



EALC / BELS 1508
Religion, State, and Society in East Asia
Spring 2024

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Office: 710 Williams Hall
Office Hours: By appointment
Class Meeting: TR 10:15-11:45

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course examines the relationship between religious institutions, society, 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, state, and society 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. 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.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY:

Please refrain from using your laptop and smartphones in class. Tablets are allowed for the purpose of notetaking. Accommodations can be arranged through the [Weingarten Center](#).

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

Class Attendance and Participation: 20%

Weekly Quizzes: 30%

Midterm Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Class attendance is part of the learning process. Every student will be permitted to miss up to **three lectures** without their grade being adversely affected. Missing additional lecture times will impact your grade. In addition, class attendance means **participation**. There is a discussion component to this course, so you must come prepared, after having completed all assigned readings and be ready to talk about them in class.

WEEKLY QUIZZES:

Starting from week three, students will be expected to submit their answers to short quizzes posted on the Canvas website, based on the weekly readings. The quizzes must be completed by 9:00 AM EST every Tuesday.

MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS:

The midterm exam will consist of identification questions drawn from a list of terms that will be distributed in advance. On this exam, students must write a short paragraph explaining the historical context and significance of each term. The final exam will consist of analytical essay questions. A list of sample questions will be provided toward the end of the semester.

READINGS:

The required textbooks for this course are:

- Thomas David DuBois. *Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia* (2011).
- Additional readings will be posted on Canvas.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

Week One: *Secularization, Globalization, and the Role of Religion in East Asia*

1/18 – Course Introduction

Readings:

Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia, 1-14.

Week Two: *Religious Foundations of the State in Premodern China and Japan*

1/23 – Divine Rulership and the Sacred “Confucian” State in China

1/25 – Emperors, Shoguns, and Monks: Religion and the State in Japan

Readings:

Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia, 15-71.

“Discussion on the Three Teachings,” in: *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol. 1, 791-793.

“Chronicles of the Direct Descent of Gods and Sovereigns,” in: *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Vol. 1, 358-363.

Week Three: *The Son of God and the Son of Heaven: Early Encounters with Christianity*

1/30 – The Rise and Fall of the Jesuit Mission in Early Modern Japan

2/1 – Missionaries and Literati: The Rites Controversy in Late Imperial China

Readings:

Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia, 72-93.

Peter Nosco, “Early Modernity and the States Policies toward Christianity in 16th and 17th century Japan,” *Bulletin of Portuguese/Japanese Studies* 7 (2003), 7-21.

“Zhang Xingyao and the Inculturation of Christianity”, in: *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol.2, 152-154.

Week Four: *Apocalypse Now: Millenarian Movements and Alternative Social Orders*

2/6 – On Endtime and the Latter Days of the Dharma: Millenarian Thought in Comparative Perspective

2/8 – Rebellion and Popular Religious Movements in China

Readings:

Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia, 123-141.

Helen Hardacre, “Japanese Millennial Movements,” in: *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, 348-368.

“The Divine Incantation Scripture,” in: *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Vol.1, 406-410.

Week Five: *Land of the Rising Sun: Shinto and National Identity in Modern Japan*

2/13 – In the Land of the Kami: What is Shinto?

2/15 – The Meiji Restoration and State Shinto

Readings:

Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia, 151-160.

Helen Hardacre, “Creating State Shinto: The Great Promulgation Campaign and the New Religions,” *Journal of Japanese Studies* 12.1 (1986), 29-63.

“Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion: An Essay by Kuroda Toshio,” in: *Religions of Japan in Practice*, 451-467.

Week Six: *Transcending the Past: Modernism and Religion in early 20th Century China*

2/20 – The Great Unification: Confucianism as State Religion

2/22 – Anti-Superstition and the Creation of “Religion” in Republican China

Readings:

Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia, 142-151, 161-179.

Vincent Goossaert, "Republican Church Engineering: The National Religious Associations in 1912 China," in: *Chinese Religiosities*, 209-232.

Lu Xun, "Confucius in Modern China," in: *The Chinese Essay*, 121-128.

Week Seven: *Zen at War: Religion, Imperialism, and Militarism in 20th Century Japan*

2/27 – Buddhism and the Making of the Modern Japanese Empire

2/29 – **MIDTERM EXAM**

Readings:

Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia, 179-193, 215-223.

Week Eight: NO CLASSES (Spring Break)

Week Nine: *Opium of the People: Religion in the Communist Paradise*

3/12 – The CCP and the Question of Religion

3/14 – The Reddest Red Sun: The Cultural Revolution and the Cult of Mao

Readings:

Religion and the Making of Modern East Asia, 194-202.

Jiping Zuo, "Political Religion: The Case of the Cultural Revolution in China," *Sociological Analysis* 52.1 (1991): 99-110.

"Mao Tse-tung Overthrows Religious Authority" and "The Cult of Mao," in: *Chinese Religion: An Anthology of Sources*, 303-316.

Week Ten: *New Beginnings: The Post-Mao Religious Revival*

3/19 – The Religious Question in Post-Mao China

3/21 – Religious Economies in the Reform Era

Readings:

Yang Fenggang, "Market Economy and the Revival of Religions," in: *Chinese Religious Life*, 209-224.

Lizhu Fan and Na Chen, "The Revival and Development of Popular Religion in China, 1980–Present," in: *Modern Chinese Religion*, 923-948.

"The Basic Viewpoint and Policy on the Religious Question During Our Country's Socialist Period, Document No. 19 (March 31, 1982)," *Chinese Law and Government* 33.2 (2000): 17-34.

Week Eleven: *Modern Gods: New Religious Movements in Japan*

3/26 – New Religious Movements in Japan and the World

3/28 – NRMs Before and After Aum Shinrikyō

Readings:

Inken Prohl, “New Religions in Japan: Adaptations and Transformations in Contemporary Society,” in: *Handbook of Contemporary Japanese Religions*, 241-267.

Watanabe Manabu, “Reactions to the Aum Affair: The Rise of the Anti-cult Movement in Japan,” *Bulletin of the Nanzan Institute for Religion & Culture* 21 (1997), 32-48.

Shoko Asahara, *Supreme Initiation*, 10-12, 27-40, 87-93.

Week Twelve: *State Control and the Question of Cults in Contemporary China*

4/2 – Falun Gong and the “Evil Cults” Discourse

4/4 – Red, Grey, and Black-Market Christianity in Mainland China

Readings:

David Palmer, “Heretical Doctrines, Reactionary Secret Societies, Evil Cult: Labeling Heterodoxy in Twentieth-Century China,” in: *Chinese Religiosities*, 113-134.

Emily Dunn, “Cult, Church, and the CCP: Introducing Eastern Lightning,” *Modern China* 35.1 (2009): 96-119.

“The Eastern Lightning Cult,” *Asia Harvest* 66 (2002): 5-12.

Week Thirteen: *Spirituality and New Age in China and Japan*

4/9 – Spirituality and New Age Religiosity in Global Perspective

4/11 – Mindfulness and Well-being in contemporary East Asian Societies

Readings:

Shimazono Susumu and Tim Graf, “The Rise of the New Spirituality,” in: *Handbook of Contemporary Japanese Religions*, 459-485.

Li Zhang, “Cultivating Happiness: Psychotherapy, Spirituality, and Well-Being in a Transforming Urban China,” in: *Handbook of Religion and the Asian City*, 315-332.

[“How Mindfulness Can Help You to Live in the Present \(Rev. Takafumi Kawakami\)”](#)

Week Fourteen: *Ethnicity and Geopolitics in Mainland China*

4/16 – Religious Policies and Ethnic Minorities

4/18 – Islam in China: Past and Present

Readings:

Martin Lavička, “Changes in Chinese Legal Narratives about Religious Affairs in Xinjiang,” *Asian Ethnicity* 22.1 (2021): 61-76.

Dru Galdney, “Islam and Modernity in China: Secularization or Separatism?” in: *Chinese Religiosities*, 179-205.

[“Respecting and Protecting the Rights of All Ethnic Groups in Xinjiang”](#)

Week Fifteen: *Religion and Nationalism in the 21st Century*

4/23 – Religion and Right-Wing Nationalism in Japan

4/25 – Xi Jinping and the Sinicization of Religion

Readings:

Kuei-min Chang, “New Wine in Old Bottles: Sinicization and State Regulation of Religion in China,” *China Perspectives* 2018 (1/2): 37-44.

[“China’s Policies and Practices on Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief” \(2018\)](#)

Week Sixteen: *The Future of Religion in East Asia*

4/30 – Course Conclusion