



CIEE Kyoto, Japan

Course name:	Religion and Society
Course number:	RELI 3001 KYJA
Programs offering course:	Ancient and Modern Japan
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2020

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 be able to:

- 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

Completion of an introductory level course on religious studies or related topic is recommended.

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

Class Participation	20%
Online Journal	20%
Observation Report	10%
Research Paper 1	15%
Research Paper 2	15%
Group Presentation	20%



Course Requirements

Class Participation

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

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.

Weekly Schedule

Note: The following schedule and assignments are subject to change.

Week 1

1.1 Introduction to the Course

Overview of the Syllabus and Course Requirements

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

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

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

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

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

3.1 Field Excursion to a Shinto Shrine

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)

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

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

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

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

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

5.2 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

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

6.1 Fieldtrip to a Buddhist Temple

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

10.2 Religion in the Post-War Period

Topic: Allied Occupation and Religious Freedom

Content: Disestablishment of State Shinto & The Post-War Constitution

Readings: *Religion in Japan* (Chapter 19, pp. 261-266)

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

10.3 New Religions

Topic: Theoretical Approaches to the Study of New Religions

Content: The Formation and Success of New Religions

Readings: "Why religious movements succeed or fail: A revised general model"

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

Homework: Research Paper 2 due day 11.1

Week 11



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

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

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

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

12.2 Religion and Violence

Topic: Responses to the Aum Affair

Content: Media Portrayals of Aum Shinrikyo

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

12.3 Religion in the Post Aum Era

Topic: Depictions of Religion in Popular Culture

Content: Detecting Changing Perceptions of Religion in Manga

Readings: "Horrible '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

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



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

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

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

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

14.3 Religion in a Global City

Topic: Multiculturalism in Catholic Churches

Content: Diversity in Tokyo's Catholic Churches

Check in: Group Presentations

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

Week 15

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

15.2 Group Presentations

15.3 Group Presentations

Course Materials

Readings



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

Books

Daniel L. Pals, *Eight Theories of Religion*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2004.

H. Byron Earhart, *Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity*. 5th ed. Boston: Wadsworth, 2014.

Paul Williams, Anthony Tribe and Alexander Wynne, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2012.

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

Ian Reader, "Letters to the Gods: The Form and Meaning of *Ema* in Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 18.1, (1991) pp, 23-50.

John Breen (ed), *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

Jolyon Thomas, "Horrific 'Cults' and Comic Religion: Manga after Aum" in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 39.1 (2012) pp, 127-151

Rodney Stark, "Why religious movements succeed or fail: A revised general model" in *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11.2 (1996) pp, 133-146

Yumi Wijers-Hasegawa, "UNESCO heritage bid challenged over gender bias" in *The Japan Times* (2004)

Group Presentation Readings

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

Aum Affair

Robert J. Kisala and Mark R. Mullins (eds), *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society Through the Aum Affair*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2001.

Zen, Nationalism and Militarism

Oleg Benesch, "Reconsidering Zen, Samurai, and the Martial Arts" in *Asia Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*. 14, 17 (No. 7) (2016)

Robert H. Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism" in *History of Religions* 33.1(1993), pp.1-43.

Yasukuni Shrine

John Breen (ed), *Yasukuni, the War Dead and the Struggle for Japan's Past*. New York: Columbia



University Press, 2008.

Shinto and Environmentalism

Aike P. Rots, "Sacred Forests, Sacred Nation: The Shinto Environmentalist Paradigm and the Rediscovery of *Chinju no Mori*" in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 42.5 (2015), pp. 205-233

Buddhism and Abortion

Richard W. Anderson and Elaine Martin, "Rethinking the practice of mizuko kuyo in contemporary Japan: Interviews with practitioners at a Buddhist temple in Tokyo" in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 24.1-2 (1997), pp. 121-143.

Transmission of Zen to the West

Robert H. Sharf, "Sanbokyodan: Zen and the Way of the New Religions" in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 22/3-4 (1995), 417-458.

Religion and Social Discrimination

William Bodiford, "Zen and the Art of Religious Prejudice: Efforts to Reform a Tradition of Social Discrimination" in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23/1-2 (1996), 1-27.