



**EALC 1508**  
**Religion, State, and Society in East Asia**  
**Spring 2023**

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Office: 710 Williams Hall  
Office Hours  
Class Meeting: TR 10:30-12:00

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines the relationship between religious institutions and the state in China and Japan. Students will learn about the impact of religious ideas, practices, and organizations on social, political, and economic processes and inspect the role of religion in the consolidation of individual, communal, and national identity. Adopting a comparative and transnational approach, we will examine the impact of Asian religious traditions: Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism, and Shinto, as well as global religions such as Islam and Christianity, on the internal sociopolitical structure of the Chinese and Japanese states and their role in shaping power relations on the international level. We will begin the semester by discussing the emergence and consolidation of organized religion in premodern China and Japan. This introduction will set the tone for our main topic: the relationship between religion and the state in the modern and contemporary periods. Special emphasis will be given to the role and use of the grand narratives of secularism and modernity in the shaping of the Chinese and Japanese nation-states, as well as the value of using these frameworks in the study of modern East Asia. We will conclude this course by focusing on present-day religious issues, such as the emergence of new religious movements in postwar Japan and the continuing discourse on state control over religion in the PRC and Taiwan. In addition to covering material from the assigned chapters from the textbook and other secondary sources in greater depth, we will also dedicate our class sessions to close readings of primary historical sources, such as short works of fiction, policy documents, and documentary films. While the class will largely be lecture-based, it will also include a discussion component. No previous knowledge of Chinese or Japanese is necessary, and all readings will be available in English on the Canvas site in PDF form.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

Class Attendance and Participation: 10%

Weekly Quizzes: 20%

Mid-term Assignment: 30%

Final Take-Home Exam: 40%

### **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:**

Class attendance is part of the learning process. Every student will be permitted to miss up to **two** lectures without their grade being adversely affected. Missing additional lecture times will lower grades. If you will miss an assignment due to a legitimate absence (such as serious illnesses, religious holidays, or University-sanctioned events), please notify me in advance of the class you will be missing. In addition, class attendance means **participation**. This is a discussion-based class, so you must come prepared, after having completed all assigned readings and the response paper and be ready to discuss them in class.

### **RESPONSE PAPERS:**

Students will be expected to post weekly response papers to the assigned sources. Response papers should be uploaded by noon on Monday unto the appropriate discussion thread on Canvas. A good response paper will be between 250 and 500 words (about a page in MS Word). Discussion questions will be posted a few days before each response paper is due. You are only allowed to miss **one** entry without penalty. The goal of this task is to help students familiarize themselves with the assigned reading before class thus facilitating a meaningful and productive discussion.

### **MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS:**

For their midterm assignment, students will produce critical review essay of Brian Victoria's *Zen at War*. The final take-home exam will consist of two analytical essays responding to a set of questions on one primary and one secondary source. Further details will be provided later in the semester.

### **READINGS:**

The required textbooks for this course are:

- Thomas David DuBois. *Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia* (2011).  
[https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN\\_9977358221303681](https://franklin.library.upenn.edu/catalog/FRANKLIN_9977358221303681)
- Brian Daizen Victoria. *Zen at War*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (2006).
- Additional readings will be posted on Canvas.