

Religions of Japan



RELI 246 / EAST 253

Spring 2009 • T/R 9:30–10:52 a.m. • RCHM 018

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Office hours: T/R 2:30–4:00 p.m., also by appointment

Japan is today a major world power, having risen like a phoenix from the ashes of defeat in World War II to challenge the US and Western powers for economic and cultural, if not political supremacy. Japan is also a nation with a long and storied past, notable in particular for its ability to assimilate foreign ideas and values, whether they be Indian, Chinese or Western. Although Japanese society today is, at least on first glance, largely secular, the legacy of the Japanese religious traditions still plays a role in shaping beliefs and behaviors, and knowledge of these traditions remains crucial for any deep understanding of Japanese culture.

This course provides an introduction to the religious traditions of Japan through study of their origins, basic beliefs, practices and values, historical development, as well as their interaction and involvement in Japanese politics, culture and society, and with one another. We will focus especially on Shinto and the various forms of Japanese Buddhism, though attention will also be given to the impact of Confucianism, Daoism, Christianity, and the so-called New (and 'New New') Religions. Along the way, we will cover such topics as: weird and wacky Shinto creation myths; medieval Buddhist court culture and Sohei warrior monks; the mysticism of Kukai, as well as his legendary posthumous status as Kobo Daishi; Shugendo mountain asceticism; popular social reformers Gyogi and Ippen; Pure Land art and visions of Buddhist paradise; the risqué poems of Zen eccentric Ikkyu; Zen koans and "emptiness"; the appeal of Zen to the samurai class; the rise and fall of Christianity in Japan; the involvement of both Shinto and Buddhism with modern Japanese nationalism; the religious terrorism of Aum Shinrikyo; and the status of religion in contemporary "secular" Japan.

The primary objectives of the course are to: a) help students develop a basic knowledge and understanding of the beliefs, values and practices of the main Japanese religions, b) discuss the role of religion in Japanese politics and ethics (vis-à-vis the adoption of religion by the state, popular movements for reform, and the effect on basic values); c) discuss the role of religion in shaping and transmitting Japanese arts (sculpture, architecture, painting, and so on); and d) allow the student to reflect in both a personal and critical manner on the ideas and themes presented in the course via lectures, readings, and other media.

Course Format:

The course will follow a lecture-discussion format, with two lectures of roughly 45-50 minutes each on Tuesdays and Thursdays, followed by 25-30 minutes for discussion, clarification or media presentation. Some classes, usually Thursday, will be set aside for discussion. Each week of lectures will encompass a new theme, as dictated by the Schedule of Topics and Readings (see below), and is accompanied by one or more readings, familiarity with which will greatly enhance comprehension of the lecture. Please be prepared.

Pedagogical Note:

I want to create 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 both oral and written critical engagement with course material. I will also be employing various media, including Powerpoint presentations, video and DVDs, clickers, 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. Please note, however, that the Powerpoint slides only provide a basic sketch of the lecture material—i.e., they are meant to supplement note taking, not replace it.

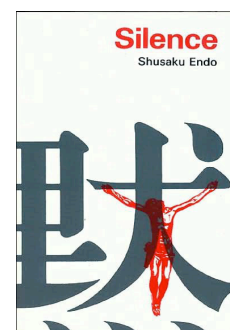
Required Reading Material:



- EBK—Robert Ellwood, *Japanese Religions: The E-book*. Journal of Buddhist Ethics Books, 2007.**



- KASULIS, Thomas. *Shinto: The Way Home*. Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2004



- ENDO Shusaku. *Silence*. Marlboro, NJ: Taplinger, 1980.

The following additional Required Readings can be found on Blackboard, listed by author's last name:

1. Wada Kan. "Ainu Shamanism." In W. Fitzhugh, *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, pp. 261–267. Los Angeles: Perpetua Press, 1999.
2. Earhart, Byron. "The Religious Background and Historical Development of Shugendo." In *A religious study of the Mount Haguro sect of Shugendō; an example of Japanese mountain religion*. Tokyo: Sophia University, 1970.
3. Masaharu Anesaki, ed. "Saicho and His Work," from *History of Japanese Religion*, pp. 111–122. Rutland, VT and Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1978.
4. Tanabe, George J. "The Founding of Mt. Koya and Kukai's Eternal Meditation." In *Religions of Japan in Practice*, edited by George J. Tanabe, pp. 354–359. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
5. Reader, Ian. "Legends, Miracles, and Faith in Kobo Daishi and the Shikoku Pilgrimage." In *Religions of Japan in Practice*, edited by George J. Tanabe, pp. 360–369. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
6. Machida Soho. "Introduction," from *Hōnen and Japanese Pure Land Buddhism*, translated and edited by Ioannis Mentzas, pp. 1–22. Los Angeles: University of Cal. Press, 1999.
7. Shibayama Zenkei. "Hyakujo and a Fox" and "Nansen Kills a Cat." In *Zen Comments on the Mumonkan*, pp. 32–41, 107–113. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

****Instructions on how to purchase and download the E-book will be provided in class during the first session (R 01/15).**

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. ATTENDANCE

I will not take attendance in this class. However, given the nature and format of this course, substantial participation is expected, and it is difficult to participate when you are not here.

2. PARTICIPATION

20%

Class participation, including discussion of readings and questions posed on weekly Powerpoint slides, 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. Good questions are also an important 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 polite, relevant and informed).

4. READING ASSIGNMENT

5%

Each class one or more students will be asked to provide a short summary of one of the assigned readings for that particular week, along with at least two questions for discussion, based on that reading. A schedule will be provided by the second week of class.

5. MID-TERM QUIZ

25%

There will be an in-class mid-term quiz on Thursday, March 6. The specific format will be provided in advance, and, if necessary, class time will be provided for questions and discussion prior to the quiz day.

6. ART REPORT

10%

Each student will write a short, 5-page essay on a particular work of "material culture" related to one or more Japanese religions. This includes any work of painting, sculpture, relief or architecture, from any time period of Japanese history. The paper will be submitted at the end of March (R 03/27), roughly two weeks after Spring Break.

7. RESEARCH PAPER

30%

Each student will write a 3000 word research paper on a topic chosen from a list of diverse themes and issues relevant to Japanese religion. Details will be provided several weeks into the course. The research paper will be due at the end of the semester (R 04/28), but I will ask for a proposal and first draft in late March.

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GRADING POLICIES

Grading for Participation is quite straightforward: the more engaged you are in the class, the higher your grade. I am particularly fond of the 3 e's: energy, effort, and enthusiasm. Please be aware of the subtle but significant psychological effect of me actually knowing who you are, and even a little bit about you. Though I do not evaluate you on your personality, the very fact that I am able to identify you implies that you have participated in the class in some fashion.

In grading the research paper I ask the following questions:

1. Does the paper have a thesis?
2. Is the thesis interesting / relevant to the course?
3. Is the paper free from long quotations / excessive borrowing of ideas?
4. Is the paper reasonably well written (i.e., sentence structure, grammar, spelling)?
5. Is it long enough / not too long?

If the answer to any of the above is 'no', the paper will receive a 'C' grade of some form. If the answer to more than two of the above is 'no', the paper will receive a 'D' grade. If all of the above are answered by 'yes', the following additional questions apply:

6. How thoughtful / original is the paper?
7. How well organized is the paper? Does it have a conclusion?
8. Is the style efficient, not wordy or unclear?
9. Does the writing betray any special elegance?
10. Does the paper go 'beyond' the course material to explore other possibilities?

Depending on the answers to these questions, the paper will receive some form of A or B grade.

When it comes down to it, there is absolutely no reason for anybody to get a grade lower than B- in this class. The only way you can get a C, D or F is if you fail to attend and/or do not do the work.

GRADING RUBRIC:	93-100%	=	A	4.00	Near Perfect!
	88-92%	=	A-	3.67	Excellent
	83-87%	=	B+	3.33	Very Good
	78-82%	=	B	3.00	Good
	73-77%	=	B-	2.67	Average
	68-72%	=	C+	2.33	Below Average
	63-67%	=	C	2.00	Acceptable, but...
	58-62%	=	C-	1.50	Not so Good
	50-57%	=	D	1.00	Poor
	0-49%	=	F	0.00	Not Acceptable

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Schedule of Topics and Readings

I. Introduction to Japanese Religions

Weeks 1 & 2 • 01/15 – 01/22 • 3 sessions

Week 1: *Basic introduction to the course, with discussion of your prior knowledge, ideas and images of 'religion' and 'Japan'; syllabus, requirements, grading policies, schedule, glossary of terms, tips for success*

Week 2: *Discussion of Japanese religions, based on EBK (ch. 1) reading; what are the Japanese religions? what are unique features of such, compared with Western religions? general features of Japanese religions: animism, purity, syncretism, 'worldly benefits', community, introduction to earliest Japanese religious practices: Jomon to Kofun periods; Ainu religion*

READINGS: EBK 1–63; 112–116; BB1 Wada

II. Shinto: The Way of *Kami*

Weeks 3 – 6 • 01/27 – 02/17 • 7 sessions

Week 3: *Introduction to Shinto: earliest origins, problems of the term 'Shinto', basis in simple animism and community festivals; basic meaning of 'kami'; in-depth discussion of the 'philosophy' of basic Shinto (Kasulis); distinction between 'existential' & 'essential' forms*

READINGS: EBK 80–93; KAS 1–58

DVD: *Princess Mononoke* (excerpts)

Week 4: *Shinto myths and cosmology, discussion of stories from Kojiki & Nihon shoki: Izanami & Inzanagi, Amaterasu & Susano-o, Jimmu & the origins of the Yamato Imperial line; Chinese influence on Japanese foundation myths, transformation of concept of 'kami'; importance of mirrors, sacred regalia; fusion with Buddhism; Shinto history 710–1945; emergence of "National Learning" school under Motoori Norinaga; modern Shinto nationalism after Atsutane; WWII and aftermath*

READINGS: KAS 71–147; EBK 269–281; 288–299

Weeks 5/6: *Shinto in contemporary Japanese society; most 'popular' kami: Inari, Tenjin, Hachiman; folk tales & legends; demons & ghosts; forms of Shinto practice; prayer (norito), shrine visits, kamidana, omamori amulets, matsuri; discussion of major Shinto shrines: Ise, Inari, Meiji, Yasukuni; the Yasukuni problem; layout of basic shrine*

READINGS: EBK 64–80; KAS 59–70; 148–170

BB2 Matsumoto

DVD: *Spirited Away* (excerpts)

III. Impact of Chinese Religions: Confucianism & Daoism

Weeks 6 – 7 • 02/19 – 02/26 • 3 sessions

Week 6/7: *Introduction to Confucianism; basic principles; arrival in Japan as part of Chinese OS; adoption by Shotoku Taishi & in "17-article Constitution"; impact of Confucianism in Japanese culture; Yushima Seido shrine; introduction to Daoism, as "philosophy" (Daodejing), cosmology (yin/yang) and "magical" practice; emergence of onmyodo (yin/yang magic) as part of Heian elite culture & state apparatus; Shugendo mountain asceticism: as shamanist, Shinto, Daoist, Buddhist syncretism*

READINGS: **WEB1** <http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/japanese-confucianism.html>

EBK 153–158; 300–305; **BB3** Earhart

DVD: *Onmyodo* (excerpts)

TUES, MARCH 3: MID-TERM QUIZ

THURS, MARCH 5: BONUS FILM

TUES, MARCH 10 – THURS, MARCH 12

SPRING BREAK • 2 sessions

IV. Japanese Buddhism: Variations on a Theme

Weeks 10 – 14 • 03/17 – 04/09 • 8 sessions

Week 10: *Introduction to Buddhism: beginnings in India: life of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha; key Buddhist teachings; origins of Mahayana; growth of Buddhist devotion to “celestial” buddhas and bodhisattvas—Amida, Yakushi, Dainichi, Kannon, Jizo, Miroku; Buddhism passes to China; Sinification of Buddhism in philosophy & practice; emergence of new Chinese schools; Buddhism enters Japan; features of Japanese Buddhism; Empress Suiko & Prince Shotoku; imperial patronage: Horyuji temple; 6 Schools of Nara Buddhism; elite vs. popular Buddhism; Gyogi & Buddhist social reform; Daibutsu (Great Buddha) of Todaiji*

READINGS: EBK 94–134

VIDEO/DVD: Life of Buddha

Week 11: *Heian Buddhism; Saicho & Tendai; Tendai beliefs & practice; Hiei-zan complex; kaihogyo (mountain marathon); Kukai & Shingon; life of Kukai; basic teachings of Shingon esoteric Buddhism; cult of Kobo Daishi; Koya-san temple complex; reflection on Shikoku 88-temple pilgrimage*

READINGS: EBK 145–150; BB4 Anesaki; EBK 135–145; BB5 Reader

VIDEO/DVD: On Buddhist Pilgrimage in Japan

Week 12: *Kamakura Period: turmoil & crisis; emergence of Kamakura Buddhism; simplification of practice; branches form out of Tendai synthesis; Pure Land (Jodo) Buddhism: introduction to PLB as a religious system based on cult of Amida (savior Buddha) & priority of “faith” & prayer; Amidist cults in Japan, spread by hijiri (Kuya); Honen and development of Japanese PLB; reaction to Honen; Shinran’s development of “True” (Shin) sect; Ippen and the Ji sect; PLB & material culture: Taima Mandala; raigo paintings; PLB architecture (Byodoin Phoenix Hall); Nichiren Buddhism: Nichiren’s life and teachings; trouble & exile; Nichiren-shu social engagement / nationalism; seeds of SGI*

READINGS: EBK 159–192; BB6 Machida

Week 13: *Introduction to Zen Buddhism; origins (legendary & historical); meditation; Zen & Daoism; Zen teachings; Heart Sutra; discussion of “emptiness”; emergence of Zen in Japan: Dogen & Soto sect; “mountains are mountains”; Eisai & Rinzai sect; koan practice: what are koans? Zen & the martial arts; Zen and the samurai; Zen & Japanese culture: architecture (Ginkakuji); sansui gardens (Ryoanji); tea ceremony; Noh drama; the risqué Zen poems of Master Ikkyu*

READINGS: EBK 193–234; BB7 Shibayama

DVD: Last Samurai (excerpts)

V. Christianity & the New Religions

Weeks 14 – 16 • 04/14 – 04/28 • 5 sessions

Week 14: *Early Christian missionaries on Silk Road; Nestorians? Franciscans & Jesuits bring cross to Japan in Sengoku (warring states) period; initial successes; Oda, Hideyoshi, Tokugawa warlords react to Christian presence; growing persecution; Christian martyrs; discussion of Endo’s novel, Silence*

READINGS: EBK 235–247; ENDO 1–201

Week 15/16: *Introduction to 19th & 20th-century New Religious Movements (NRMs): Tenrikyo, PL Kyodan, Soka Gakkai; persecution; postwar situation; “New New” Religious Movements; Aum Shinrikyo terrorist attack; discussion of Japanese religions today: problems & challenges*

READINGS: EBK 305–376

Student Name: _____

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MID-TERM QUIZ

Bucknell University

RELI 246 / EAST 253

Examiner: Prof. James Mark Shields

Tuesday, March 3, 2009
9:30 – 10:52 a.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 14 (fourteen) pages, including this cover page.

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Section #1: FILL IN THE BLANK

10 x 2 = 20 %

1. The earliest Japanese era-name, _____, (J) refers to the style of 'cord-pattern' pottery found at these sites; the succeeding _____ (J) Period was one of massive immigration from the Asian continent.
2. The KOFUN period is characterized by the expansion of the power of the _____ (J) clan, and the construction of massive _____ (J) for the elite.
3. The Shinto term used to describe the expression of KAMI in language or poetry is _____ (J). Shinto prayers, or NORITO, are the best example of this.
4. The *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki* tell the stories of the KAMI as gods, including the 'creation story' of the brother-sister Izanagi and _____ (J), as well as the myths surrounding the great goddess _____ (J) and the legendary first emperor, Jimmu Tenno.
5. The Three Imperial Regalia are the _____ (E) (valor), _____ (E) (wisdom), and _____ (E) (goodness).
6. The 4th century Emperor Ojin was deified as Hachiman, the God of _____ (E), whereas Sugawara no Michizane was posthumously granted the title of Tenjin-sama God of _____ (E).
7. In modern times, due in part to the work of Motoori Norinaga's _____ (E) School, we see the emergence of Shinto nationalism. Today this issue centers on the Japanese Prime Minister's visits to _____ (J) Shrine in Tokyo.
8. The single most important principle of Confucianism as it developed in China was _____ (E), which, combined with the so-called _____ (E) of Heaven, allowed for what may be called Confucianism's "radical possibility" (this was rejected by the Japanese elite upon their adoption of Confucian teachings).
9. ONMYO is the Japanese term for _____ (C/E) cosmology; in medieval times Daoist 'magicians' or ONMYOJI were employed by the Imperial Court to help bring _____ (E) to the realm.
10. During the SETSUBUN festival of early February, a typical Japanese 'national' MATSURI, people chant the words _____ (E) out! _____ (E) in!

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Section #2: MULTIPLE CHOICE

20 x 1 = 20 %

Please circle the letter corresponding to the response which best answers the question. Note: There is only ONE correct response to each question.

11. According to William James's definition, religion is:

- a. a way for people to deal with tragedy in their lives
- b. a fantasy based on worship of God as an ideal father figure
- c. belief in god or nature spirits
- d. belief in an unseen order, and the attempt to connect with such

12. Which of the following is the correct chronological order?

- a. Jomon, Yayoi, Kofun, Nara, Asuka, Heian
- b. Yayoi, Jomon, Kofun, Asuka, Nara, Heian
- c. Jomon, Yayoi, Kofun, Asuka, Nara, Heian
- d. Jomon, Yayoi, Asuka, Nara, Kofun, Heian

13. Compared to Jomon religion, Yayoi religion seems to have been more:

- a. individualistic
- b. focused on *kami*
- c. obsessed with death
- d. communal

14. Typically, an Ainu shaman would have been _____ as a youth:

- a. intelligent
- b. powerful
- c. physically strong
- d. diseased

15. The NIPOPO—wooden babies—of the Ainu are used primarily as:

- a. symbolic scapegoats
- b. amulets for warding off disease
- c. amulets for bringing good fortune
- d. totem poles

16. Roughly what percentage of Japanese consider themselves "religious"?

- a. 90%
- b. 50%
- c. 12%
- d. 2%

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17. The 'original' sense of *kami* might be expressed as "that which makes you _____."
- a. go crazy
 - b. go 'wow'
 - c. worship the gods
 - d. follow the Tenno
18. Which of the following qualities is NOT one of the 6 main 'values' of Shinto:
- a. devotion
 - b. simplicity
 - c. purity
 - d. intoxication
19. Which of the following does NOT mark off a sacred space:
- a. *shimenawa*
 - b. *jinja*
 - c. *kokoro*
 - d. *torii*
20. According to the *Kojiki*, Izanagi's beloved wife died because:
- a. she was human
 - b. she gave birth to the god of fire
 - c. she angered her husband
 - d. she was angry at her brother
21. Why does the Sun Goddess eventually emerge from her cave?
- a. she is curious
 - b. she is lonely
 - c. she feels guilty for what she did to her brother
 - d. Susano forces her to come out
22. Inari, the god of agriculture, is associated with which animal?
- a. dog
 - b. cow
 - c. bird
 - d. fox
23. The main structures of the Grand Shrine at Ise are rebuilt every ____ years:
- a. 5
 - b. 20
 - c. 100
 - d. 500

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24. Which of the following is NOT a common type of MATSURI:
- a. seasonal festival
 - b. coming of age festival
 - c. fertility festival
 - d. naked festival
25. Which of the following is NOT one of the main functions of Confucianism in Japan?
- a. support state
 - b. promote domestic harmony
 - c. promote humaneness
 - d. promote education
26. The foundational text of 'Philosophical Daoism' is:
- a. *Kojiki*
 - b. *Daodejing*
 - c. *Lotus Sutra*
 - d. no founding text
27. Philosophical Daoism made its strongest mark in Japan within:
- a. Zen Buddhism
 - b. Shingon Buddhism
 - c. Tendai Buddhism
 - d. Shinto
28. Which of the following is NOT an example of Religious Daoist influence on Japanese culture:
- a. *yamabushi*
 - b. *feng shui*
 - c. *onmyodo*
 - d. *shimenawa*
29. Daoist belief in "immortality" gave rise to a new set of Japanese deities, called:
- a. The Eight Heavenly Kami
 - b. The Four Great Buddhas
 - c. The Seven Lucky Gods
 - d. The Eight Drunken Immortals
30. Which of the following terms best describes the SHUGENDO tradition in Japan:
- a. Daoist
 - b. Shinto
 - c. Buddhist
 - d. syncretistic

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Section #3: IDENTIFICATION / SHORT ANSWER

$$3 \times 10 = 30 \%$$

Answer THREE (3) of the following FIVE (5) questions. Mark a large X through the box of the questions you choose not to answer.

QUESTION #31

Identify and explain BOTH (A) and (B) in relation to early Japanese religion/culture.

A



B

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QUESTION #32

Identify and explain BOTH (A) and (B) in relation to early Japanese religion/culture.



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QUESTION #33

Identify and explain the following image in relation to Shinto development/belief.



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QUESTION #34

Identify and explain the following passage in relation to Japanese religion/culture (the image shows the supposed author of the passage).



1. Harmony is to be valued, and contentiousness avoided. All men are inclined to partisanship and few are truly discerning. Hence there are some who disobey their lords and fathers or who maintain feuds with the neighboring villages. But when those above are harmonious and those below are conciliatory and there is concord in the discussion of all matters, the disposition of affairs comes about naturally. Then what is there that cannot be accomplished?

2. Sincerely reverence the Three Treasures. The Buddha, the Law (Dharma), and the monastic orders (Sangha) are the final refuge of all beings and the supreme objects of reverence in all countries. It is a law honored by all, no matter what the age or who the person. Few men are utterly bad; with instruction they can follow it. But if they do not betake themselves to the Three Treasures, how can their crookedness be made straight?

10. Let us cease from wrath, and refrain from angry looks. Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simple ordinary men. How can any one lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong?

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QUESTION #35

Identify and explain the following image in relation to Shinto practice.

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Section #4: ESSAY QUESTION

$$1 \times 30 = 30 \%$$

Answer ONE (1) of the following TWO questions. Mark an X through the box of the question you choose not to answer.

QUESTION #36

In *Shinto: The Way Home*, Thomas Kasulis analyzes Shinto tradition in terms of a distinction between what he calls “existential” and “essential” Shinto. Explain what Kasulis means by these terms, and how they can be used to categorize the various streams and developments of Shinto discussed in the course (e.g., “basic” Shinto, *kami*, Ryobu Shinto, Motoori Norinaga, State Shinto, and contemporary “neo-essentialist” Shinto). How does all this relate to the contemporary “problem” of Yasukuni Shrine?

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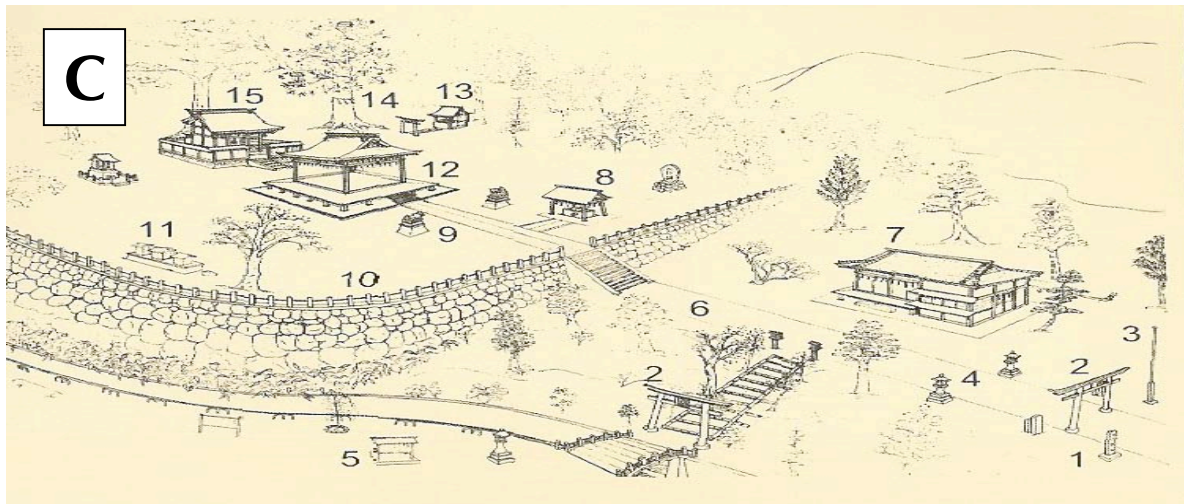
QUESTION #36 (continued)

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QUESTION #37

Use the following images to identify and explain the most significant forms of Shinto practice.



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QUESTION #37 (continued)

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RELI 246 / EAST 253
Spring 2009 • Professor J. M. Shields

ART REPORT

Assigned: *Thursday, February 12*
Due Date: *Thursday, March 26*
Length: *5 pages, typed, double-spaced, reasonable font-size (11-12)*
MUST be submitted as a Word doc, via e-mail (no hard copies)
Worth: *10% of Final Grade*

Each student is required to write a short paper on a work of art, artist, school or aesthetic theme related to the broad field of Japanese religions. You have exactly 6 weeks to complete this assignment. Be forewarned: I will not accept a late assignment for any reason.

Any genre of art is acceptable, so long as it is "visual" or "material"—i.e., excluding poetry, literature, dance, theatre (these can be topics for the Research Paper). Painting, sculpture and architecture are the most obvious choices, though you may think of others. If you are unsure, come to speak with me.

There is no restriction as to time period: anything from the Jomon *dogu* to contemporary *manga* is acceptable, so long as it reflects or connects in some way to one or more of the religious traditions covered in the course: folk religion, Shinto in its various forms, Confucianism, Daoism (philosophical or religious), Buddhism in its various forms, Christianity, or a mixture of any of these.

Your 5-page report should include, but is not limited to, the following (in any order):

1. **CONTEXT:** a short discussion of the context of the work or works (what type of art is it? when was it made? who made it? and so on.)
2. **DESCRIPTION:** describe as carefully as possible the medium, technique, subject, and/or treatment of the subject.
3. **EXPLANATION:** explain the specific connection to one or more of the Japanese religions.
4. **IMPRESSIONS:** describe your impressions, feelings, thoughts about the work or works you are analyzing. You may also choose to compare or contrast to other works of art (Japanese or otherwise) you have seen in class or elsewhere.
5. **VISUALS:** If at all possible, try to include pictures of the works you are discussing.

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RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT

<i>Assigned:</i>	<i>Thursday, February 12</i>
<i>Proposal Due:</i>	<i>Thursday, April 2</i>
<i>Due Date:</i>	<i>Thursday, April 30</i>
<i>Length:</i>	<i>10-12 pages, typed, double-spaced, reasonable font-size (11-12)</i> <i>MUST be submitted as a Word doc, via e-mail (no hard copies)</i>
<i>Worth:</i>	<i>30% of Final Grade</i>

Each student will be required to write a 10-12 page research paper on a topic of their own choosing related to a specific topic within the broad field of Japanese religions. You have exactly 11 weeks to complete this assignment. A one-page typed proposal will be due in 8 weeks. Please be forewarned: I will not accept a late assignment for any reason.

I am giving you a lot of freedom in this research report, though I am also providing a list of 25 fairly specific topics on Japanese religions. You should first decide which general area interests you the most: religious history, philosophy of religion, psychology of religion, ethics, religious doctrines, rituals, or religion and culture (including both 'high' and 'popular' culture). Please avoid topics in visual art or architecture, however, since this area will be covered in your 'Art Report' assignment. You may focus on any one of the two main 'streams' of Japanese religion: Shinto or Buddhism; or you may choose to look more closely at the influence of Chinese religions like Daoism or Confucianism or the case of the incursion of more recent 'foreign' religions such as Christianity. You may also decide to focus on a specific individual from Japanese religious history, though it's best to avoid the 'big names' that we will discuss in class.

Since the paper is not very long, keep the details to a minimum, and try to develop an interesting 'argument' on the topic (though it need not be a completely novel one—this is not a Ph.D. thesis). You may of course choose a topic discussed in lectures or texts for the course, though you need to explore a dimension other than what you hear in lectures or read in the course material. In other words, you need to do some of your own research. Finally, I would like you to approach your topic 'critically' (i.e., add your own reflections and arguments, rather than just repeating what others write or suggest). At the same time, do not just tell me what you feel without providing any support. If you have any further questions, or are having problems finding a topic, come to see me.

Religions of Japan



RELI 246 / EAST 253
Spring 2009 • Professor J. M. Shields

RESEARCH PAPER ASSIGNMENT: POSSIBLE TOPICS

AREA 1: Philosophy and Ethics

- the Nara Schools of Buddhism (Kegon)
- the doctrine of 'Buddha-nature' in medieval Japan
- Dôgen as *the* 'Japanese philosopher'
- Neo-confucianism in the Tokugawa Era
- the Kyoto School and modern Japanese philosophy

AREA 2: Mysticism, Cosmology and Psychology

- Zen meditation as psychology
- Divination/shamanism in Japanese religion
- Esoteric/Tantric Buddhism in Japan (Kûkai, Shingon)
- Daoism (Yin/Yang; *feng shui*) in modern Japan
- Chinese medicine/alchemy (*kanpo*) in Japan

AREA 3: Religious Doctrine and Devotion

- devotional aspects of Shinto practice
- impact of 'Religious Taoism' on Japanese popular religion/Shinto
- Japan's New Religions (e.g. SGI)
- transformation of Christian doctrine in Japan
- popular Buddhist devotion in Kamakura Japan (Pure Land Buddhism)

AREA 4: Religion and Culture

- impact of Confucianism/Daoism/Buddhism on Japanese martial arts
- religion in Japanese drama: Kabuki & Noh
- religion in Japanese 'popular' culture: *manga*, *anime*, video games
- religion as a basis of Japanese horror films: e.g., *Ringu*, *Juon*
- Japanese religion in modern Hollywood films: e.g., *Last Samurai*, *Star Wars*

AREA 5: Myths and Legends

- ancient Japanese myth as reflection of political ideologies
- women in Japanese myth: Amaterasu/Tokoyo
- transformation of Indian/Buddhist myths in Japan
- Kannon: sex-change of an Indian bodhisattva
- animals in Japanese myth & legend