Course title: Religion and Society
Course code: RELI 3001 KYJA
Programs offering course: Ancient and Modern Japan
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Spring 2021

Course Description

In addition to surveying the basic tenets and historical developments of Buddhism, Shinto, and other prominent religions in Japan, this course examines the intersections of religion and a range of social issues in the modern era. Lectures will focus on a number of topics including, but not limited to, the relations between religion and the state, religious violence, religious freedom, and religion in a period of rapid globalization. Throughout the course, students will learn of various theoretical frameworks that may be employed when approaching these topics.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Understand and apply prominent theoretical frameworks in the field of religious studies in the analysis of relationships between religious thought, religious communities, and other social forces
- Compare and contrast Japanese religious traditions, customs, and behaviors
- Analyze the relationship between the development of religious thought and practices, social contexts, and significant historical events
- Analyze the impact of migration and other globalization forces on religious communities

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

This class will incorporate in-class lectures, discussions, video, and fieldtrips. Additionally, guest speakers — e.g. religious leaders — may be invited to address the class and engage in a Q&A session with students.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Online Journal 20%
2. Observation Report 10%
3. Research Paper 1 15%
4. Research Paper 2 15%
5. Group Presentation 20%
6. Class Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements

Online Journal

You will be expected to post a short journal entry of 125 to 150 words to the online discussion group by 11:59pm about the readings assigned that day. You must also respond to at least two posts made by two different classmates to generate discussion online. These posts and responses will aid in the in-class discussion to be held the following day.
Observation Report

You will have to identify three publicly accessible religious institutions – for example, local temples or shrines – within reasonable distance from your housing or study site. After unobtrusively visiting these sites you will describe in detail the facilities and human behavior that you observed. Students should focus on describing and refrain from interpreting, analyzing, or evaluating what they see. The purpose for doing this is to develop a strategy for approaching the unfamiliar, recognize one’s assumptions, and keeping those assumptions in check. You can later compare what you wrote to what you learned in the course. Your report must be 800 to 1000 words.

Research Paper 1

You will write a scholarly essay of 1200 to 1500 words in which you develop a critical argument about a topic related to the course, subject to instructor approval. Your paper must demonstrate sufficient understanding of key concepts explored in class, and must follow conventions of academic writing.

Research Paper 2

You will write a scholarly essay of 1200 to 1500 words in which you develop a critical argument about a topic related to the course, subject to instructor approval. Your paper must demonstrate sufficient understanding of key concepts explored in class, and must follow conventions of academic writing.

Group Presentation

Each group will present on a topic related to Weeks 11 to 15 in the course, subject to instructor approval. Presentations should not exceed 15 minutes. Presentations should cover various viewpoints and controversies surrounding the topic and employ theoretical frameworks that the students learn over the course of the semester.

Class Participation

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

Attendance

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

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.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

Class: 1.1 Introduction to the Course

Overview of the Syllabus and Course Requirements

Class: 1.2 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion

Topic: Society and Religion

Content: Emile Durkheim’s Theory of Religion

Readings: Eight Theories of Religion (Chapter 3)

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 1.3 Theoretical Approaches to the Study of Religion (Continued)

Topic: Culture and Religion
Content: Clifford Geertz’s Definition of Religion & Recent Critiques
Readings: Eight Theories of Religion (Chapter 8)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Week 2

Class: 2.1 Characteristics of Japanese Religiosity
Topic: The Formation of a Japanese Religiosity
Content: Significance of Family, Rituals and Festivals
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapters 1 & 2)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 2.2 Introduction to Shinto
Topic: Myths and Prominent Kami
Content: Overview of the Kojiki and Nihon Shoki
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 4, pp. 32-41)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 2.3 Shinto Religiosity
Topic: Shinto Religious Life
Content: Prominent Festivals and Life Rituals & The Ritual Calendar
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 4, pp. 41-45)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Week 3

Class: 3.1 Field Excursion to a Shinto Shrine

Class: 3.2 Introduction to Buddhism
Topic: Basic Tenets and Beliefs
Content: Life of the Historical Buddha and Early Teachings
Readings: Buddhist Thought (Chapters 1 & 2)

Class: 3.3 Developments in Buddhist Thought
Topic: Introduction to Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism
Content: Universal Enlightenment & The Bodhisattva Ideal
Readings: Buddhist Thought (Chapters 3, 4 & 5)

DUE: Observation Report
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts
Week 4
Class: 4.1 Popular Bodhisattvas in Japan

Topic: Kannon and Jizo
Content: Myths and Significance in Everyday Religious Life
Readings: "Kannon: the goddess of mercy and pets"
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates' posts

Class: 4.2 Buddhism in Japan: Beginnings

Topic: The Entry of Buddhism into Japan
Content: Buddhism and the State
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 5, pp. 46-52)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates' posts

Class: 4.3 The Intellectual Study of Buddhism in Japan

Topic: The Six Nara Schools
Content: Overview of the Jojitsu, Sanron, Hosso, Kusha, Kegon and Ritsu Schools
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 5, pp. 52-60)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates' posts

Week 5
Class: 5.1 Buddhism in the Heian Period

Topic: The Shingon Tradition
Content: Life of Kukai & Shingon Beliefs and Practices
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 9, pp. 97-106)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates' posts

Class: 5.1 Buddhism in the Heian Period

Topic: The Tendai Tradition
Content: Life of Saicho & Tendai Beliefs and Practices
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 9, pp. 106-116)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates' posts

Class: 5.3 The Synthesis of Buddhism and Folk Religion

Topic: Shugendo
Content: Shugendo Myths, Beliefs, and Practices
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 10)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

**Week 6**

**Class: 6.1** Fieldtrip to a Buddhist Temple

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

**Class: 6.2** Buddhism in the Kamakura Period

**Topic:** The Pure Land Tradition

**Content:** Life of Honen & Jodo Beliefs and Practices

**Readings:** Religion in Japan (Chapter 11, pp. 128-137)

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

**Class: 6.3** Buddhism in the Kamakura Period

**Topic:** The True Pure Land Tradition

**Content:** Life of Shinran & Jodo-Shin Beliefs and Practices

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

**Week 7**

**Class: 7.1** Buddhism in the Kamakura Period

**Topic:** The Nichiren Tradition

**Content:** Life of Nichiren & Nichiren Beliefs and Practices

**Readings:** Religion in Japan (Chapter 11, pp. 137-139)

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

**Class: 7.2** Buddhism in the Kamakura Period

**Topic:** The Soto Zen Tradition

**Content:** Life of Dogen & Soto Beliefs and Practices

**Readings:** Religion in Japan (Chapter 11, pp. 139-150)

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

**Class: 7.3** Buddhism in the Kamakura Period

**Topic:** The Rinzai Zen Tradition

**Content:** Life of Eisai & Rinzai Beliefs and Practices

Assignments: Journal

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Homework: Research Paper 1 due on day 8.1

**Week 8**

**Class: 8.1** Religion in the Tokugawa Period

**Topic:** “The Christian Century”

**Content:** Introduction of Christianity to Japan & Subsequent Persecution

**Readings:** Religion in Japan (Chapter 13)
DUE: Research Paper 1
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 8.2 Religion in the Tokugawa Period
Topic: The Temple System: Historical Beginnings and Lasting Legacies
Content: The Ban on Christianity & Mandatory Registration with Buddhist Temples
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 15, pp. 177-180)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 8.3 Religion in the Tokugawa Period
Topic: Restoration Shinto
Content: Life & Thought of Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 15, pp. 188-194)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Week 9
Class: 9.1 Religion in the Meiji Period
Topic: State Shinto
Content: Separation of Buddhism and Shinto & Formation of a State Religion
Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 16)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 9.2 Religion in the Meiji Period
Topic: Yasukuni Shrine
Content: Function and Early History of Yasukuni Shrine
Readings: Yasukuni (Introduction)
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 9.3 Deification of the War Dead
Topic: Memorializing the War Dead
Content: The Controversies Surrounding Yasukuni Shrine
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Week 10
Class: 10.1 Religion in the Meiji Period
Topic: The “New” Buddhism and Nationalism
Content: Zen and Bushido & Buddhist Support for Japanese Militarism
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 10.2 Religion in the Post-War Period
Topic: Allied Occupation and Religious Freedom
Content: Disestablishment of State Shinto & The Post-War Constitution
Week 11
Class: 11.1 Early New Religions

Topics: Tenrikyo

Content: Life of Miki Nakayama & Tenrikyo Beliefs and Practices

Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 18 pp. 234-241)

Group assignments for Group Presentations

DUE: Research Paper 2

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Homework: start working on your Group Presentations

Class: 11.2 20th Century New Religions

Topic: Soka Gakkai International

Content: Foundations and Transformation into an International Religion

Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 18 pp., 241-247)

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 11.3 The Transmission of Zen to the West

Topic: Sanbo Kyodan

Content: Lay Zen Movements & Buddhist-Christian Practice

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Week 12
Class: 12.1 Religion and Violence

Topic: The Aum Affair

Content: Life of Asahara Shoko & Aum Shinrikyo Beliefs and Practices; The 1995 Sarin Gas Attack

Readings: Religion in Japan (Chapter 18, pp. 247-260)

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 12.2 Religion and Violence

Topic: Responses to the Aum Affair
Class: 12.3 Religion in the Post Aum Era

Topic: Depictions of Religion in Popular Culture

Content: Detecting Changing Perceptions of Religion in Manga

Readings: “Horrific ‘Cults’ and Comic Religion: Manga after Aum”

Check in: Group Presentations

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Week 13

Class: 13.1 Buddhism and Abortion

Topic: Mizuko Kuyo (Memorial Rites for Aborted Fetuses)

Content: Buddhist Ethics and Abortion; Jizo and the tale of Sainokawara; Tatari (Spirit Attacks)

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 13.2 Gender and Religion

Topic: Discrimination Against Women in Japanese Religions

Content: Prohibiting Women from Sacred Sites

Readings: “UNESCO heritage bid challenged over gender bias”

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 13.3 Everyday Life and Religion

Topic: Praying for Worldly Benefits at Temples and Shrines

Content: Genze Riyaku & Omamori, Ofuda and Ema

Readings: “Letters to the Gods”

Check in: Group Presentations

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Week 14

Class: 14.1 Environmentalism and Religion

Topic: Shinto and Nature

Content: Reconceptualizing Shinto as an Environmentalist Religion

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 14.2 Migration and Religion

Topic: Sociological Approaches to the Study of Migration and Religion

Content: The Effects of Globalization on Religious Communities; Understanding Transnationalism and Multiculturalism

Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 14.3 Religion in a Global City
Week 15
Class: 15.1 Religion in a Global City

Topic: The Recent Growth of Islam in Japan
Content: Islamic Organizations and Institutions in Tokyo
Readings: “Islamic Community Lays Down Roots”
Homework: Online Journal post and responses to at least two classmates’ posts

Class: 15.2 Group Presentations

Class: 15.3 Group Presentations

Course Materials
Readings

Note: The instructor may utilize additional sources when assigning weekly readings.

Books

Articles
Alex Martin and Minoru Matsutani, “Islamic Community Lays Down Roots” in The Japan Times (2010)
Amy Chavez, “Kannon, the goddess of mercy and pets” in The Japan Times, 2011

Group Presentation Readings

Note: Students may consult the instructor for additional supplementary resources.

Aum Affair

Zen, Nationalism and Militarism
Oleg Benesch, “Reconsidering Zen, Samurai, and the Martial Arts” in Asia Pacific Journal:

Yasukuni Shrine

Shinto and Environmentalism

Buddhism and Abortion

Transmission of Zen to the West

Religion and Social Discrimination