

**RELI 103**

**Paths to Enlightenment: Introducing Asian  
Religions**



**Religious Studies  
SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS AND  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**TRIMESTER 3, 2009**

# RELI 103

## Paths to Enlightenment: Introducing Asian Religions

TRIMESTER 3 2009

16th November 2009 to 21st February 2010

*Course co-ordinator:* Dr Rick Weiss  
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*Tutors:* tba

*Where and when:* Lectures: HU LT 323  
Tuesday 5:30-8:20 p.m.  
Tutorials: Times and Seminar Room TBA.

### Trimester dates

Teaching dates for this course: 16 November 2009 to 31 January 2010

Mid-trimester break: 19 December 2009 to 4 January 2010

Examination/Assessment period: 15 February to 21 February 2010

**Religious Studies** is located in the Hunter Building. The programme administrator, Aliko Kalliabetsos, is in HU 318 (463 5299), [aliki.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:aliki.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz). **Notices regarding the course or any information on changes will be posted on the notice board outside her office. Notices will also be communicated to students via emails sent from Blackboard. Students who do not use their assigned student.vuw.ac.nz email addresses should ensure that ITS has an up-to-date email address, and that they check this address regularly.**

Office Hours: The main office is open Monday - Friday, 9.30 – 12:00 noon and 2:30 - 3.30 pm. You can arrange to meet with Rick Weiss by appointment, and he will also answer all emails promptly.

### Course delivery

The course uses a mixture of lectures and tutorials. The lectures communicate historical and doctrinal materials, while the tutorials allow students the opportunity to develop their own communication skills through critical discussion of the readings and lectures.

## *Course outline*

### **1 Course content**

This course will focus on ancient and contemporary beliefs, practices and forms of religiosity in the cultural regions of South and East Asia. The course aims to introduce class participants to the lived dimensions of Asian religion.

### **2 The course aims:**

**First** to improve students' skills in critical thinking, creative thinking and communication.

**Second** to develop academic reading and writing skills, including the recognition and expression of key arguments and themes, logical analysis and critical engagement with primary and secondary sources.

**Third** to develop excellent skills in communication for peer learning, collaboration, and for formal presentation in the academic study of religion as well as other fields.

**Fourth** to familiarise students with the main concerns and methodologies of research in studies of religion as an academic discipline, and to prepare them for further study in the histories, social dynamics and practices of religion.

**Fifth** to encourage students to critically engage with the issues and debates found in the scholarly literature in the area of Asian religions.

**Sixth** to provide students with the necessary skills and resources to undertake independent argument and analyses in the areas covered by the course.

This course is designed as an integral combination of lectures, readings, tutorials, and assigned work. These components are complementary, not redundant, with one another; and ALL components of the course are necessary for students to do well. It is thus recommended in the strongest possible terms that students do the reading, attend all lectures and tutorials, and keep up with the required work for the course.

### **3 The main learning objectives for this course are threefold:**

- to impart knowledge of the contemporary forms of religious practice in South and East Asia;
- to teach the study of religion as a critical discipline; that is, to examine the political, economic, and social dimensions of religious activity;
- to help the students develop their research and writing skills, their ability to make and defend arguments, and their critical awareness.

### **4 Rationale for assessment:** The assessment of this course relates directly to these objectives.

- i. **The tutorial assignments** are to be short (one page, maximum) written responses to the current week's required readings and lectures. They ensure that students read and think about the required readings prior to tutorial discussion. They also provide continuous feedback to students on their level of understanding and their development of the analytical skills required in the essays. **They are due in the relevant tutorial.**

- ii. **The essays** allow students to apply their analytical skills to information retrieved through library research on a set topic. Essays demonstrate the students' level of proficiency in finding, understanding, and using sources. They develop the skills of critical reading, analysis and organizing material necessary for continued study. The process also gives them the opportunity to develop a more in-depth knowledge of an area covered in the lectures and weekly readings.
- iii. **The quizzes.** This course is designed as an integral set of complementary readings, lectures, tutorials and assigned work. The quizzes give an incentive to do the readings and attend lectures, and reward students for doing so.
- iv. **The test** allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the material presented in the course and allows students the opportunity to reflect on their learning process throughout the term.

Students who do not understand the grades they have been assigned or are concerned about their progress are encouraged to meet with the marker for a discussion.

- 5 The **lecture programme** follows. Lectures may be varied from time to time. As much notice as possible will be given when changes occur and, if necessary a revised programme will be issued at lectures.

**Lectures are an essential part of the course**, and your attendance is encouraged in the strongest possible terms. **Lectures do not merely repeat the content of the readings**; rather, the course is designed as an integrated combination of complementary lectures, readings and tutorials, and *all* components are necessary for students to do well.

- 6 **Tutorials** deal with topics which complement the lecture programme. They provide an opportunity to discuss aspects of the course in a small group and develop the ability to contribute to discussions.

**Rationale: why do we require tutorial assignments?** Over the course of the trimester, we require students to submit a total of four written responses to the readings. These responses are submitted to your tutor at tutorials. These responses should not exceed one page in length and need only address the required readings. They will be marked according to the criteria below and returned to students the following week. These written responses are designed to accomplish the following four objectives, each of which is vital to successful completion of the course:

- They give students a regular, small-scale (low-risk) opportunity to practice good academic writing, and receive feedback on their writing to help them improve;
- They ensure that students are keeping up with the required readings and enable teaching staff to monitor student progress;
- They provide students the opportunity to develop critical reading skills (i.e. a focus on the material most pertinent to the question);
- They develop students' analytical skills.

**Mandatory course requirements: To gain a pass in this course students must**

- a) Submit the written work specified for this course, on or by the specified dates (subject to such provisions as are stated for late submission of work) attaining 50% or more for course assessment;
- b) Attend 80% of tutorials.

7 **The course is internally assessed** by means of two essays, four tutorial assignments, four in-class quizzes and one class test, as follows:

- **two essays**, the first approximately **1,250 words in length, worth 20%** of the final grade, and the second approximately **2,000 words in length, worth 30%** of the final grade;

**Essay 1 is due on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2009, at 5 p.m.**

**Essay 2 is due on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> FEBRUARY, 2010, at 5 p.m.**

Essays are to be submitted in two ways, both of which are mandatory to receive credit for the essay:

**First**, students must submit a paper copy of the essay to the assignment box outside the Religious Studies office (HU 318). Please make sure you sign the sheet to document that you submitted your assignment, and when.

**Second**, students must submit an electronic copy via Blackboard. These electronic copies will be submitted to Turn It In, an electronic plagiarism database, to check for possible plagiarism.

- **four tutorial assignments**; short (one page) weekly written assignments to be submitted **in the relevant tutorial**, collectively worth **10%** of the final grade;
- **four brief, simple quizzes** on the content of the readings, administered during lectures, collectively worth **10%** of the final grade;
- **a class test lasting two hours in class time on Tuesday, January 26**, worth **30%** of the final grade (since this last session of the course comprises only the test, class will be released one hour early, at 7:30 p.m.);

8 **Required text:** There is no set textbook. The *RELI 103 Course Reader* should be obtained from the Student Notes shop at a cost of approximately \$35.

- 9 Academic Integrity and Plagiarism** Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such material

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

**Use of Turnitin:** Student work provided for assessment in this course will be checked for academic integrity by the electronic search engine <http://www.turnitin.com>. Turnitin is an online plagiarism prevention tool which compares submitted work with a very large database of existing material. At the discretion of the Head of School, handwritten work may be copy-typed by the School and subject to checking by Turnitin. Turnitin will retain a copy of submitted material on behalf of the University for detection of future plagiarism, but access to the full text of submissions is not made available to any other party.

- 10 Work-load (Recommendation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences):** For 100-level 9 week courses, 20 hours per week are recommended. An average student should spend 16 hours per week for preparation, reading and writing in addition to attendance at lectures and tutorials.
- 11 Aegrotat regulations apply** to internally assessed courses. Students who cannot submit or complete the course requirements due to illness or some other impairment may apply for an aegrotat pass. Applications may be submitted concerning tests or for other assessment items which are due at most three weeks before the day on which lectures cease for the course, and for which no alternative item of assessment could reasonably be substituted or extension time granted. (refer to aegrotat provisions in section 4.5 of the Assessment statute.

- 12 General University policies and statutes** Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC (Academic) website also provides information for students in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/avcademic/Publications.aspx>

## *Lecture Programme*

The lectures (HU LT 323, Tuesday 5:30-8:20 p.m.) constitute the core of the course. The readings supplement the lectures, but are *not* a substitute for them (nor vice versa). As lecture material is crucial for both the class test and the essays, it is important that students *both* attend all lectures *and* do all readings.

For the summer version of this course, each week will comprise three one-hour lectures given in a single three-hour session. Thus, each week we will cover three topics, and the readings are also designed to cover those three topics.

### **Week 1: 17<sup>th</sup> November**

*First hour:*

#### **Introduction the Course: a few big questions**

Is there anything special about Asian religions, that all of them share, but that marks them out as distinct from other groups of religions in the world? If so, what? If not, why are we studying Asian religions as a group? What biases and misunderstandings do we need to be careful of in approaching Asian religions, or indeed, Asian cultures in general?

#### **Required readings:**

King, Richard. *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and the 'Mystic East'*. London: Routledge, 1999. Chapter Four, "Orientalism and Indian Religions," 82-95.

#### **Optional additional reading:**

Harrison, Victoria S. "The Pragmatics of Defining Religion in a Multi-Cultural World." *International Journal for the Philosophy of Religion* 59 (2006): 133-152.

#### **Recommended viewing:**

Jhally, Sut, dir. *Edward Said on Orientalism*. Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2002. DVD 05048.

### **Unit One: Questions in the Pre-modern History of Asian Religions**

We begin the course by looking at some basic questions in the study of Asian religions. How did religions look at the dawn of history in Asia? What are the similarities and differences between the religions of the two largest and oldest major civilisations in the region – India and China? How were religions changed by the advent of more "universal", second-wave religions, with named founder figures (e.g. the Buddha, Confucius), and with bodies of explicit stipulative texts (the Buddhist scriptures, the Confucian *Analects* and "classics" etc.), arguing that adherents should adopt a significantly different worldview? How did Buddhism grow and change to eventually fulfil the role of the only pan-Asian religion – only to eventually die out in its homeland, India, leaving the Buddhist world in the second millennium "hollow in the middle"?



*Second and third hour:*

### **Vedic religion as seen through the Aśvamedha ritual**

The oldest texts in India are religious texts – the Vedas, dating in part as early as 1500 B.C.E. (some were probably produced as late as 500 B.C.E.), which centre on chants, received directly by seers from the gods, that were used as the central recitation texts for a complex range of religious rituals, especially sacrifices. Thus, in many senses, the oldest historical information we have about Indian civilisation as a whole is religious, and our picture of early historical India is seen through a religious lens. What kind of religious culture can we see in these old texts? How is it similar to, or different from, other religious cultures? How did it set the tone for later Indian religiosity? What might it say about Indian civilisation as a whole, or about culture at the dawn of history worldwide, that these first texts *are* centred on religion in this manner?

#### **Required readings:**

Stutley, Margaret. "The *Aśvamedha* or Indian Horse Sacrifice." *Folklore* 80, no. 4 (1969): 253-261.

#### **Recommended viewing:**

Gardner, Robert and J. F. Staal. *Altar of Fire*. DVD 1673.

In the 1970s, a group of Brahmins performed the very ancient Vedic *agnicayana* ("fire altar") ritual, possibly for the last time ever, and it was filmed.

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## **Week 2: 24<sup>th</sup> November**

*First hour:*

**Essay writing**

<b>ESSAY WRITING: Significant class time this week will be devoted to discussion of how to enhance your essay-writing (and maximise your marks!).</b>
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**Essay writing is one of the most important components of your entire education.** It develops key skills like

**critical thinking** (in analysing your materials);  
**creative thinking** (in conceiving of an **original argument**); and  
**communication** (in articulating your ideas).

It is also a skill that can make a huge difference to your marks (and your future employment prospects), and one of the most durably useful things you will carry away from your education for us throughout the remainder of your life. In other words, **it's really important!**

In this course, we work hard to help you improve your essay writing, through the tutorial assignments and essays, and the feedback we give you on them. We also **tell you exactly what we are looking for and how to do it**, and that is what this session is for.

**Required readings:**

Booth, Wayne C., Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. Chapter 3, "From Topics to Questions," 35-47.

From Student Learning Support Services, Victoria University:

"The Essay Writing Process"

"Structure of an Essay"

"Clear Writing Tips!"

"Editing Checklist"

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*Second hour:*

**Basic Buddhism**

Buddhism is one of the largest religions in the world (perhaps 370 million adherents), and may be the largest and fastest-growing non-Western religion of conversion among Westerners. What is it? What do Buddhists believe, or teach, or do? Is there any common core to the Buddhist religion, or should we actually speak about plural *Buddhisms*? Is Buddhism actually a religion anyway?

**Required readings:**

Harvey, Peter. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teaching, History and Practices*. New York/Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, [1990] 1991. "The Buddha and His Indian Context," 9-31.

**Optional additional reading:**

Boyd, James W. "Suffering in Theravāda Buddhism." In *Suffering: Indian Perspectives*, ed. Kapil N. Ti Wari, 145-162. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1986.

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*Third hour:*

**Confucius and the *Analects***

Confucius 孔子 is probably the most famous Chinese person of all time, and still probably the most famous Chinese person in the world (except perhaps for Chairman Mao). But who was he? What kind of teaching, or practice, did he advocate? What kind of text is his *Analects* 論語 (apart from being the inspiration for all those "Confucius say" jokes?). Is there a difference between what Confucius himself taught, and Confucianism? Are either of these things (Confucius's teaching, or Confucianism) religions? If not, what are they? And where did the name "Confucius" come from anyway – it hardly sounds Chinese, surely?

**Required readings:**

Fingarette, Herbert. *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*. New York: Harper and Row, 1972. "Human Community as Holy Rite," 1-17.

Lau, D. C., trans. *Confucius: The Analects (Lun yü)*. London: Penguin, 1992. 59-63, 66-73, 82-85, 90-93, 112-117, 120-125, 130-133, 144-145.

## Week 3: 1st December

*First hour:*

### **Taoism: An Early Chinese Mystical Tradition**

Taoism is often considered to be the mystical counterpart to Confucianism, and is perhaps its most consistent critic. The Taoist school of thought focuses on the *Tao*, the Way, which it describes as “the One” which is eternal, unnameable, natural, and spontaneous. How did Taoism, which stresses *wu-wei*, or harmonious action, engage with the ritual and political dimensions of society? Is its philosophy one of non-action, rejection of society, and passivism, or does it have a more affirming social teaching? Here we will focus on the most well-known Taoist author, Lao Tzu, whom Chinese intellectual tradition has held to be contemporaneous with Confucius.

#### **Required readings:**

Chan, Wing-Tsit, translator and Compiler. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963. Chapter 7, “The Natural Way of Lao Tzu,” 136-161.

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### **Unit Two: The Social and Personal Practice of Asian Religions**

Religions are not just about ideas, though there has been a misleading tendency in the West, and at times in the study of religion historically, to assume that ideas (beliefs) are the most important defining features of a religion. In this unit, we look at some important aspects of religions in practice.

*Second hour:*

### **Caste In India**

Caste is a “system” of social stratification in South Asia that distinguishes communities by ascribing them different levels of purity and social status. It has dictated personal vocation and religious practices and roles in India for at least two millennia. It was employed by British colonial authorities as a justification of colonialism, and it continues to be targeted by Christian missionaries in their proselytising efforts. In India today, caste continues to be a central consideration in religious processes, friendships, and especially in marriages. What upholds caste distinctions, and how are they justified? Who are the winners and the losers, and what resistance is there to these social hierarchies?

#### **Required readings:**

Fuller, C.J. *The Camphor Flame*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992. “The Structure of Indian Society,” 11-24.

Baker, Sophie. *Caste: At Home in Hindu India*. Calcutta: Rupa Co., 1991. “A Brahmin Family in Tamil Nadu,” 108-139.

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*Third hour:*

**Indispensable library skills for undergraduate work in Religious Studies**

**Library Skills:** Lecture this week will feature a guest appearance from Tony Quinn of the VUW library, who will introduce you to resources in the library and the skills you need to use to write good essays.

The library is a huge and valuable resource that you have at your fingertips (free!) for the duration of your education. Making good use of it, and acquiring the skills to do so, is an indispensable part of your education. **Don't squander this opportunity. Be strong – say "No" to the Internet (especially Wikipedia and Google) and get into the library!**

This session, from a specialist librarian whose entire job is to make it easier for you, will show you how.

**Week 4: 8<sup>th</sup> December LAST CLASS BEFORE CHRISTMAS**

*First hour:*

**Divinity and Festival in Japanese Religions**

The second tradition we will look at, in connection to the worship of multiple deities and their festivals, is Japanese Shintō 神道. We will cover some basics of this Japanese religious tradition, but our emphasis will be comparative. There are arguably many similarities between Japanese and Hindu religiosity, as can be glimpsed, for example, in festivals. What does it mean, once more, if two traditions so remote from one another as India and Japan have such fundamental similarities? Are we seeing here some kind of quintessential "Asian" religion? Or are we seeing universals of human religion? If the latter, what could conceivably make aspects of religion universal among human cultures?

**Required readings:**

Reader, Ian. *Religion in Contemporary Japan*. University of Hawaii Press, 1991. "Born Shinto. . .": Community, Festivals, Production and Change," 55-76.

Ono, Sokyō. *Shinto: the Kami Way*. Rutland, VT/Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1962. "Worship and Festivals," 50-71.

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*Second hour:*

**Divinity and festival in Indian Religions**

Another important form of religious practice, found in many religions in Asia (and elsewhere), is worship, and attendant cycles of festival. In the next two hours, we will look at two instances at opposite ends of Asia: festivals in Hinduism, and Shintō festivals in Japan. What is a festival? What is its relation to ordinary everyday activity? Why would festivals please the gods? What is revealed by the nature of the gods by the festivals held to worship them? What are festivals supposed to achieve? Festivals also show aspects of the

interesting relationship between religions and community. What role might festivals play in the construction and maintenance of religious community, or even community more broadly?

**Required readings:**

Eck, Diana. *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Pennsylvania: Anima Books, 1985. "Seeing the Sacred," 3-31; 77-78.

Marriott, McKim. "The Feast of Love." In *Krishna: Myths, Rites and Attitudes*, ed. Milton Singer, 200-212. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966.

**Recommended viewing:**

Montagnon, Peter, prod. *The Long Search with Ronald Eyre*. London: BBC Education and Training, 1977. Episode 1, "330 Million Gods". Vis 1742

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*Third hour:*

**Healing and Religion in Tibet**

Throughout the world, healing practices are often part of religious traditions. The separation of medicine, as a science, from religion, is a relatively recent historical development in Western societies, and many people in Asian today continue to consult religious specialists to address a variety of ailments. We will examine Tibetan medicine, which integrates classical, Ayurvedic medicine with shamanic practices. We will ask: How do Tibetan healers describe the structure of the human body, and how does this differ from biomedical anatomical notions? What rituals are performed to heal illness? How has the introduction of Western medicine into Tibet affected traditional healing?

**Required readings:**

Meyer, Fernand. "Theory and Practice of Tibetan Medicine." In *Oriental Medicine: An Illustrated Guide to the Asian Arts of Healing*, ed. J. van Alphen and A. Aris, 109-141. Boston, MA: Shamabala, 1996.

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**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December, 5 p.m.:            FIRST ESSAY DUE**

Essays are to be submitted to the assignment box outside the Religious Studies office (HU 318), and electronically via Blackboard. Please make sure you sign the sheet to document that you submitted your assignment, and when.

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**Christmas break 19<sup>th</sup> December 2009 – 4<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

## Week Five: 5<sup>th</sup> January

*First hour:*

### **Women in traditional Indian society**

Here we will look at the ordering of the social world in conformity with certain religious ideas, through the case-study of gender roles. In the next two one-hour segments, we will examine important religious attitudes towards women in India and China. First, we will look at the ways in which Hindu texts and rituals serve to idealise women, subject them, and sometimes even empower them.

#### **Required readings:**

Smith, David. *Hinduism and Modernity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2003. Chapter 7, “‘Woman Caste’ (aurat jati) and the Gender of Modernity,” 105-119, 213.

Flueckiger, Joyce Burkhalter. “Wandering from ‘Hills to Valleys’ with the Goddess: Protection and Freedom in the *Matamma* Tradition of Andhra.” In *Women’s Lives, Women’s Rituals in Hindu Traditions*, ed. Tracy Pintchman, 35-54. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

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*Second hour:*

### **Women in traditional Confucian society**

In this hour, we look at stipulations about the proper role and place of women in the Confucian tradition, especially in the extremely influential *Book of Filial Piety for Women*.

When we examine these Hindu and Confucian conceptions of the role of women together, important general questions arise. What is the role of religions in producing social systems? Do religions merely reflect the social worlds in which they arise, or do they alter, or even produce, social worlds? More specifically, how have religions been implicated in the construction of gender? What part do they play in the construction and maintenance of patriarchal systems, or even misogyny?

We can also consider this as another case study in the problem of comparison as a method of study. Why would civilisations so remote from one another, both physically and culturally, elaborate codes that are similar in this way? Conversely, what important differences might we see between these texts and the religious systems they reflect or produce? What more general differences do we glimpse through these texts between the religious worlds of India and China?

#### **Required readings:**

Ebrey, Patricia Buckley, trans. “The *Book of Filial Piety for Women* Attributed to a Woman Née Zheng (ca. 730).” In *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*, ed. Susan Mann, 46-69. University of California Press, 2001.

**Optional additional reading:**

Ebrey, Patricia. "Women, Marriage and the Family in Chinese History." In *Heritage of China: Contemporary Perspectives on Chinese Civilization*, ed. Paul Ropp, 197-223. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990.

**Recommended viewing:**

Montagnon, Peter, prod. *The Long Search with Ronald Eyre*. London: BBC Education and Training, 1977. Episode 8, "The Way of the Ancestors". Vis 1742.

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*Third hour:*

**Tibetan Theocracy in an Age of Exile**

From the sixteenth century, Tibet had a system of government that was perhaps unique – a theocracy (government of priests) of celibate (Buddhist) monks, with the Dalai Lama at their head. Here, we return to a very particular version of the relationship between religion and political power, which we have already noted is a general problem for the study of religion. This Buddhist case also poses a challenge to a common (though demonstrably false) understanding of Buddhism – that it has always been a peaceable, apolitical religion. In the special Tibetan case, we see at play a set of dynamics that arose repeatedly in Buddhist history, as Buddhism was adopted as part of a "civilisation package" from a central civilisation by more peripheral civilisations, and we will consider this dynamic.

Finally, in the modern era, an added twist is added to the situation by the fact that since the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959, the present (fourteenth) Dalai Lama and his government have been in exile in India. These events, combined with the great increase in popularity of Buddhism in the West and some very successful strategising and PR by the Dalai Lama and his advisors, have led to a the somewhat paradoxical situation of a non-democratic, theocratic, in many respects "feudal" institution finding perhaps its strongest support in the favourable public opinion of the international (largely Western) liberal middle class.

**Required readings:**

His Holiness the Dalai Lama. "Human Rights and Universal Responsibility." In *Buddhism and Human Rights*, ed. Damien V. Keown, Charles S. Prebish, and Wayne R. Husted, xvii-xxi. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998.

Powers, John. "Human Rights and Cultural Values: The Political Philosophies of the Dalai Lama and the People's Republic of China." In *Buddhism and Human Rights*, ed. Damien V. Keown, Charles S. Prebish, and Wayne R. Husted, 175-202. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998.

**Optional additional reading:**

Michael, Franz. *Rule By Incarnation*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982. 27-50.

**Recommended viewing:**

Sarin, Ritu. *The Reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche*. New York: Mystic Fire Video, Inc., 1993. Vis 3205.

### **Unit Three: Modernity and Asian Religions**

In this final unit of the course, we examine some facets of the transformations undergone by Asian religions in the modern world. Through case studies, we will consider such problems as the globalisation of Asian religions; the rise of Asian New Religious Movements (NRMs); the relationship between the modern state and religions outside Western liberal democracies; Western conversion to Asian religions, the Western marketplace for "alternative spiritualities" (the "spiritual supermarket"), and Orientalism; the relationship between religion and nationalism in Asian cases; and the place of the widespread modern phenomenon "invention of tradition" in the construction and reception of modern Asian religions.

#### **Week Six: 12<sup>th</sup> January**

*First hour:*

##### **Falun gong and the Chinese Communist State**

In the early 1990s, a new and extremely popular movement (arguably a New Religious Movement or NRM, though apologists and adherents deny it is a religion) mushroomed in China and then abroad (especially among expatriate Chinese) – Falun gong 法輪功. The movement was based upon a series of physical exercises, which have however a spiritual dimension, loosely based on *qigong*, a kind of Chinese gymnastic-cum-physiotherapeutic practice that had seen massive and diverse growth through the liberalisation of the PRC in the 1980s. The leader of this movement, Li Hongzhi, also wrote works explaining that he was an extremely powerful deity, and detailing his powers, the efficacy of Falun gong practices, and the worldview upon which they were based (a world that he could see, and that we cannot, due to his divine cognitive powers). In 1999, following a series of peaceful protests by Falun gong members objecting to coverage of their movement in the Chinese media, the Chinese government began a brutal crackdown on this movement. In the subsequent standoff, Falun gong has gradually become more clearly politicised (while maintaining all the while it is apolitical), and has sought the support of the international community, framing its repression at the hands of the CCP as an issue of human rights.

In this complex scenario, we catch glimpses of a number of important themes in the study of religion, as they work out in Asian contexts, including: the formation and nature of New Religious Movements (NRMs); the relationship between religion and the modern state; the globalisation of religion.

##### **Required readings:**

Madsen, Richard. "Understanding Falun Gong." *Current History* 99 (2000): 243-247.

Chang, Maria Hsia. *Falun Gong: The End of Days*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. "Beliefs and Practices", 60-95.

##### **Recommended viewing:**

Perrott, Megg. *Falun Gong* [videorecording]. N.Z.: South Seas Film and Television School, 2006. DVD04183.

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*Second hour:*

### **Modern Buddhism: The example of the Thai forest tradition**

In the mid-nineteenth century, it seems that meditation traditions were almost unknown in the Buddhist world of South-East Asia, and may well have been largely in abeyance – in stark contrast to the stereotype now current in the Western imagination, that holds that meditation is the quintessence of Buddhist practice. These traditions were gradually revived, partly out of old books, by a series of marginal reformer/revivalist figures, who often made the jungles and forests of Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Sri Lanka their main haunts. The genesis of these revivalist movements is a very interesting case-study in the dialectical relationship between Western images of Asian religions (including images constructed in Western scholarship, i.e. "Orientalism" in the old sense) and living Asian religions on the ground, in the real world.

Eventually these revivalist movements coalesced into a group of "forest traditions", which may offer us an interesting example of the "invention of tradition" (see next week). Interestingly, these "new traditions", which were in many ways quite radical, were among the targets sought out most fervently as the "most authentic" by Westerners attracted to Buddhism (a pattern repeated in the cases of other strands of Buddhism and Asian religions), and the movements who were most active in missionary activity to the West.

#### **Required readings:**

Anon. "A Short Biography of Ajahn Chah." In *Seeing the Way: Buddhist Reflections on the Spiritual Life – An Anthology of Teachings by English-speaking Disciples of Ajahn Chah*, 12-19. Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire: Amaravati Publications, 1989.

Kornfield, Jack, ed. *Living Buddhist Masters*. Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1977. "Achaan Chaa," 33-48.

Tiyanavich, Kamala. *Forest Recollections: Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997. Chapter 3, "Facing Fear," 79-105.

Venerable Tiradhammo. "Joy in Spiritual Practice." In *Seeing the Way: Buddhist Reflections on the Spiritual Life – An Anthology of Teachings by English-speaking Disciples of Ajahn Chah*, 90-95. Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire: Amaravati Publications, 1989.

#### **Recommended viewing:**

Moore, Geoff, and Cameron Broadhurst, dirs. *Buddhism in New Zealand*. New Zealand: Geoff Moore and Cameron Broadhurst, 2003. DVD 2083.

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*Third hour:*

### **The Globalisation of Asian Religion: Hindu Gurus in the West**

Globalisation has become one of the key concepts through which we understand the movement of money, people and ideas in our modern world. For over a century, Hindu gurus have successfully gained devotees throughout the world, most dramatically with the hippie movement in the 1960s. Here we will look at some of the most colourful of these globe-trotting Hindu gurus, paying particular attention to the ways in which they transform their teachings to suit European and American sensibilities. These processes raise important questions about the content and continuities of religious traditions. Are these still Hindu traditions, or has something new been created? How can these processes help us to question the usefulness of notions of religious “authenticity”? What does the popularity of Hindu gurus in Western societies tell us about the nature of religion in those societies?

#### **Required readings:**

Smith, David. *Hinduism and Modernity*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2003.  
Chapter 11, “Gurus,” 167-180, 217.

Urban, Hugh B. “Osho, From Sex Guru to Guru of the Rich: The Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism.” In *Gurus in America*, ed. Thomas A. Forsthoefel and Cynthia Ann Humes, 169-192. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005

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### **Week Seven: 19<sup>th</sup> January**

*First hour:*

#### **Buddhism, Abortion, and Death in Japan**

This section examines issues of gender, society, emotion, and ritual in contemporary Japan through a consideration of *mizuko kuyo*, memorial rituals for aborted fetuses. These ceremonies, conducted by Buddhist priests, address feelings of loss experienced by the mother. These rituals reflect historical shifts in general roles and family relations, and they also provide important material benefits to Buddhist temples.

#### **Required readings:**

Smith, Bardwell. “Buddhism and Abortion in Contemporary Japan: Mizuko Kuyo and the Confrontation with Death.” In *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 15.1 (1988): 4-24

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*Second hour:*

**Henry Steel Olcott, Modern Sri Lankan Buddhism, and the Origins of Theosophy**

In this hour, we will look at Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907), who was an important figure in the construction of one kind of characteristically modern Buddhism. Olcott was also the co-founder, with Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), of the Theosophical movement, a significant and enduring modern NRM (not so new now, of course!). In Olcott's biography, we thus see early examples of a number of important themes in the modern transformation of Asian religions: the action upon them of global forces; the influence of the constructs of Western scholarship, and the reaction of Asian reformers to them; the strange symbiosis between the Western interpretation and appropriation of Asian traditions and the formation of Western NRMs; and the relationship between Asian nationalisms and movements to modernise, reform or revitalise Asian religious traditions.

**Required readings:**

Prothero, Stephen. *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, c1996. "Introduction", 1-13.

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*Third hour:*

**Conclusion: Themes of this Course**

In this hour, I will boldly attempt the impossible (with no net!) – I will try to sum up all the themes of the course on the back of a Weetbix card. Questions and peanuts welcome.

**Week Eight: 26th January**

**FINAL IN-CLASS TEST  
REGULAR LECTURE ROOM AND TIME (2 hours)**

Note: Since this last session of the course comprises only the test, class will be released one hour early, at 7.30 pm.

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**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February, 5 p.m.: SECOND ESSAY DUE**

Essays are to be submitted to the assignment box outside the Religious Studies office (HU 318), and electronically via Blackboard. Please make sure you sign the sheet to document that you submitted your assignment, and when.

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## **Topics for tutorial assignments**

For tutorial assignments, you will have the option of choosing any four topics, including more than one topic from the same week, if you so prefer.

The tutorial assignments are designed in part to give you the chance to work steadily on improving your academic writing, and through it, your critical and creative thinking, and communication skills. **The best use of your tutorial assignments**, therefore, i.e. the one that will do your own academic progress the greatest good, is probably to complete your mandatory four assignments early in the trimester. This means you will still have a chance to act on the feedback you receive (and even incorporate any improvements made in your writing into your larger pieces of assessment, i.e. essays and the test).

### **Week 1:**

1. How might Orientalism interfere with the objective study of Asian religions? Try to give your own example (other than those from readings and lectures).
2. What kind of religious world is assumed by the Aśvamedha (horse sacrifice)?

### **Week 2:**

3. On the basis of your reading, do you think Buddhism is a religion? Why (not)?
4. What is the relationship between "benevolence" (*ren*) and "ritual" (*li*), according to the *Analects*? (See the list of passages attached to the D. C. Lau reading in the Lecture programme above).

### **Week 3:**

5. How does Taoism differ from Confucianism?
6. How are caste divisions upheld?

### **Week 4:**

7. What do you think is the most interesting feature of the Japanese festivals described in your readings? Why do you think it is interesting?
8. What is "darsan"? What do you think is its religious function?
9. How does Tibetan medicine reflect an encounter between Indian classical influences and prior shamanistic healing?

**Week 5:**

10. Does Hinduism oppress or liberate women?
11. What is the proper place and role of a woman, according to the *Book of Filial Piety for Women*?
12. *Based on your readings*, do you think there are aspects of "human rights" that are unique to Tibetan culture? Or does it seem that in the Tibetan context, also, "human rights" are regarded as universal and not culturally determined?

**Week 6:**

13. Based on your readings, do you think Falun gong is a religion? Why (not)?
14. What would be the characteristics of a perfected spiritual master in the Thai forest traditions?
15. How have Indian gurus gained popularity outside of India?

**Week 7:**

16. What is the social function of *mizuko kuyo* rituals?
17. What part did Henry Steel Olcott play in the emergence of (a kind of) modern Buddhism? What does this show us about the situation of Asian religions in the modern world?

## *Essays*

Each student is required to submit **two** essays:

**Essay 1 is due on MONDAY, 14<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2009, at 5 p.m.**

**Essay 2 is due on MONDAY, 1<sup>st</sup> FEBRUARY, 2010, at 5 p.m.**

Essay 1 is to be approximately **1,250 words in length**, and is **worth 20%** of the final grade.

Essay 2 is to be approximately **2,000 words in length**, and is **worth 30%** of the final grade.

**WARNING:** Plagiarism is a serious offence, and will be treated as such in this course. ALL STUDENTS should ensure they have read and understood the **plagiarism warning in Section 9** of this Course Outline. **THE PLAGIARISM DETECTION SOFTWARE "TURN IT IN" WILL BE USED IN THIS COURSE TO CHECK FOR PLAGIARISM.**

### **Submission of essays and assignments: ELECTRONIC AND PAPER COPIES**

Essays and assignments must be placed in the locked assignment box located near the programme administrator's office, Hunter 318, and students must date and sign the essay register to indicate an essay has been submitted. **No responsibility will be taken for assignments for which there is no record.** Students should keep a copy of all their work until it is returned.

Essays **must also be submitted electronically** via Blackboard. Essays not received electronically by 5 p.m. on the due date will be treated as late, and penalised accordingly, just as essays not received in paper copy by the due date.

### **Penalties for late essays / assignments:**

- 2 percent per 24 hours will be deducted for late essays.
- essays submitted more than two weeks late will not be accepted for assessment unless prior written arrangement has been made with the lecturer.

Essays submitted late due to medical reasons must be given to the programme administrator accompanied by a doctor's certificate.

### **Guidelines for essay writing**

Each essay should consist of a thoughtful investigation of the topic of your choice. It is up to each student to define a focus for the essay and to design an appropriate title, even where you are writing in answer to a set question (for the first essay only; see below). Where you choose your own topic, **your choice of topic must be approved prior to writing by your tutor or the lecturer.**

Note also that in Week 2 we will devote **significant time in class to an explanation of how to write successful essays.**

## The Essays

### Essay 1:

For the **first essay**, you will select, read, and analyse a primary text from an Asian religious tradition. In answering these questions, you should feel free to discuss aspects of the text that are obscure (nobody understands everything perfectly in texts like these, so you don't need to pretend you do, either!). The focus of the essay is on the close reading of a primary text; however, you should also consult one or two *good academic* secondary sources to help you. I have provided one such source in the list that follows, and you should also draw from the course readings where relevant. I do not expect extensive secondary research on the primary text, but reading 25-50 pages of secondary material can help you to understand the context of the text and the ways that it has been read by those both within the tradition and outside. Be sure to include a correctly formatted bibliography and use correctly formatted footnotes each time you refer to your primary or secondary texts. See the religious studies citation guide at the end of this course outline for proper reference citations.

The essay should be researched and written in the following order:

1. Choose your text. Below I have listed 5 primary texts that you may choose from, along with a supplementary secondary text for each. **All of these texts, both primary and secondary, are on electronic reserve.** You may also choose a primary text that is not on this list, but if you do you **must** discuss it with your tutor or with me.
2. Read your text! Reading just 30 pages of primary material will be challenging. Reading a text that was written in, say, China in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE is far more difficult (and edifying!) than reading the *Dominion Post*. You may struggle to understand some of the context and language of the text. This is where the consultation of some basic secondary literature can be helpful.
3. Begin the writing of the essay. Give a general, overall description of the text. Is it in verse or not? What is the subject of the text? What does it emphasise? What aspects of the text will you focus on? In this introductory paragraph, give some background to the text. This is where your secondary literature comes in handy. When, and where, was the text written? What do we know about its authorship?
4. Provide some analysis of the text. This is the bulk of the essay. This analysis should be organised around a particular question. Below are some examples of questions you might ask of the text. Note that you may choose one of these questions, part of one, a combination of more than one, or you can come up with your own question. It is important that you only ask one or two focused questions, however, because if you ask too many questions of the text, your essay will lack focus.
  - a. What is the moral teaching of the text?
  - b. What does the text say about gender? What behaviour does it prescribe for women and/or men? What is the ideal woman/man, according to the text?
  - c. What sorts of ideals (social, gender, moral, etc.) are emphasised by the text? What norms of behaviour does it prescribe? What is the ideal person proposed by the text?

- d. Does the text have a notion of evil, and if so, what is it? How does one avoid evil?
  - e. What rituals are prescribed by the text, what benefits accrue from doing such rituals, and what might be the dangers of incorrectly performing these rituals?
  - f. Does the text support some form of social hierarchy and/or differentiation?
  - g. What does the source indicate about the nature of the person in its religious tradition? That is, what does it mean to be human in this text? What is the relationship between human beings and the rest of the cosmos?
  - h. Does the text employ narratives/stories? If so, what lessons do the narratives teach? What does this tell us about the role of narratives in religious traditions?
  - i. What is the most important aspect of religion emphasised in the text (ritual, myth, morality, philosophy, practice, sacrifice, etc.)? Why is this aspect more important than other aspects of religion?
  - j. Does the source advocate worship? If so, to what, in what way, and why? How does worship work (i.e., does it appease the deity, does it focus the mind, is it a way of bartering for favours)? What are the benefits and drawbacks of worship?
  - k. What is sacrifice in this source? Is it considered beneficial or detrimental to spiritual development? Why or why not?
5. Conclusion – here you sum up your findings, with some general observations about the text. It is not enough simply to repeat everything you have already said, but you should also draw some conclusions about your study that you may not have said before. For example, what does this material tell us about the role of religious texts? For what purpose was the text written? This is the time for broad, sweeping statements about the text. Be bold, feel free to speculate a little here, though keep in mind your close reading of the text that has come before. Oh, and don't forget to come up with a title for your essay: it can be descriptive and/or poetic, but it should be something more informative than just the name of the text you are analysing.

### **Texts, Essay 1**

The list of primary texts follows. Each of these texts, and an accompanying secondary reading, are on electronic reserve, and can be accessed through the library's home page. Go to <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/library/>, then select "course reserve" under quick links, and then select the course, RELI103.

1. The *Chandogya Upanisad*. This is one of the most well-known of the Upanisads, a group of speculative (mystical?) Sanskrit texts that speak of the attainment of knowledge of *atman*, the individual self, and its connection to *Brahman*, the cosmic self. The *Chandogya Upanisad* was probably composed sometime around the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, and it has become one of the most important early texts in the development of Hindu philosophy.

**Primary Reading:** The *Chandogya Upanisad*, chapters 6-8. In *Upanisads*, translated from the Sanskrit by Patrick Olivelle. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Pages 148-176.

**Secondary Reading:** Hopkins, Thomas J. *The Hindu Religious Tradition*. Belmont, USA: Wadsworth, 1971. Chapter 3, "The Upanishads," pp. 36-51.



2. The *Laws of Manu*. This is the most important of the *Dharmashastric* texts, or texts which set out proper social behaviour according to the standards of orthodox Hindus. It is therefore a work that dictates how people should act, and it promotes certain ideals of action and morality. This particular reading discusses the place of women in ancient Indian society. This work dates to approximately the beginning of the Common Era.

**Primary Reading:** *Laws of Manu*, chapter 9. In *The Laws of Manu*, translated from the Sanskrit by Wendy Doniger and Brian K. Smith. New York: Penguin, 1991. Pages 197-233.

**Secondary Reading:** Flood, Gavin. *An Introduction to Hinduism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Chapter 3, "Dharma," pp. 51-74.

3. Mencius. This philosopher wrote in the tradition of Confucius, and is perhaps the most important Confucian after Confucius. He worked from the position that humankind is essential good, and his writings cover topics ranging from morality, human destiny, governance, and revolt. He dates from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E.

**Primary Reading:** Selections from the *Book of Mencius*. In *A Source Book In Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit Chan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. Chapter 3, "Idealistic Confucianism: Mencius," pp. 49-83.

**Secondary Reading:** Yu-Lan, Fung. *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*. New York: Free Press, 1966. Chapter 7, "The Idealistic Wing of Confucianism: Mencius," pp. 68-79.

4. Chuang-Tzu. This mystical thinker is in the tradition of Lao Tzu. His work is among the most influential in Taoism. He conceived nature as in constant flux and transformation, and his thought thus aligned with and influenced Buddhist doctrines that were to enter China centuries later. He dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.

**Primary Reading:** Selections from the Chuang Tzu. In *A Source Book In Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit Chan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. Chapter 8, "The Mystical Way of Chuang Tzu," pp. 177-210.

**Secondary Reading:** Yu-Lan, Fung. *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*. New York: Free Press, 1966. Chapter 10, "The Third Phase of Taoism: Chuang Tzu," pp. 104-117.

5. The *Dhammapada*. This is one of the most important texts of the Pali canon, the set of authoritative texts of the Theravada tradition of Buddhism. Buddhist tradition holds that this text is a collection of the Buddha's own words. Its subject matter is *dhamma*, a polyvalent word that signifies proper behaviour, natural law, and the teachings of the Buddha. The text, composed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE, has been important to Buddhist lay and especially monastic communities throughout South and South-East Asia for millennia.

**Primary Reading:** *The Dhammapada*. In *A Sourcebook in Indian Philosophy*, edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970. "The *Dhammapada* (The Path of Virtue)," pp. 292-325.

**Secondary Reading:** Wallis, Glenn, trans. *The Dhammapada: Verses on the Way*. New York: The Modern Library, 2004. "Forward," pp. xi-xii; "Introduction," pp. 89-102.

## Essay 2

For the **second essay**, all students will choose their own essay topic and find materials upon which to base the essay. We will have a **session in class time on the use of the library** to research your essay, which will help you in this process. You may use a range of primary and secondary resources in your research and writing. Perhaps most importantly, you should strive to develop a compelling **focus** for your essay.

**Please note** that the questions below are intended as **suggestions** to help you think of a topic; none of them is intended as a rigid straitjacket that you must comply with. Some of the questions below have been set out with too many complications for you to successfully address them all in one essay (e.g. the questions on Falun gong), and in such cases you will have to be **selective to keep your focus**. You may also develop further one of the topics for tutorial assignments, and you are free to pursue further a subject that we have looked at in the readings. If you have any doubts about what kinds of topics or essay questions will meet our requirements, talk to your tutor or the lecturer.

If you have a **topic other than those listed** below you would really like to pursue, you are encouraged to do so, but it is vital you **talk to your tutor or lecturer first** to ensure it is workable and that sufficient resources are available for you to have a reasonable chance of completing an essay successfully.

Possible topics for the second essay:

- What does the practice of household *pūja* tell us about the nature of the divine in Hinduism?
- "Hierarchical values and institutionalised inequality are at the heart of both Hinduism and Indian society." Do you think this statement accurately describes Indian religion?
- How does the caste system work? What are some of the effects, good, bad or indifferent, that you think it has on the operation of Indian society?
- Is Hinduism a patriarchal (male-dominated) religion? If so, in what ways? If not, what is the actual position of women and/or the feminine in it?
- How does pilgrimage feature in Hindu religion, and why is it so important? Do you discern anything in this aspect of Hinduism that is not, to your knowledge, paralleled in other traditions?
- Buddhism famously makes the claim that we are in fact "without self" (*anattā*). Is this a coherent claim? If so, what does it mean? If not, might it be effective to make it anyway, and why?
- What is the place of the worship of gods and goddesses in contemporary Theravāda Buddhism? How do we account for claims that Theravāda contains no such worship, or reconcile them with the facts of religion on the ground?
- "Today, in Theravāda Buddhism, the practice of monks and the practice of lay people are becoming more alike." Is this true? If so, why might it be so? If not, why might someone be motivated to make such a claim?
- Buddhist monastics (monks and nuns) seem to remove themselves from society as part of their renunciation, yet they perform an important social function. How might we reconcile this apparent contradiction?

- Can the Buddhist Samgha be entirely explained in terms of its role for non-monastic society? If not, what other functions does it also serve? How?
- Analyse one type of Buddhist meditation (*other than* those already covered in lecture). Does it reinforce or undermine common characterisations of Buddhism as a religion? How?
- Does the teaching of Confucius, as reflected in the *Analects*, suggest that his teaching is a religion? If not, why not? If so, what kind of religion is it? In either case, what are the implications for our general definition of the term "religion"?
- How do Taoist thinkers propose that human beings behave towards (a) nature, and (b) society?
- How does "Orientalism" feature (has it featured) in the study of Asian religions?
- Consider the comparison between sacrifice in Vedic India and early (Shang-Zhou) China.
- Is religion in historical Asia an essentially patriarchal phenomenon? If so, why might this be so? If not, what exceptions can we find?
- Is Chinese ancestor worship in fact a "religion"? If so, is it like any other religions you know of or can find about, and which ones? If not, what is it? (PLEASE NOTE that a successful essay on this topic will have to define its terms very clearly.)
- Is Confucianism in fact a "religion"? If so, what kind of religion is it? If not, what is it? (PLEASE NOTE once more that a successful essay on this topic will have to define its terms very clearly.)
- What is the relationship between the world of gods and that of humans in Chinese religion, and what can it tell us about power structures in Chinese society?
- Investigate some examples of Falun gong religious art (it can be easily found on the Internet; see your lecturer if you have trouble). What can we discern about the nature of Falun gong as a religion from this art? Is it different from what we could learn from Falun gong texts, or by reading Maria Chang's description? If so, how? Does the nature of this art change over time? If so, can these changes be related to changes in the real-world status of the movement?
- Analyse one Asian religious festival.
- Analyse *Zhuan fa lun* by Li Hongzhi (the founder of Falun gong). Is there a coherent religious vision in this text? If so, what is it? If not, what kind of text might this be, and how would you account for the appeal of Falun gong as a movement? Does the text appeal on some other level, or is the primary appeal of Falun gong perhaps not located in Li's texts at all?
- We have seen that the Chinese Communist Party claims that Falun gong is an "evil cult", and that followers claim it is not even a religion at all. Why are these respective claims made? What do they mean? What audience are they intended for? What might the CCP or FLG stand to gain or lose on the basis of such claims?
- Analyse the structure of a representative Tibetan Tantric ritual and/or meditation (sometimes the two are combined). What are the aims of this religious practice? How do you think it is supposed to work? What does it tell us about how the world is understood by the religious culture that produces such practices?

- What political role has Buddhism played in Tibet? How has this been justified in Buddhist terms? Feel free also to critique such justifications if you wish to do so.
- Why do Japanese go to Shintō shrines when so few of them say they believe in Shintō?
- What is the relationship between Shintō and Buddhism in Japan?
- How has the role of the Dalai Lama changed since his government went into exile? Do the changes you identify have religious ramifications?
- How has it changed Japanese Buddhism, in comparison to the past or to other Buddhisms from around Asia, that monks have been permitted to marry since the mid-19th century, and the vast majority of monks now have wives and children?
- In both Indian and Chinese religion, the most ancient materials remaining to us are intimately tied up with elaborate ritual systems. Compare the basics of Vedic and Bronze-age Chinese (Shang and Zhou) ritual. Try to identify some similarities and some differences, and allow yourself to speculate (but not wildly) on the reasons for what you observe.
- Compare SELECTED ASPECTS (only) of Shintō and Hinduism. If you find yourself noting similarities more than differences, you might speculate carefully, in the closing section of your essay, on the reasons these similarities might exist. If you find yourself focusing on differences, you might similarly speculate carefully in closing your essay on the question of whether there is something unique about each religion in comparison to the other.
- Consider the relationship between religion and state in one specific Asian context (interesting cases you might consider: modern Sri Lanka; communist China; Meiji Japan; post-war Japan; Tibet in various periods of its history; Thailand since the reign of Chulalongkorn the great [r. 1868-1910]; Islam in Malaysia; the Aum Shinrikyō in Japan; Falun gong).
- Consider one Asian religious community in New Zealand (either among Asian migrants, or New Zealand converts regardless of ethnicity, or both). In what ways does it exemplify larger processes in the modern situation of Asian religions? Is it exceptional in any ways? If so, what?
- Analyse an example of the "invention of tradition" in the context of Asian religions, *other than the examples already given in your course readings and lectures*.
- Both Hinduism and Shintō have become deeply embroiled in right-wing nationalist politics in their respective countries. Consider why this might have occurred in two countries otherwise so different, and what it might tell us about the relationship between religion and politics.
- Compare Falun gong with an influential new (i.e. modern) religion from the United States (Scientology or Theosophy, for example, might yield interesting results).
- Compare Falun gong with one or more apocalyptic religions from the Chinese past.
- What are some of the changes Buddhism is undergoing in the course of its transfer to the modern West? Do these changes affect (or threaten to affect) the basic nature of the religion? If so, how?

### **Finding research materials for your essays**

Encyclopaedias such as *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1987) in the Reference Reading Room in the library, can be helpful as each article also contains a bibliography, but **the research for the essay must extend beyond such sources.**

Some of the most useful sources in the library have been put on **Closed Reserve**. To obtain a list of these books you must look them up in the library computer system. Under the library menu, choose "Closed Reserve", and then type in the course code (Reli103) to access the list.

The following **journals** may also have articles that you can use for your essay:

*History of Religions*  
*International Journal of Hindu Studies*  
*Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*  
*Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*  
*Journal of Chinese Religions*  
*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*  
*Monumenta Nipponica*  
*Numen*  
*Philosophy East & West*  
*Religion*  
*T'oung-pao*

If you have never done so, you will probably find it interesting just to go to the shelves and **browse through** one or more of these journals, to see the sorts of things researchers publish on in the field. Doing this may also give you ideas for essay topics.

You can also search for articles on relevant databases:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/library/research/databases/index.aspx>

The most useful for this course are:

ATLA Religion Database  
JSTOR  
ProQuest  
Te Puna (all New Zealand library resources)  
Web of Knowledge

## ***How to cite books, articles and internet resources for essays in Religious Studies***

It is mandatory to use a correct citation style in academic writing. The Programme standard in Religious Studies at VUW is the version of Chicago Style for the Humanities. The only exceptions to this Programme standard will be the correct and consistent use of an alternative, standard style **when expressly permitted by your course coordinator**.

Chicago Humanities style is defined in *The Chicago Manual of Style 15th ed. rev.* (University of Chicago Press, 2003). The full guide (a hefty volume) is available in the VUW library at Call No. Z253 C532 15ed (ask at the Reference desk). However, the following information should be sufficient for most of your basic needs.

Note that the **citation style differs for a footnote and for the bibliography** at the end of your essay. For each type of source, we have listed each example in both forms. Each example footnote contains a sample page number so you can be sure how to include the number of the page cited in your footnote.

Note also that as with all academic citation style conventions, every detail of the formatting for Chicago style is fixed. You must thus ensure you **follow the examples below in every detail**: order, punctuation, formatting (especially italics), spacing and so on.

Some of the details used in these examples have been modified, and some sources therefore do not really exist in the form given below.

For further examples of **bibliography style only**, see the list of readings included in the Lecture Programme in **this Course Outline**. All readings listed in this outline are given in Chicago bibliography format.

**I SOLEMNLY PROMISE A MORO BAR, OR EQUIVALENT ACCORDING TO PERSONAL PREFERENCE, TO ANY STUDENT WHO POINTS OUT TO ME AN ERROR IN THE CITATION FORMAT OF THIS COURSE OUTLINE.**

### **Book – single author**

#### **Footnote:**

T. N. Madan, *Non-Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 38.

#### **Bibliography:**

Madan, T. N. *Non-Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

### **Book – two or more authors**

#### **Footnote:**

Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion: An Historical Introduction* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1997), 113.

#### **Bibliography:**

Robinson, Richard H., and Willard L. Johnson. *The Buddhist Religion: An Historical Introduction*. Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1997.

### **Chapter or article in edited multi-author volume**

#### **Footnote:**

James P. McDermott, "Karma and Rebirth in Early Buddhism," in *Karma and Rebirth in Indian Classical Traditions*, ed. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 171.

#### **Bibliography:**

McDermott, James P. "Karma and Rebirth in Early Buddhism." In *Karma and Rebirth in Indian Classical Traditions*, ed. Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, 165-192. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

### **Translated book**

#### **Footnote**

Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, trans. by W. D. Robson-Scott (New York: H. Liveright, 1928), 28.

#### **Bibliography**

Freud, Sigmund. *The Future of an Illusion*. Translated by W. D. Robson-Scott. New York: H. Liveright, 1928.

### **Journal article – single author**

#### **Footnote:**

Richard King, "Is 'Buddha-Nature' Buddhist? Doctrinal Tensions in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* – An Early Tathāgatagarbha Text," *Numen* 42 (1995): 12.

#### **Bibliography:**

King, Richard. "Is 'Buddha-Nature' Buddhist? Doctrinal Tensions in the *Śrīmālā Sūtra* – An Early Tathāgatagarbha Text." *Numen* 42 (1995): 1-20.

### **Journal article – two or three authors**

#### **Footnote:**

Helen Hardacre and Abe Yoshiya, "Some Observations on the Sociology of Religion in Japan: Trends and Methods," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 5, no. 1 (1978): 18.

#### **Bibliography:**

Hardacre, Helen, and Abe Yoshiya. "Some Observations on the Sociology of Religion in Japan: Trends and Methods." *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 5, no. 1 (1978): 5-27.

### **Web site**

#### **Footnote:**

Paul Kingsbury, "Inducing a Chronology of the Pali Canon," <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~kingsbur/inducing.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2008).

#### **Bibliography:**

Kingsbury, Paul. "Inducing a Chronology of the Pali Canon." <http://www.ling.upenn.edu/~kingsbur/inducing.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2008).

### **Reference work (e.g. encyclopaedia or dictionary)**

#### **Footnote:**

*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v. "Sufism."

#### **Footnote:**

*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Apophatic."

The abbreviation "s.v." is for the Latin *sub verbo* ("under the word").

Reference works are usually not included in the bibliography.

### **Sacred texts**

Standard citation convention is set for the sacred texts of each major tradition. You must be sure to cite sacred texts in the correct format. Unless your lecturer for a specific course states otherwise (e.g. if conformity to a more complex standard is required for courses specialising in a particular tradition), the following conventions will apply.

#### **The Bible**

In quoting the Bible, you should use in-text citation (i.e. give your source in brackets in the body of your text, rather than using a footnote). NOTE that the Bible and the Qur'an are the only exceptions to the general rule AGAINST in-text citation in this Chicago Humanities style. (You should otherwise ALWAYS use footnotes, not in-text citation.)

The Bible is cited by book, chapter and verse. For example:

. . . as it says in the Bible (1 Kgs 2:7).

Note that books of the Bible are abbreviated according to standard abbreviations. A list of abbreviations should usually be available in the edition of the Bible you are using.

Note also that the punctuation mark comes *after* the close of the parentheses. This is also the case for the full stop in a direct quote:

". . . Absalom thy brother" (1 Kgs 2:7).

When citing multiple passages, list the abbreviated title of each *new* biblical book followed by the chapter number and colon, with all verses in that chapter separated by a comma and space. A semicolon should separate references to subsequent chapters or books. Do not include the conjunction "and" or an ampersand ("&") before the last citation. List passages in canonical and numerical order. For example:

. . . as it says in the Bible (Matt 2:3; 3:4–6; 4:3, 7; Luke 3:6, 8; 12:2, 5).

It is preferable, unless you are discussing differences of translation and interpretation, to use a single version of the Bible throughout a piece of work. In this case, you can indicate that fact by a note with your first citation, and thereafter omit mention of the version:

#### **Footnote:**

Matt. 20:4-9. In this essay, all biblical quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1989).

Where you have to refer to more than one version of the Bible, you can indicate the different versions in footnotes, or by a set of abbreviations that you establish in a footnote early in the essay.

List the versions of the Bible you use in your bibliography. They should appear alphabetically according to title. For example:



*The New Oxford Annotated Bible: The Holy Bible.* Edited by Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973.

This item would be listed alphabetically under "New".

### **The Qur'an**

The name of the text is best written, "Qur'an."

In quoting the Qur'an, you should use in-text citation (i.e. give your source in brackets in the body of your text, rather than using a footnote). NOTE that the Qur'an and the Bible are the only exceptions to the general rule AGAINST in-text citation in this Chicago Humanities style. (You should otherwise ALWAYS use footnotes, not in-text citation.)

When quoting the Qur'an, give the abbreviation "Q.", then cite the number of the *sura* (chapter), then the number(s) of the *ayat* (verse). For example:

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...." (Q. 24:35).

"Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds; The Compassionate, the Merciful; Master of the Day of Judgment" (Q. 1:2-4).

State in the first footnote what "translation" edition is being used for the entire document. For example:

#### **Footnote:**

In this essay, all citations from the Qur'an will be taken from *An Interpretation of the Qur'an: English Translations of the Meaning (Bilingual Edition)*, trans. Majid Fakhry (New York: New York University Press, 2000).

If you use more than one source for Qur'anic text in your essay, then you need to provide a separate, footnoted reference to each citation, specifying which version that citation is from.

In your bibliography, list each "translation" edition of the Qur'an you use alphabetically under its title. For example:

#### **Bibliography:**

*An Interpretation of the Qur'an: English Translations of the Meaning (Bilingual Edition)*. Translated by Majid Fakhry. New York: New York University Press, 2000.

This item would be listed alphabetically under "Interpretation".

### **Buddhist and Indian texts**

For undergraduate purposes, simply cite the English translation you are using as if it is an ordinary translated book. However, note that many Indian or Buddhist texts you will cite are compilations of multiple texts into a single volume. In such cases, you must also include the name of the text in your footnote citation. The name given to the text in English by the translator will suffice; but include the name in the original language also if it is easily accessible. For example:

#### **Footnote:**

"The Buddha's Last Days" (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*), in *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, trans. Maurice Walshe (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995), 232.

In your bibliography, list only the whole translated works to which you refer in your essay, according to the usual format. In other words, if you cite more than one *sutta* etc. from a single volume, you need not list every individual text, but just the volume. For example:

#### **Bibliography:**

Walshe, Maurice, trans. *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995.

### **How to cite in the body of your essay**

When you refer to one of your sources in the course of your argument, you should always give your source in a footnote, which is indicated by a superscript number attached to the appropriate part of the sentence.

Note that some other stylistic conventions use what is called "in-text citation", where references are given in parentheses at the end of the sentence; you will see this method of citation often as you read. **HOWEVER, IN-TEXT CITATION IS NOT PART OF THE CHICAGO STYLE INTRODUCED HERE** (with the sole exceptions of passages from the Bible or the Qur'an), and you should consistently use footnotes indicated by superscript numbers ONLY.

Footnote style has been given above. Note that footnote numbers should always come *after* any punctuation mark at the end of the word they attach to; thus, it is correct to write a footnote like this,<sup>1</sup> but wrong to write it like this<sup>2</sup>. One of the advantages of superscript numbered footnoting is that it allows you to make tangential comments, as in this example.<sup>3</sup>

When you refer to the same source several times in a row, you can use "Ibid." and the page number for all subsequent notes after the first.<sup>4</sup> If you are referring to the same page number in several successive notes, then "Ibid." alone is sufficient.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Random correct placed footnote.

<sup>2</sup> Random incorrectly placed footnote.

<sup>3</sup> Constance Prevarication, *The Book of Tangential Comments* (Dargaville: Primrose Path Publications, 2004), 27. It is interesting to note that in this recent work, Prevarication reverses her previous hard-line stance on the literary sidetrack, and not only countenances it in principle, but herself indulges in it extensively in practice.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 36. [This means the reference is to the same source, but with a different page number.]

If you cite source A, then cite one or more other sources,<sup>6</sup> and then return to source A,<sup>7</sup> it is best to repeat only the author's name,<sup>8</sup> a shortened title, and the page number cited,<sup>9</sup> rather than to repeat the full citation. See the footnotes attached to this paragraph (notes 6-9) for examples.

In other words, only use abbreviated citations where you are citing the same source more than one time. Avoid old abbreviations like *loc. cit.*, *op. cit.* and so on, which can require the reader to keep track of sources over a number of references and pages, and are thus confusing.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. [This means page 36, exactly like the preceding footnote.]

<sup>6</sup> T. N. Madan, *Non-Renunciation: Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 38.

<sup>7</sup> Richard H. Robinson and Willard L. Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion: An Historical Introduction* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, 1997), 113.

<sup>8</sup> Madan, *Non-Renunciation*, 38-40.

<sup>9</sup> Robinson and Johnson, *The Buddhist Religion*, 115.