

Fall 2024
TR 12:45–2:00 pm
Dicke Hall 208

RELI 1330 Asian Religions

This course is an introduction to the diverse religious traditions of Asia. We will specifically examine the worldviews, doctrines, texts, and practices of five religious traditions founded and developed in Asia, including two from China: Confucianism and Daoism, two from India: Hinduism and Buddhism, and one from Japan: Shinto. The survey of each religious tradition includes the study and analysis of: 1. primary or sacred texts, 2. interaction with Asian history, literature, and culture 3. contemporary beliefs and practices, and 4. influence on modern culture. The course studies how the central tenets and teachings of Asian religions create the cultural roots of contemporary Asian cultures. At the same time, the course will introduce students to the plethora of methodological approaches used in the academic study of religion, all while working to master skills in close reading, critical thinking, and analytic writing. It is not necessary to have a background in either Asia or religious studies to take this class.

Instructor and Contact Information

Dr. Huiqiao Yao (she, her, hers), Dicke Hall 217
Office Hours: TR 2:10–3:10 pm, F 11:30 am–12:30 pm, or by appointment
hyao@trinity.edu (Please allow 24 hours for me to reply to emails)

Objectives

This course fulfills both the “Humanities” Approach and the “Global Awareness” Core Capacity requirements of the Pathways curriculum. It can also count towards the “East Asia” Interdisciplinary Cluster.

Upon successful completion of a Humanities course, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- Discuss the significance of ideas, texts, performances, or cultural artifacts within an appropriate intellectual or historical framework.
- Apply the interpretive or analytical methods that characterize at least one of the humanistic disciplines.

Upon successful completion of a Global Awareness (GA) course, students will have demonstrated the ability to:

- Identify and articulate the perspectives or values of diverse peoples, groups, institutions, or cultures of regions outside the United States.
- Gather and evaluate information from scholarly sources concerning the perspectives and values of the peoples of regions outside the United States.

Required Texts

Nadeau, Randall Laird. *Asian Religions: A Cultural Perspective*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell. 2014.

This textbook is required and is available to purchase from the university bookstore. Other primary and secondary sources will be provided accordingly via the university’s online

learning platform, Canvas. If you are unsure how to use Canvas, please ask someone for help or schedule an instructional session with the [University IT department](#) as soon as possible.

You need to finish all the required readings before each class meeting in order to discuss them during the class. There is a moderate amount of required reading in this course; if you encounter any difficulties getting through them or making sense of them, please contact me in order to discuss effective reading strategies for course materials. I view the ability to work through large amounts of relatively dense information in a reasonable amount of time and to form opinions on that information to be a fundamental skill learned in college, no matter the subject matter of the course.

Grades

1. Dialectical Journals (*10)	25%
2. In-Class Participation	40%
3. Midterm	10%
4. Creative Project	10%
5. Final Paper	15%

Grades of short assignments will normally be given within 3 days after the deadlines. For longer assignments (midterm, creative project, and final paper), please give me one week after the deadline to give you feedback. I will inform you beforehand if I am unable to do so during certain time periods.

1. Dialectical Journals (25%): You are asked to write ten (10) dialectical journals (each worth 2.5 pts) to reflect on your reading materials during this semester. This journal should be at least 250 words and your own reflections on the **primary sources** (the reading(s) in **bold** listed under the “Schedule” below) of the reading materials of a class meeting (Thus, if there are two readings in bold on one day, you need to reflect both of them, possibly connecting or comparing them). The journals should be posted on Canvas. They should consist of two paragraphs:

- Paragraph 1: Your summary of the reading. Please don’t copy and paste internet sources or use AI to generate answers. Use your own words.
- Paragraph 2: Points you find interesting, or passages you find confusing, etc. Briefly explain why they interest/confuse you. You can also relate them to your own life experience or our society at large.

No outside class references are needed! You are not expected to understand everything in the readings before the class meeting. Write down your initial ideas. Some guiding questions will also be posted on Canvas. At least **two** in-text citations are necessary to get a full grade. You can use informal, in-text citations (e.g. *Analects*, p. 1 or *Analects* 2.1) in your journal. The due time is the **midnight** prior to each class meeting when the primary sources are assigned. There are more than ten chances to post your journals this semester, so you can make your own choices, too. However, the grades starting from your 11th journal will not be counted towards your final grade. Please don’t post more than 10 times to boost your grade.

2. In-Class Participation (40%): This course requires you to regularly attend class discussions. To this end, please read all the assigned readings before coming to the class and actively engage in the class discussions. The participation points consist of:

- **Presentation (5%):** Each student will get one (1) chance of summarizing and presenting the required reading(s) at the beginning of each class meeting for 5-10 minutes. At the end of the presentation, please ask three (3) questions to your classmates to facilitate the 15-minute discussion afterwards. Please cover all the questions posted and don’t exceed

the assigned time. These questions can be the continuation of my questions posted on Canvas or your own questions. You will be evaluated on your preparedness, delivery, and overall engagement with the class themes.

- **Attendance and Participation (15%):** There will be short class activities and short low-stakes writings to record the class attendance and performance for each class meeting. You will be evaluated at each class meeting based on your participation, performance in class activities, and the short writing assignments you submit at the end of each class. Coming late or leaving early will affect your performance grade. Absence will automatically result in a zero for that class. Two lowest attendance and participation grades will be dropped. After each class meeting, you will earn one of the following scores for the day:
 - 10 Thorough familiarity with materials, active in discussion
 - 9 Familiar with materials, active in discussion
 - 8 Passing familiarity with materials, some activity in discussion
 - 7 Some familiarity with materials, does not actively participate; late for class/left class early unexcused
 - 5 Unprepared or not fully responsive; rude or disrespectful of others
 - 3 Zero participation
 - 0 Unexcused absence

Please notice that “active in discussion” means taking part in an exchange of ideas between members of the class; dominating the conversation or talking over others may be “active,” but it is not part of discussion.

- **Short Identification Quizzes (10%):** At the end of each unit, you are asked to identify/describe/explain important terms or concepts from your weekly readings and discuss their significance. The quizzes are closed book, but the possible terms will be given during the class before. We will select two (2) terms out of five (5) that are given. Write at least five (5) sentences to explain your takes of the terms. They are not research projects, so no outside references are needed! One lowest grade will be dropped.
- **Discussion and Short Reports (10%):** During class meetings, we will discuss related questions or do case studies. Students work in groups, briefly write down their answers (no less than 100 words for each question), and one member on behalf of the group will report their answers to the class. Students in the same group will get the same grades.

Unless excused, in-class participation grades cannot be made up. However, if you know you will be absent/late on a certain day for legitimate reasons, please notify me beforehand and schedule your make-up assignments during my office hours within one week. After one week, I reserve the right to decide whether the assignment can be made up or not. For legitimate absence with proper documentation, the attendance and participation grade on that day will be excused. However, it is still your responsibility to ensure that you have your scores of your quizzes and discussion reports.

3. Midterm (10%): There will be a midterm scheduled in the middle of the semester during class on October 8. This midterm is closed book, but there will be a review sheet distributed prior to the test. This midterm consists of 10 multiple choice questions, two (2) identification items similar to your ID quizzes, and one (1) short essay question.

4. Creative Project (10%): Suppose that you are a preacher/believer of one of the Asian religions, how will you let another person, who does not have any knowledge about that religion at all, follow that religion? You not only need to emphasize the benefit of following that religion, but also the shortcomings of two other alternative religions that we introduced during this semester. The forms can be but are not limited to: video, manga, painting, song, poster, website, poem, fiction, Twitter thread, etc. Alongside the creative project, please write at least

400 words to explain the creative process and the project's relevance to certain themes in this course. More details will be released later this semester. Group and individual projects are both welcome, and they need to be signed up beforehand. The due date for the project is the last class meeting, which is December 10th.

5. Final Paper (15%): Compare two religious traditions in Asia introduced this semester. Focus on one recurring theme (such as worship, scripture, religious community, afterlife, self-cultivation, etc.) of this class and make your arguments. This essay should cite our class readings and be around 1000 words, to be uploaded to Canvas. Please write an outline and discuss your topic with your instructor prior to writing this paper. More details of the project will be released later this semester. The outline and bibliography (5%) are due November 21st, during class, and the due date for the paper (10%) is December 17th, 11:59pm.

Missed/Late Assignments

The penalty for late assignments (other than in-class participation assignments, which should not typically be done outside class meetings) will be a deduction of 5% of the total grade for the assignment for each day late (not including weekends), up to three days. After three days, late assignments will not be accepted. If an assignment is due on a Wednesday, the latest it may be turned in is next Monday, with a penalty of 15%, or a grade and a half. In the case of documented exceptional circumstances (illness, personal tragedy, etc.), notify your instructor as soon as possible.

No assignments will be given after the last day of the class under any circumstances.

Extra Credit

From time to time, there may be opportunities for extra credit. These opportunities will be announced in class to everyone. In the interest of fairness, no individual extra credit assignments will be given. Please do not ask for an extra credit assignment in order to boost your grade.

The first extra credit opportunity is to attend my office hours for at least 15 minutes by September 13. Come to ask a question, share concerns, or just introduce yourself! You will receive 0.5% on top of your final grade (one time only).

Expectations

Regular attendance is expected and essential to get good grades. Please minimize the use of electronics for purposes other than note-taking or reference to class materials; studies have shown that "multi-tasking" frequently results in reduced efficiency in all the tasks being performed. Furthermore, texting, web browsing, Tweeting, Instagramming, watching Netflix (no, seriously), etc. distracts those around you—they are looking over your shoulder, whether they admit it or not! Students creating such distractions will be asked to leave, and the performance grade for the day will be reduced to a zero.

You are responsible for checking Canvas and your university email at least daily during weekdays. In case there are schedule changes, class cancelations, etc., they will be announced both via Canvas/email.

Honor Code

All students are covered by a policy that prohibits dishonesty in academic work. Under the Honor Code, a faculty member will (or a student may) report an alleged violation to the Academic Honor Council. It is the task of the Council to investigate, adjudicate, and assign a punishment within certain guidelines if a violation has been verified. Students are required to pledge all written work that is submitted for a grade: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this work" and their signature. The pledge may be abbreviated "pledged" with a signature.

All assignments submitted for this course should reflect your own thinking and work. Any use of generative AI, such as but not limited to Chat GPT, will be considered "unauthorized assistance" and a violation of academic integrity and of the Trinity University Honor Code.

If necessary, I will check your writing through AI detection tools such as ZeroGPT and GPTZero. If the rate is higher than 30%, the grade of the assignment will be automatically reduced to zero.

Selling or "sharing" class notes, videos, and /or other materials to other students and third parties is not permitted without the instructor's express written consent. Violation of this and other course rules is subject to the Trinity University Honor Code and may result in punishments. This conduct may also constitute copyright infringement.

Title IX/Sexual Misconduct Reporting

As a faculty member, I am designated as a Responsible Employee. As such, I am required to report any instances of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator when: 1) I witness or receive information in the course and scope of my employment, 2) this information is about the occurrence of an incident that I reasonably believe is Sexual Harassment or Sexual Misconduct, and 3) the incident is committed by or against someone who was a Trinity university student, employee, or contractor at the time of the incident. This reporting responsibility applies regardless of where the incident occurred (on- or off-campus) and regardless of whether the individual(s) are still affiliated with Trinity.

If you share information with me about any incidents that implicate the [Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#), I am required to report this to the Title IX Coordinator to make sure you have information about support resources and complaint resolution options. My report does not initiate the complaint process, and you are in control over how you choose to engage with our Title IX Coordinator. If you or someone you know has experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, I encourage you to share this information directly with the Title IX Coordinator or one of the individuals who has been designated as a confidential resource on campus. [The reporting form is available here](#) and information about supportive resources is available [here](#).

Note to Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and will need accommodations in this class, I expect that I will receive a faculty notification letter early in the semester so we can discuss how I might prepare to meet your needs. Please make these arrangements with me as soon as possible once you have registered through SAS Link. All discussions will remain confidential. If you have not already registered with Student Accessibility Services, contact the office at 210-999-8528 or SAS@trinity.edu. You must be registered with SAS before I can provide accommodations. To be eligible for accommodated testing (e.g. extended time, reduced distraction environment), students must register with Student Accessibility Services. All accommodated tests must be scheduled through SAS Link. Students are responsible for scheduling their exams with the ATC

at least 5 days in advance of the exam time that is agreed upon by the student and the instructor. The administrative staff will not administer accommodated exams and the responsibility for planning with the ATC falls solely on the student.

Electronic Recordings of Course Instruction

Please be aware that all classroom instruction, including student participation in classroom activities, is subject to recording and dissemination on the University's secure course management system (T-Learn or CANVAS). The recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the course to facilitate online learning and review.

Students are expressly prohibited from capturing or copying classroom recordings by any means; violations will be subject to disciplinary action. Instructors who wish to use a recording outside of class must obtain the written consent of any students who are personally identifiable in the recording.

Academic Support Resources

Trinity faculty hold students to the highest academic standards and also know that the very best students seek out help when necessary. The following resources are in place to support your academic success:

[Office of Academic Advising](#): Your academic advisor is available to help you explore academic opportunities, identify goals, plan your degree program, assist with registration, and navigate your academic experience.

[Academic Support](#): time management, study skills, test anxiety, note taking, supplemental 1:1 tutoring

[Office of the Dean of Students](#): provides comprehensive student support, development, and engagement opportunities through Trinity's Student Care Referral and connection with case manager/life coach; student conduct; and leadership development through engagement in campus activities and student organizations

[Center for Experiential Learning & Career Success](#): major exploration, career guidance

[Counseling Services](#): mental health concerns, interpersonal relationship challenges, identity development

[Health Services](#): physical health concerns and care

[Quantitative Reasoning and Skills Center](#): tutoring for quantitatively demanding coursework

[Student Accessibility Services](#): accommodations for a diagnosed disability

[Wellness Programs](#): nutrition, sleep, stress management

[Writing Center](#): starting a paper, finding a thesis, drafting and editing

All campus resources for students can be found in the [TigerHub](#).

Changes to the Syllabus

Information contained in the course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policy, may be subject to change with advance notice, as deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Final Note

It is my goal that every one of you succeed in this course. To that end, I will reach out often with reminders and invitations to meet with me in my office (or connect through email). If there are circumstances you believe will impact your ability to work through the course as it stands, do not wait until you are behind before contacting me!

Course Schedule

(Subject to change; all changes will be announced via class/email/Canvas)

- Week One: Introduction
T (8/27): Class Intro
• Reading: none
R (8/29): Religion and Language
• Reading: 1. Nadeau Preface & Part I
- Week Two: Confucianism I
T (9/3): Confucianism: The Background
• Reading: 1. Nadeau ch. 3-4
R (9/5): *The Analects* and Its Era
• Reading: 1. **Excerpt from *The Analects***
- Week Three: Confucianism II
T (9/10): After Confucius
• Reading: 1. **Excerpts from Mencius and Xunzi (Hsün Tzu)**
2. Nadeau ch. 5-6
R (9/12): Later Developments of Confucianism
• Reading: 1. **Excerpt from *Great Learning***
2. **Excerpt from Wang Yangming on *Great Learning***
- Week Four: Confucianism III and Daoism I
T (9/17): Contemporary Underpinnings (Quiz Scheduled)
• Reading: 1. Nadeau ch. 7
2. Kupperman, Joel J. "Feminism as Radical Confucianism: Self and Tradition."
R (9/19): Daoism as a Philosophy
• Reading: 1. **Excerpt from *Laozi/Daodejing***
2. Nadeau ch. 8-9
- Week Five: Daoism II
T (9/24): Zhuangzi and Daoist Critiques against Confucianism
• Reading: 1. **Excerpt from *Zhuangzi***
R (9/26): Daoism as a Religion
• Reading: 1. **The Way of the Taoist Tradition of Perfect Truth**
2. **"Immortality Recipe"**
- Week Six: Daoism III
T (10/1): Later Developments of Daoism
• Reading: 1. Kohn, Livia. "Laozi: Ancient Philosopher, Master of Immortality, and God."
2. Nadeau ch. 10-12
T (10/3): Contemporary Daoism (Quiz Scheduled, Review Sheet Distributed)
• Reading: 1. Nadeau ch. 13
- Week Seven: Exam and Hinduism I
T (10/8): Midterm Exam
• Reading: Study the "Review Sheet" to prepare for the exam

R (10/10): Hinduism: Definition and Background

- Reading: 1. "The Hymn to Purusa, The Cosmic Person, Rig Veda 10.90"
2. Nadeau ch. 14

Week Eight: Hinduism II

T (10/15): Hinduism: Basic Teachings

- Reading: **1. Introduction and Chapters 3 and 5 of *The Bhagavad-Gita***
2. Nadeau ch. 15

R (10/17): Devotional Practices

- Reading: **1. Chapters 12 and 18 of *The Bhagavad-Gita***
2. Nadeau ch. 16-17

Week Nine: Hinduism III and Buddhism I

T (10/22): Yoga and Contemporary Hinduism (Quiz Scheduled)

- Reading: 1. Watch the yoga video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1HD8i2vCek>
2. Nadeau ch. 18

R (10/24): Buddhism: The Basics

- Reading: **1. Excerpt from *The Questions of King Milinda***
2. Nadeau ch. 19-20

Week Ten: Buddhism II

T (10/29): Theravada Buddhism

- Reading: 1. Nadeau ch. 21-23

R (10/31): No class (out of town for a conference)

- Reading: Catch up with your readings or read ahead

Week Eleven: Buddhism III

T (11/5): Mahayana Buddhism

- Reading: **1. *Heart Sutra***
2. "The Parable of the Burning House" from *The Lotus Sutra*
3. Nadeau ch. 24-25

R (11/7): Buddhism in East Asian History

- Reading: **1. Explore Koans (You may select two of them in your reflection):** <https://ashidakim.com/zenkoans/zenindex.html>
2. Excerpts from Dogen's "How to Practice Buddhism (Bendowa)"

Week Twelve: Buddhism IV and Shinto I

T (11/12): Buddhism in Contemporary Society (Quiz Scheduled)

- Reading: **1. Explore websites of Dharma Drum Mountain:**
<https://www.dharmadrum.org/>
2. Fo Guang Shan: <https://www.fgs.org.tw/en/>
3. Nadeau ch. 26

R (11/14): Shinto: The Basics

- Reading: **1. Excerpts from *Kojiki (Records of Ancient Matters)***
2. Nadeau ch. 27-28

Week Thirteen: Shinto II

T (11/19): Shinto Deities

- Reading: 1. "Legends of Shinto Deities"
2. "Toire no Kamisama":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GfvAx0mWGxI>

T (11/21): Shinto and Contemporary Media (Quiz Scheduled)

- Reading: 1. Watch the movie *Spirited Away* (2001)
2. Nadeau ch. 29

Final Paper Outline and Creative Project Sign-ups due during class

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving Break, no class!

Week Fifteen: Review and New Religions

T (12/3): Peer Review

- Reading: no readings

R (12/5): New Religions

- Reading: 1. Explore the Soka Gakkai site:
<https://www.sokaglobal.org/>
2. Watch the video about Unification Church:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=haDmfgkGrug>

Week Sixteen: Presentation

T (12/10): Presentation: Presentation of Creative Projects

- Reading: none

Creative Project due during class

Final Paper due by December 17th, 11:59 pm