CIEE Tokyo, Japan

Course title: Religion in Japan
Course code: RELI 2003 TOJA
Programs offering course: Summer Japanese Studies
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Summer 2020

Course Description

This course will provide students with a fundamental understanding of the most prominent religions in Japanese culture and society: Shinto and Buddhism. In addition, students will also learn about the so-called “New Religions,” Christianity as well as other world religions found in the global city of Tokyo.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Differentiate characteristics and traditions within religions in Japan
- Compare Japanese religious traditions and customs
- Examine Japanese religious behaviors and their origins

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

This course will incorporate in-class lectures, discussion, readings, video and fieldtrips.

N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, or local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Response Paper (2x) 20%
2. Final Paper 20%
3. Group Presentation 20%
4. Final Exam 20%
5. Class Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Response Paper (2x)

Final Paper

Students must write a Final Paper on a topic of their choice, subject to instructor approval. The paper must be at least 2,000 words and use both in-class and out of-class scholarly materials.

Group Presentation

Students will present on a topic of their choice, subject to instructor approval.
Final Exam

Closed books exam covering topics covered throughout the class.

Class Participation

You are expected to follow CIEE’s attendance and participation policies as outlined in the CIEE Academic Manual for students.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1
Class: Introduction to the class

Week 2
Class: 2.1 Academic Study of Religion

  Topic: Theoretical Approaches to Studying Religion
  Content: Overview of Durkheim, Marx, Eliade and Geertz

Class: 2.2 Introduction to Japanese Religiosities

  Topic: Common Themes Found in Japanese Religions
  Content: Importance Placed on Family, Rituals, and Festivals

  Readings: Religion in Japan (pp. 1-17)

Class: 2.3 Fieldtrip: Temple or Shrine

Class: 2.4 Shintō

  Topic: Mythology and Deities
  Content: Meaning of Kami and Foundational Myths

  Readings: Reader, Ian (pp. 16-63)

  Assignment: Response Paper 1

Week 3
Class: 3.1 Shintō

  Topic: Festivals, Rituals and Customs
  Content: Ritual Calendar/ Life-Cycle Rituals

  Readings: Reader, Ian (pp. 64-121)

Class: 3.2 Shintō

  Topic: Shintō and Popular Culture: Exploring the Cinema of Hayao Miyazaki
  Content: Religious Themes in Spirited Away

  Readings: “Shinto Perspectives in Miyazake’s Anime Film ‘Spirited Away’”

Class: 3.3 Buddhism

  Topic: Basic Tenets
**Week 4**

**Class: 4.1 Buddhism**

- **Topic:** Early History of Buddhism in Japan
- **Content:** Nara Schools
- **Readings:** Religion in Japan (pp. 46-68)

**Class: 4.2 Buddhism**

- **Topic:** Heian Buddhism (Mahayana and Vajrayana Traditions)
- **Content:** Tendai and Shingon
- **Readings:** Religion in Japan (pp. 97-110)

**Class: 4.3 Buddhism**

- **Topic:** Kamakura Buddhism
- **Content:** Nichiren, Pure Land, and Zen
- **Readings:** Religion in Japan (pp. 128-144)

**Assignment: Response Paper 2**

**Week 5**

**Class: 5.1 Christianity**

- **Topic:** The “Christian Century”
- **Content:** Francis Xavier; Danka System; Kakure Kirishitan
- **Readings:** “The Kakure Kirishitan and Their Place in Japan’s Religious Tradition”

**Class: 5.2 Group Presentations**

**Class: 5.3 Religion and Nationalism**

- **Topic:** Meiji Period Religion
- **Content:** State Shinto and “Imperial Way” Buddhism
- **Readings:** Reader, Ian (pp. 122-129)

“Reconsidering Zen, Samurai, and the Martial Arts”

**Week 6**

**Class: 6.1 Japanese New Religions**

- **Topic:** Introduction to the “New” Religions
- **Content:** Aum Shinrikyo and Soka Gakkai
- **Readings:** “The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyo as a Religious Movement”

**Class: 6.2 Religion in a Global City**

- **Topic:** Migration and Multiculturalism Religious Communities
- **Content:** Islam and Christianity in Tokyo


**Course Materials**

**Readings**


