



Introduction to Asian Religions

RELI 115 / EAST 115

Fall 2008

Coleman Hall 022

MWF 1:00 - 1:52 p.m.

Professor: James Mark Shields • #71336 • jms089@bucknell.edu

Office: Coleman Hall, Room 011

Office hours: MWF 2:00 - 3:00 p.m., or by appointment

www.facstaff.bucknell.edu/jms089

After a few centuries of lagging behind the West in terms of economic development and political influence, the nations of Asia—led first by Japan and more recently the emerging behemoths China and India—have recently resumed their customary place as major world powers. Indeed, some prognosticators have gone so far as to dub the coming century the ‘Asian Century’. In some ways this is less a novelty than a return to normality after an unusual period of Western domination. Over the span of nearly 5000 years of recorded history, Indian and Chinese civilizations were more often than not in positions of relative power and influence vis-à-vis the empires of the West and even the great caliphates of Islam.

This course provides an introduction to the various religious traditions of Asia through study of their origins, basic beliefs, practices and values, historical development, as well as their interaction and involvement with politics, culture and society, and relations with each other. We will deal primarily with five major religious traditions of South and East Asia—Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and Shinto—while noting the significance of less well-known religions and folk traditions. Topics covered include the philosophical revolt of the *Upanishads*, goddesses and the role of women in *bhakti* Hinduism, Gandhi and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the gorgeously odd Mahayana Buddhist sutras, Silk Road cave art and Buddhist pilgrimage, the radical political implications of Confucian humanism, the strange paradoxes of the *Daodejing*, the ‘no-mind’ of Japanese Zen, the life and struggles of the XIVth Dalai Lama, the battle between the Chinese Communist Party and Falun Gong, and the recent caché of Asian religions in the West.

Course Objectives:

The primary objectives of the course are to: a) familiarize students with the central texts, beliefs, values and practices of the four major Asian religious traditions, b) provide an introduction to the historical development of those traditions in key periods of Asian history; c) discuss the role of religion in shaping and transmitting Asian arts (sculpture, architecture, painting, and so on); and d) allow the student to reflect in a personal and critical manner on the ideas and themes presented through both written and oral assignments.

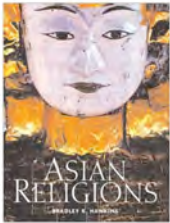
Course Format:

The course will follow a lecture-discussion format, with three lectures of roughly 40 minutes each on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Generally each week of lectures will encompass a new theme, as dictated by the Schedule of Topics and Readings (see below). Each lecture is accompanied by one reading, familiarity with which will greatly enhance comprehension of the lecture. Please be prepared. A few minutes at the end of each class will be left open for questions of clarification and, it is hoped, an open discussion of the ideas and issues presented. Friday classes will often be set aside for films or discussion.

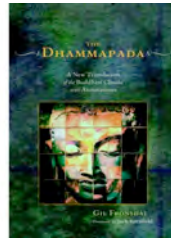
Pedagogical Note:

I want to create at all times a comfortable, enjoyable, and at times provocative environment for learning. This is meant to be an *interactive* course; the student will be asked to respond and engage with the course material, and with the ideas and opinions of the instructor and other students—though, it is hoped, always in a civil and polite fashion. Evaluation for the course will be based largely on the demonstration of critical engagement with course material. I will also be employing various media, including Powerpoint presentations, video and DVDs, CDs, and so on, in order to stimulate as many learning faculties as possible. Powerpoints will be available prior to each class for those who wish to print them as a basis for note taking.

Required Reading Material:



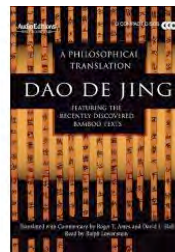
- *Introduction to Asian Religions* (Bradley K. Hawkins)



- *The Dhammapadam* (G. Fronsdal, trans.)



- *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (Barbara Miller, ed.)



- *Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation* (Roger T. Ames, trans.)

- **Blackboard Readings:** (see page 4)

Course requirements:

1. ATTENDANCE

Attendance for this class is not mandatory. However, please note that participation counts for a robust 20% of your grade, and each Wednesday we will have a very short weekly reading quiz worth 10%.

2. PARTICIPATION 20%

Class participation, including discussion of assigned materials, is a requirement. Participation is a matter of quality not quantity. You do not have to speak every class, but rather show that you have done the readings and are willing and able to engage, in a thoughtful way, with the topics under discussion. Of course, good questions are also an aspect of participation.

3. DISCUSSION BOARD QUESTIONS 10%

In order to help with the readings and to encourage collaborative learning, you will be expected to participate in a class 'blog', located in the DISCUSSION BOARD section of the Blackboard page for the course. Here you are free to write any comments you may have on the course, though its primary intention is to ask questions or raise points about the readings. I will not evaluate your entries per se, but I will check frequently to see if you are participating in the discussion (in a way that is relevant and informed).

4. READING QUIZZES (RQ) 10%

Almost every week, at the beginning of Wednesday's class, I will hand out a very short (5 minute) quiz on the THE LAST TWO readings (i.e., the readings for Monday and Wednesday of that week). These will not be difficult: you should be able to answer the questions if you have done the reading and taken note of the main points.

5. SHORT PAPERS (SP) 2 x 15% = 30%

In addition to the main textbook (IAR), we will read three primary texts (in translation) from different Asian religious traditions: *The Bhagavad Gita* (Hinduism), *The Dhammapadam* (Buddhism), and *Daodejing* (Daoism). During the semester each student will be expected to turn in a short (1000 word) essay on TWO of these books (see Schedule of Topics and Readings for specific due dates). The choice is up to you. These essays are meant to help you synthesize the course material and discussions and improve your writing skills, but may also be creative. Further guidelines will be discussed early in the semester.

6. FINAL QUIZ 30%

There will be an in-class final quiz on Friday, December 5. Questions will be primarily 'identification' and 'short answer'. Specific format will be discussed at the end of the term.

Grading Policies: See "Grading Policies" handout

Blackboard Readings (12):

- HITCHENS, Christopher. "There is no 'Eastern Solution.'" In *God is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*, pp. 195-204. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.
- ERALY, Abraham. "Neyti! Neyti!" In *Gem in the Lotus: The Seeding of Indian Civilization*, pp. 167-175. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000.
- ECK, Diana. "Seeing the Sacred." In *Darśhān: Seeing the Divine Image in India*, 2ⁿ edition, pp. 1-31. Chambersburg, PA: Anima Books, 1985.
- GANDHI, Mohandes. "Introduction" to the *Bhagavad Gita*. Originally published as "Anasaktiyoga: The Gospel of Selfless Action," in *Young India*, 1931.
- THICH Nhat Hanh. *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajñāparamita Heart Sutra*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax, 1988.
- STRONG, John S. "Saviors and Siddhas: The Mahāyāna Pantheon and Tantric Buddhism." In *The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations*, 3rd edition, pp. 188-205. New York: Wadsworth, 2007.
- BRAUEN, Martin. "The Other Mandala: Tantric Method." In *The Mandala: Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism*, pp. 36-79. Boston: Shambala, 1997.
- KASULIS, Thomas. "Ancient Shinto (Prehistory-794): The Trailblazers." In *Shinto: The Way Home*, pp. 71-91. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004.
- MATSUMOTO Ken'ichi et al. "War Responsibility and Yasukuni Shrine." In *Japan Echo* 32, 5 (October 2005), pp. 23-28.
- SUZUKI Shunryu. Excerpts from *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. In *A Modern Buddhist Bible: Essential Readings from East and West*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr., pp. 127-137. Boston: Beacon Press.
- HSIA CHANG, Maria. "A Religious Sect Defies the State." Chapter One from *Falun Gong: The End of Days*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Pp. 1-31.
- SUTIN, Lawrence. "Beat Zen and Crazy Wisdom." In *All is Change: The Two-thousand Year Journey of Buddhism to the West*, pp. 292-317. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2006.



Introduction to Asian Religions

Schedule of Topics and Readings

I. Introduction

W 08/27	1. Course Introduction	IAR	2-11
F 08/29	2. DISCUSSION: What's it all about?	BB	Hitchens

II. Roots of Indian Religion

M 09/01	3. Mother Goddesses, Brahmins & <i>Soma</i>	IAR	12-38
W 09/03 ^{RQ}	4. The Way of Knowledge & Liberation	BB	Eraly
F 09/05	5. DISCUSSION: <i>Vedas</i> and <i>Upanishads</i>	IAR	352-353

III. Hinduism: Devotion and Practice

M 09/08	6. The Birth of <i>bhakti</i>	IAR	49-64
W 09/10 ^{RQ}	7. Art and Images in Hindu Devotion	BB	Eck
F 09/12	8. FILM: <i>Holi: A Hindu Festival</i>		
M 09/15	9. The Hindu Pantheon I	GITA	
W 09/17 ^{RQ}	10. The Hindu Pantheon II	GITA	
F 09/19	11. DISCUSSION: <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>	BB	Gandhi

IV. Buddhism: Meditation and Liberation

M 09/22	12. The Life of the Buddha	IAR	109-120
W 09/24 ^{SP1}	13. The Path of Liberation from Suffering	DHP	
F 09/26	14. DISCUSSION: <i>Dhammapada</i>	DHP	
M 09/29	15. Emergence of the Mahayana	IAR	121-128
W 10/01 ^{SP2}	16. Mahayana Philosophy: Emptiness	BB	Thich
F 10/03	17. Celestial Buddhas & Bodhisattvas	BB	Strong
M 10/06	18. Vajrayana: The Diamond Path	IAR	128-136
W 10/08 ^{RQ}	19. Tibet: Mudras, Mantras, & Mandalas	BB	Brauen
F 10/10	20. FILM: <i>Kundun: Life of the Dalai Lama</i>		
M 10/13	FALL RECESS—NO CLASS		

V. Daoism: The Way of the Dao

W 10/15	21. Chinese Cosmology and Devotion	IAR	176-189
F 10/17	22. FILM: Daoism as Popular Religion		
M 10/20	23. Laozi and the <i>Daodejing</i>	IAR	190-197
W 10/22 ^{RQ}	24. Daoism as Mystical Philosophy	DDJ	
F 10/24	25. DISCUSSION: <i>Daodejing</i>	DDJ	

VI. Confucianism: The Way of the Sage

M 10/27	26. Origins: Life of Master Kong	IAR	207-223
W 10/29 ^{SP3}	27. DISCUSSION: Confucian Ethics	IAR	374-376
F 10/31	28. FILM: Confucianism Today		

VII. Japanese Religions

M 11/03	29. Shinto I: Way of the <i>Kami</i>	IAR	281-294
W 11/05 ^{RQ}	30. Shinto II: Polytheism & State Cult	BB	Kasulis
F 11/07	31. DISCUSSION: Shinto and the State	BB	Matsumoto
M 11/10	32. Japanese Buddhism I: PLB	IAR	257-259; 306-313
W 11/12 ^{RQ}	33. Japanese Buddhism II: Zen	IAR	260-263; 317-325
F 11/14	34. GUEST SPEAKER: Pennsylvania Zen	BB	Suzuki

VIII. Conclusions: Asian Religions Today

M 11/17	35. Religion in India Today: Issues	IAR	88-100
W 11/19 ^{RQ}	36. Religions in China Today: Issues	BB	Hsia Chang
F 11/21	37. "Beat Zen": Asian Religions in America	BB	Sutin
M 11/24	38. DISCUSSION: Asian Religions in America		
W 11/26	THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO CLASS		
F 11/28	THANKSGIVING RECESS – NO CLASS		
M 12/01	39. FILM: <i>I Heart Huckabees</i>		
W 12/03	Quiz Review		
F 12/05	FINAL QUIZ		
M 12/08	40. "Conclusions"		

Key:

IAR = *Introduction to Asian Religions* (Bradley K. Hawkins)

GITA = *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna's Counsel in Time of War* (Barbara Miller, ed.)

DHP = *The Dhammapada* (G. Fronsdal, trans.)

DDJ = *Daodejing: A Philosophical Translation* (Roger Ames, trans.)

BB = Blackboard Reading

^{RQ} = Reading Quiz

^{SP} = due date of Short Paper



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Reading Quiz #1

1. Besides public ritual baths, some Indus Valley cities such as Kalibangan contain _____ altars, suggesting that some of the inhabitants of these cities were in fact Aryans (hint: think Agni).

2. Name three elements or characteristics of Indus Valley / Harappan religion:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

3. Name three elements or characteristics of Aryan / Vedic religion:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

4. Which of the following best defines a *mantra*, in the Vedic context?

- a. a rumination on the meaning of existence
- b. a sacred formula for recitation during sacrifice
- c. a sacred circle used in meditation
- d. a fire sacrifice

5. True or False: The Vedas describe rituals dedicated to a whole range of goddesses: _____

6. Which of the following is the Sanskrit word for 'god' (literally 'shining one')?

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| a. <i>ashura</i> | c. <i>brahmin</i> |
| b. <i>veda</i> | d. <i>deva</i> |

7. The Sanskrit term _____ is derived from three Sanskrit roots that imply 'to sit down near', since the teachings in this series of texts were passed down initially from a master or *guru* to a student.

8. The *Upanishads* teach that the personal 'self' (*jiva*) must come to recognize:

- a. the immortal soul (*atman*) that resides within
- b. the single Reality behind appearances
- c. at the end of the day, Atman IS Brahman!
- d. all of the above

9. What is *tapas*, and why is it important to the yogic traditions and the *Upanishads*?

10. Identify and briefly explain the significance of the image to the left:





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Reading Quiz #3

1. Echoing the basic Hindu concept of LILA, _____ plays also an important element in the Holi festival.

2. True or False: "The word 'Holi' is taken from 'Holika', the name of a beautiful goddess who was the main consort of Krishna." _____

3. At one point in the Holi festival, on the day dedicated to Krishna's brother Balarama, the head priest arrives riding a 'hobby horse', signifying _____.

4. Briefly describe the principal qualities of ONE of the following four gods or goddesses: Shiva, Krishna, Rama, Devi:

5. What is the literal translation of 'Bhagavad Gita'? _____ of _____

6. Which of the following best describes Arjuna's main dilemma:

- a. do the gods really exist?
- b. is it acceptable to kill?
- c. what is the goal of meditation?
- d. which god is the highest of all?

7. True or False: "According to the Hindu concept of *dharma* as explained in the Gita, standards of right and wrong are universal." _____

8. True or False: "According to the Krishna, Arjuna should act with determination, but without being concerned with the fruits of his action." _____

9. Which of the following key terms best indicates the highest 'value' or practice according to Krishna's teachings in the Gita?

- a. *karma* - action
- b. *bhakti* - devotion
- c. *nirvana* - liberation
- d. *jñana* - knowledge



10. Identify and briefly explain the significance of the image to the left:



Introduction to Asian Religions

Reading Quiz #5

1. The 'celestial' buddha most associated with being a 'savior' (not a 'messiah') is _____.

2. True or False: "According to those who focus their devotion on the above buddha, one can *only* practice the Dharma and reach *nirvana* after one dies."

3. One of the earliest buddhas to be worshipped was Bhaishajyaguru, otherwise known as Yakushi, or the _____ Buddha.

4. What are the roles or functions of the Bodhisattva Jizo, especially as he is worshipped in Japan?

5. This bodhisattva, whose cult was especially strong in Tibet, represents the highly developed wisdom of an awakened being: _____

6. Which of the following figures has the unique distinction of being BOTH a buddha and a bodhisattva?

- a. Shakyamuni
- b. Maitreya
- c. Avalokita
- d. Manjushri

7. True or False: "Worship of Maitreya involves a mystical attempt to achieve 'union' with this buddha."

8. True or False: "Images of bodhisattvas traditionally picture these beings as princely figures." _____

9. Which of the following benefits is promised to those reborn in Sukhavati:

- a. no more rebirth
- b. no more pain
- c. magical powers
- d. all of the above

10. Identify and briefly explain the significance of the image to the left:





Name: _____

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Reading Quiz #7

1. Most scholars agree that the earliest forms of Japanese religion were a mix of animism and _____, akin to the religious traditions of Siberia.

2. True or False: "According to Japanese myth, Amaterasu Omikami is the creator of the islands of Japan and mother of all the *kami*." _____

3. The ancient term 'kami' is best translated as:

- a. god
- b. soul
- c. spirit
- d. whatever makes you go 'wow'!

4. Briefly describe at least one technique of purification in Shinto ritual practice:

5. Besides the *kami* of nature and those of the powerful clans or *uji*, Shinto eventually came to include a sense of spirits of _____, similar to the Chinese belief in *gui*."

6. Which of the following is the name for the important Japanese midsummer festival similar to Hallowe'en, sometimes called a 'party for the dead'?

- a. Norito
- b. Matsuri
- c. Obon
- d. Shinto

7. True or False: "Death is considered a taboo within Shinto." _____

8. True or False: "The 'gods' of the *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* are both omnipotent and omniscient." _____

9. Which of the following sets of terms best describes the principal concern of Shinto, at least as expressed in the ancient myths?

- a. suffering & liberation
- b. ethics & morality
- c. devotion & belief
- d. purity & pollution

10. Identify and briefly explain the significance of the image to the left:



Student Name: _____



Introduction to Asian Religions

FINAL QUIZ

Bucknell University

RELI 115 / EAST 115

Examiner: Prof. James Mark Shields

Thursday, December 7, 2006
11:45 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Instructions: Answer all questions directly on the exam paper. Please keep in mind the relative worth of each question, and budget your time and effort accordingly. Calculators and dictionaries are prohibited. Please write your name on this cover page.

Good luck. Buena suerte. Bonne chance. Viel Glück. 好运气. 頑張って。

This exam comprises 12 (twelve) pages, including this cover page.

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Section #1: FILL IN THE BLANK

10 x 1 = 10 %

1. In philosophical Daoism, the proper mode of behavior is known by the Chinese compound term _____-_____ or action-not-action.
2. So-called 'religious Daoism' (*daojiao*) developed many techniques for achieving a transformed state of being. One of these, practiced more by 'spiritual elites' than by common folk, is known as _____, and involves the channeling of _____ energy towards the creation of an 'immortal fetus'.
3. At the top of the Daoist spiritual hierarchy one finds the _____ Emperor, while at the bottom are the household gods—most famously the _____ God (Zao Jun)—with whom humans have daily contact.
4. After his death, the sayings of the ancient sage Master _____, known to the West as Confucius, were compiled into a work called the _____, now one of the classics of the Confucian/Neo-confucian canon.
5. Three fundamental Confucian virtues are _____, which includes traditional rites but also the practice of self-cultivation, XIAO or filial piety, and _____, often translated as 'benevolence' or 'human-heartedness'.
6. The fundamental Shinto term _____, though frequently translated into English as 'god' or 'spirit', can perhaps be best defined as "that which makes you go _____."
7. The earliest Japanese myths can be found in the _____, an 8th-century text that also establishes a connection between the gods and the _____.
8. The man responsible for establishing the Pure Land sect in Japan during the Kamakura Period (1192-1333) was _____. His main disciple, _____, broke with his master to form the 'True Pure Land' sect, emphasizing the importance of faith over any sort of practice or ritual.
9. Whereas the Soto Zen sect focuses on the technique of _____, or 'just sitting', the Rinzai sect includes the use of _____, or riddles to prompt instant awakening.
10. The name Falun Gong can be literally translated as _____-wheel-construction, a title that alludes to the significance of Buddhism to this New Religious Movement.

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Section #2: MULTIPLE CHOICE

24 x 2= 48 %

Please circle the letter corresponding to the response which best answers the question.

Note: There is only ONE correct response to each question.

11. Which of the following IS NOT a significant symbolic being from ancient Chinese tradition:

- a. tortoise
- b. phoenix
- c. kappa
- d. dragon

12. The complementary dualism of YIN/YANG can be applied to which of the following?

- a. nature
- b. domestic relationships
- c. physical health
- d. all of the above

13. The 'Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove' were a group of Daoist poets whose poems express most clearly the Daoist tendency towards:

- a. sexuality
- b. antinomianism
- c. worship of nature
- d. ethics

14. The Daoist classic *Zhuangzi* emphasizes the principle of:

- a. liberation from *samsara*
- b. oneness with the Dao
- c. immortality
- d. freedom

15. The primary (realistic) goal of Religious Daoism, at least for common folk, is:

- a. health & longevity
- b. oneness with the Dao
- c. immortality
- d. freedom from social rules

16. According to groups like the Yellow Turbans and Celestial Masters:

- a. Laozi has revealed himself as a kind of Messiah
- b. people must live according to strict rules of purity
- c. the End of the World is coming!
- d. all of the above

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17. Among other things, Daoist monks at Wudang Mountain created Wudang Wushu, a form of:

- a. inner alchemy
- b. meditation
- c. devotion to Laozi
- d. martial art

18. The teachings of Confucius were central to Chinese education and state bureaucracy for almost _____ years, until Mao's Communist Revolution:

- a. 1000
- b. 500
- c. 2000
- d. 4000

19. At the basis of Confucianism lies a belief in _____ as the foundation of moral order:

- a. Heaven
- b. God
- c. Confucius
- d. Dao

20. The so-called 'radical possibility' of Confucian humanism refers to the fact that a person's neglect of _____ results in him losing his 'status' in a hierarchical relationship:

- a. REN
- b. XIAO
- c. LI
- d. DHARMA

21. According to Zhu Xi, self-cultivation requires 'reverence for one's inner goodness', 'building one's virtues,' and an 'investigation of things', resulting in a merging of one's heart/mind with TAIJI, called the _____.

- a. Buddha-nature
- b. Dao
- c. Mandate of Heaven
- d. Great Ultimate

22. Can a woman achieve the Confucian goal of *junzi*?

- a. definitely yes
- b. absolutely not
- c. yes in theory, no in practice
- d. no in theory, yes in practice

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23. Which of the following were important ritual implements in early Shinto?
- a. mandalas
 - b. mirrors
 - c. statues of kami
 - d. all of the above
24. Which of the following figures is NOT a protector kami?
- a. Inari
 - b. Tenjin
 - c. Oni
 - d. Raiden
25. Which of the following is NOT an aspect of Shinto practice?
- a. meditation
 - b. simple devotion
 - c. purification
 - d. festivals
26. Both the TORII and SHIMENAWA are:
- a. markers of sacred space
 - b. rituals of Shinto purification
 - c. seasonal festivals
 - d. books of Japanese mythology
27. Early Japanese leaders accepted Buddhism on the basis of:
- a. its foreign-ness
 - b. its philosophy
 - c. its effectiveness as protector of the state
 - d. its ritual forms
28. The late Heian and early Kamakura periods in Japan were characterized by:
- a. peace and prosperity
 - b. unrest and apocalypticism
 - c. the first appearance of Buddhism in Japan
 - d. the disappearance of Buddhism in Japan
29. Which Japanese PLB teacher danced from village to village proclaiming the 'good news' that "Amida will save you no matter whether you believe in him or not!"
- a. Honen
 - b. Ippen
 - c. Shinran
 - d. Dogen

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30. The Japanese word 'Zen' (as well as the Chinese 'Chan' and Sanskrit 'Dhyana') means:

- a. Buddhism
- b. Emptiness
- c. Meditation
- d. Peace

31. According to Zen legend, the Indian monk _____ ('the blue-eyed barbarian') is responsible for introducing Zen to China:

- a. Bodhidharma
- b. Bodhisattva
- c. Shakyamuni
- d. Nansen

32. Dogen's form of Soto Zen meditation can be characterized as:

- a. concentration on images
- b. sustained insight into one's thoughts and feelings
- c. dropping off of body and mind
- d. strict asceticism

33. Which of the following classes of people were most attracted to Rinzai Zen:

- a. peasants
- b. samurai
- c. elites
- d. women

34. Twentieth-century Tibetan teacher Chogyam Trungpa developed the concept of _____, which he defined as "the process of going further in and in without any reference point of spirituality, without any reference point of a savior, without any reference point of goodness or badness—without any reference points whatsoever!"

- a. spiritual materialism
- b. beat Zen
- c. true insight
- d. crazy wisdom

Introduction to Asian Religions Take Home Exam – Questions

Please answer TWO of the following FIVE questions: one chosen from questions 1-4, along with question 5. In other words, you MUST answer question 5. Your answer to questions 1-4 must be between 800-1000 words; your answer to question 5 must be between 1600-2000 words. Your answer to questions 1-4 will be worth 10 points (i.e., 10% of your final grade); your answer to question 5 will be worth 20 points (i.e., 20% of your final grade). The completed exam will be due on MONDAY, DECEMBER 8 during class, and I would like you to hand me a paper copy. *Please single-space your answers and print on both sides of the page, if you can.* Be creative, and try to have fun!

1. Somewhere in Rome, 100 CE

A man called Simon has come to Rome from his home in distant Palestine in order to convince people of the 'good news' — that the long-awaited Messiah was born, suffered, and died at the hands of the Romans some 70 years before. This 'messiah' was a Jewish carpenter's son called Yeshua bar Yusef, and he taught a 'gospel' of peace, love, and humility; some though not all of his followers believe him to have been a manifestation — or 'Son' — of YHWH, God Himself. These folks, derisively called 'Christians' by their many pagan critics, seem quite willing to sacrifice their lives for their vision. Women play an important role, and they often live together in common houses, without paying much attention to either Jewish or Roman social hierarchies or family duties. Indeed, some had given up sex and children altogether in favor of an ascetic life in the desert or in separate communities.

Simon comes across a marketplace, where a group of 4 foreign travellers (two male and two female) has convened for a weekly discussion. He meets:

1. A Shakti Hindu (f) – call her Shakti
2. A Zen Buddhist (m) – call him Zen
3. A Daoist (f) – call her Dao
4. A Confucian (m) – call him Con

Try to imagine the response of each of these figures to Simon's story. Which do you think would be more likely to accept this 'gospel', and for what reasons? Which would be most likely to reject these teachings, and why?

2. Somewhere on the Silk Road, West Asia, 600 CE

A man named Ali from Arabia is travelling east on the Silk Road, on his way to the city of Xian, the cosmopolitan capital of the Chinese Empire and the world's largest city. He stops at a series of caves that are home to thousands of Mahayana Buddhists monks, where he meets and speaks with four other travelers (two male and two female), attempting to convince them that there has been a new revelation in Arabia to a camel-driver turned prophet named Muhammad, and that this new faith requires complete 'submission' to the will of a supreme Creator and Father of all people. Ali's companions include:

1. A Vaishnavite Hindu (m) – call him Vaish
2. A Pure Land Buddhist (f) – call her Pur
3. A Daoist (f) – call her Dao
4. A Confucian (m) – call him Con

Try to imagine the response of each of these figures to Ali's message. What kind of comments might each one make, and why?

3. Somewhere in France, 1100 CE

A young woman named Mary has travelled on foot from Spain on a spiritual pilgrimage to a recently completed Gothic Cathedral outside Paris. Inside the vast height of the church, she encounters a dazzling

array of colors, filtered through the thousands of stained-glass windows, and hears rhythmic chants from the monk's quarters nearby. Near the altar, in front of the vast wooden crucifix with an image of a bloodied Jesus, there is a gorgeously ornamented reliquary holding a rotten piece of bone, which is believed to be the relic of an early Christian martyr. On her knees, with tears in her eyes, Mary begins to pray.

Mary, however, is not alone. Also in the church are a group of 4 foreign travellers (two male and two female), who have come from afar out of curiosity to this most famous of Christian sites. The four travellers are:

1. A Tibetan Buddhist (m) – call him Tib
2. A Pure Land Buddhist (f) – call her Pur
3. A Zen Buddhist (m) – call him Zen
4. A follower of Shinto (f) – call her Shin

Try to imagine the response of each of these figures to Mary's behavior. What kind of comments might each one make, and why?

4. Somewhere in Switzerland, 1600 CE

A man named Martin leaves his small apartment and enters into the village square, only to see his fellow villagers about to torture a 'heretic' who has refused to accept the new doctrines of 'Protestantism'. The old man about to be tortured calls out to God and curses his persecutors in the name of the Pope, while other villagers rush to the square. Martin is not sure how to react, but decides to flee the scene and retreat to a bar on one of the small side-streets. Once his eyes become adjusted to the gloom, he sees a table around which are seated four oddly-dressed figures, deep in conversation. They are:

1. A Shaivite Hindu (m) – call him Shaiv
2. A Pure Land Buddhist (f) – call her Pur
3. A Confucian (m) – call him Con
4. A follower of Shinto (f) – call her Shin

After informing the strangers of what is happening outside, Martin declares his own commitment to the Reformation begun some decades previous by Luther and Calvin—in particular the doctrine that individuals are 'saved' by faith rather than good works, and that only the Bible, and not any institution or person, however powerful—holds the true path to peace and happiness. And yet, as a humanist, Martin is disturbed by what he just witnessed. What kind of advice might these strangers give?

5. Somewhere in America, 2008 CE

Erica is a student at a small liberal arts college in the middle of nowhere. She studies just enough to get by, but has no idea what she wants to do with her life after college. Her friends spend most of their time having fun, and she feels pressure to go out drinking at least 3 nights a week. Lately, she feels especially frustrated by the fact that she has very little money compared with her peers, who drive around campus in BMWs, while she owns a beat-up Subaru. Whatever extra money she has left over is spent on cigarettes, alcohol and new clothes, despite the fact that her wardrobe is already overflowing.

One evening when she returns from yoga class she finds, Erica is surprised to find a group of six people (three women and three men) in her dorm room. They are:

1. A Shakti Hindu (f) – call her Shak
2. A Theravadin Buddhist monk (m) – call him Ther
3. A Daoist (f) – call her Dao
4. A Confucian scholar (m) – call him Con
5. A Zen Buddhist nun (f) – call her Zen
6. A follower of Shinto (m) – call him Shin

Each of these figures gives advice to Erica about how best to transform her own life. Record their conversation, making sure to give each figure some part in the dialogue.