

SUMMER SESSION

ASIA 1147 RELIGIONS OF ASIA

"He who knows one, knows none." Max Müller

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CLASS LOCATION: GOOGLE CLASSROOM

CLASS TIME: ANYTIME (THIS IS AN ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS)

OFFICE HOURS: MONDAYS 9AM-4PM & BY APPOINTMENT

COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course provides a thematic and historical overview of four major Asian religious traditions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism in the cultural regions of India and China. To accomplish this ambitious goal, we will direct our focus to the major themes of each tradition, paying attention to how some of these traditions developed in dialogue with each other, and how others crystallized into distinct traditions in reaction to each other. This introduction to Asian religions will be undergirded by an exploration of the nature of religious belief and questions about the ethics of interreligious dialogue.

Specific themes that we will address include the following:

- What is religion as opposed to personal, moral, or political philosophy in India and China?
- How is religious identity defined in cultures that embrace a plurality of traditions?
- What common religious problems do the four traditions attempt to answer?
- How do we define religious pluralism? What are some approaches to religious difference?
- What do you think is the best approach to religious difference for you?

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Tsai Chih Chung, *Zhuangzi Speaks*, trans by Brian Bruya. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J., and Bryan W. Van Norden, eds. *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001.
- Extensive articles on Google Classroom.



EVALUATION

1. ACADEMIC CITIZENSHIP: 15%

Preparation, Attention, Collegiality: An organizing principle of this class is that knowledge is co-created; it is not unilaterally dispensed by the professor to students. In order for this collective investigation into the topic of the religions of Asia to be successful, we must each practice good academic citizenship: we must carefully complete readings prior to watching lectures or participating in class discussions; we must be attentive, respectful, and inquisitive with our colleagues' ideas and questions; we must do the work of forming, sharing, and interrogating our own ideas. Committing to these practices ensures a successful course of intellectual exploration.

Attendance: Your attendance in this class will involve watching online video lectures, participating in online discussions, participating in group annotations of texts, and other online activities. You can complete these activities at any time that is convenient for you as long as it is prior to the activity's due day and time. Due dates and times for every assignment are specified on Google Classroom. All times indicated are based on the Lynchburg, VA (Eastern) time zone.

2. RELIGIOUS AUTOBIOGRAPHY: 10%

Part of the process of learning about other religious traditions is coming to terms with the nature of one's own religious identity (or lack thereof). In this assignment, please share, to whatever degree you feel comfortable, a narrative of your own experience of religion (which can, of course, include a discussion of your lack of experience with religion, or of your rejection of religion.) You can talk about the arc of your lifelong relationship with religion, or share a pivotal experience that subsequently affected your understanding of religion. What you choose to share is up to you. Note that I (the professor) will be the only person to read this paper. Please know that you are NOT required to discuss any experience or event that you consider to be private. Please think carefully about what you want to share with me. This paper should be 2-3 double spaced pages long. See the "Your Religious Autobiography" assignment on our Google Classroom page for more details.



3. "BECOMING RESPONSIBLY ENGAGED IN THE WORLD" (B.R.E.W.): 15%

In order to bring the question of religious pluralism and interfaith dialogue from the realm of the hypothetical to the land of reality, we aren't just going to read about different religions: we are going to encounter them in our lives. To that end, a requirement of this course is an interview with a person of a different faith or non-faith than you, and a written reflection on that encounter.

First, you will need to find a Randolph faculty member, staff person, peer, or member of your own local community who practices a different religious or non-religious tradition than you do. This means that if you are, say, a Lutheran Christian, you may not interview a Catholic Christian or a Christian of a different denomination. Please challenge yourself-- find someone about whose tradition you know very little or do not relate to very well-- and remember that in the Randolph community we have a wonderful diversity of traditions including Buddhism, Unitarian Universalism, Islam, Hinduism, Mormonism, atheism, and many others. Do not pick a close friend of yours unless it's actually the case that you have never really talked to them about their religious tradition. In order to not place too heavy a burden on any one person in our community, you may only interview someone who is not being interviewed by anyone else in the class. Invite the person you choose to coffee or lunch, and tell them you would love to interview them for the interfaith component of your class.

Second, you will need to design 5-6 respectful and thoughtful interview questions. We will brainstorm these in an online discussion. A favorite is, "What is something about your religious tradition you really wish everyone outside of your religious tradition understood better?" List your interview questions on your BREW assignment.

Third, write a reflection paper describing what you learned by engaging in this conversation. (Note: Do not mention their real name in your assignment unless you have asked and received their permission to do so.) Answer the following questions:

- What did you learn about your neighbor's tradition?
- What most surprised/challenged/interested you?
- What assumptions did you bring into the interview that were changed or challenged or nuanced by the dialogue?
- Did you discover any shared values or practices, and if so, what were they? What was an area of disagreement or discomfort? How did you handle it?

Your BREW assignment should be 3-5 pages long. See "BREW Assignment" on Google Classroom for more details.

4. HINDUISM EXAM: 20%

- Exam will engage seminal Hindu texts, vocabulary, ideas, and practices. See Google Classroom for exam details.

5. BUDDHISM EXAM: 20%

- Exam will engage seminal Buddhist texts, vocabulary, ideas, and practices. See Google Classroom for exam details.

6. CHINESE RELIGIONS EXAM: 20%

- Exam will engage seminal Confucian and Daoist texts, vocabulary, ideas, and practices. See Google Classroom for exam details.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction

Week 2: Hinduism

Week 3: Buddhism

Week 4: Confucianism

Week 5: Daoism & Wrap-Up



COLLEGE-WIDE POLICIES Title IX: As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. I also have a mandatory reporting responsibility related to my role as a faculty member. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep information you share private to the greatest extent possible. However, I am required to share information regarding sexual misconduct or information about a crime that may have occurred on Randolph's campus with the College's Title IX Coordinator, Sharon Saunders. I do this to make sure that you are able to get all the information and support you may need. The Health Center and Counseling Center staffs, as well as the College Chaplain, are not mandated reporters. As such they are not required to share information about sexual misconduct with the College and will keep your information private and confidential. Some staff and faculty serve as Campus Advocates. They can offer confidential guidance but they do need to report basic occurrence information. If a faculty member is also serving as a Campus Advocate, they remain a mandated reporter while in the classroom. A student must ask to speak to them in their role as Campus Advocate before revealing any information. **Accommodations:** Randolph College is committed to providing learning experiences that are accessible for all students, and will make reasonable accommodations for individuals with documented disabilities. If you have a learning difference or a disability—mental health, medical, or physical impairment—please contact Diane Roy, Coordinator of Access Services, in the Academic Services Center, 4th floor, Lipscomb Library; 947-8132; droy@randolphcollege.edu. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism, an act that violates the College's Honor Code, is using the words or ideas of another person without properly acknowledging the source. Ignorance of the conventions of documentation is not a defense for plagiarism. The Student Handbook (www.randolphcollege.edu/studenthandbook) provides examples of ways to avoid it. You can educate yourself even more by speaking about the topic with faculty and Writing Lab tutors. **Honor Code and the Honor Pledge:** The Student Handbook (www.randolphcollege.edu/studenthandbook) describes the Honor Code and the Honor System. If you have questions about how the Honor Code pertains to this class, it is your responsibility to ask them. Randolph students take the following pledge: "I pledge absolute honesty in my academic work and in all personal relationships at Randolph College. I will maintain the integrity of my word and I will respect the rights of others. Realizing that these standards are an integral part of life at Randolph College, I assume my obligation to uphold this honor pledge. If at any time I fail to live up to my obligations of this pledge, I will report myself to the Chair of the Judiciary Committee. I will also ask others to report themselves for any infraction of this pledge."