinduism / Buddhism
 - B. Reading Assignment: Morgan: 159-187.
 - C. **E-Reserve, Feb 14:** "Orality, Writing, and Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in the Mahayana." David McMahan, *History of Religions*, Vol. 37, No. 3. (Feb., 1998), pp. 249-274
- VII. **Week Seven:** February 19 / 21 Sacred Texts of Sikhism
 - A. **PAPER ONE DUE:** February 19
 - B. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 127-144; Morgan: 305-316; 293-303

VIII. **Week Eight:** February 26 / 28 Sacred Texts of Sikhism / Mid-Term Exam

A. **E-Reserve, Feb 26:** "The Word as Guru: Sikh Scripture and the Translation Controversy." Verne A. Dusenbery, *History of Religions*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Sikh Studies. (May, 1992), pp. 385-402

B. **MIDTERM EXAM: FEBRUARY 28**

C. **SPRING BREAK MARCH 3-7:**

IX. **Week Nine:** March 11 / 13 Sacred (??) Texts of Confucianism

A. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 145-159; Morgan: 189-209

X. **Week Ten:** March 18 / 20 Sacred (??) Texts of Confucianism

A. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 160-172; Morgan: 211-220

B. **QUIZ THREE:** March 20

XI. **Week Eleven:** March 25 / 27 Confucian Texts and Daoist Texts

A. **E-Reserve, March 25:** "The Religious Character of Confucian Tradition." Rodney L. Taylor, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 48, No. 1, (Jan., 1998), pp. 80-107

B. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 173-186; Morgan: 221-232

XII. **Week Twelve:** April 1 / 3 Sacred Texts of Daoism

A. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 186-206; Morgan: 233-257

B. **QUIZ FOUR:** April 3

XIII. **Week Thirteen:** April 8 / 10 Sacred Texts of Daoism

A. **E-Reserves, April 10:** "Ritualization of Texts and Textualization of Ritual in the Codification of Taoist Liturgy." Catherine Bell, *History of Religions*, Vol. 27, No. 4. (1988), pp. 366-392

XIV. **Week Fourteen:** April 15 / 17 Sacred Texts of Shintoism

A. Reading Assignment: Fieser & Powers: 207-221

B. **PAPER TWO DUE:** April 17

XV. **Week Fifteen:** April 22

A. Reading Assignment: Morgan 317-330

B. **FINAL EXAM : SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 8:30-10:30**