



CIEE Tokyo, Japan

Course name:	Religion in Japan
Course number:	RELI 2003 TOJA
Programs offering course:	Tokyo Japanese Studies
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Summer 2019

Course Description

This course will provide students with a fundamental understanding of the most prominent religions in Japanese culture and society: Shinto and Buddhism. In addition, students will also learn about the so-called “New Religions,” Christianity as well as other world religions found in the global city of Tokyo.

Learning Objectives

In this course, students will develop a more in depth understanding of the prominent religions being practiced today. By the end of this course students will:

- Be familiar with different religions in Japan.
- Understand Japanese religious traditions and customs.
- Understand Japanese religious behaviors.

Course Prerequisites

None

Methods of Instruction

This course will incorporate in-class lectures, discussion, readings, video and fieldtrips.

Assessment and Final Grade

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| • Class Participation | 20% |
| • Response Paper (2x) | 20% |
| • Final Paper | 20% |
| • Group Presentation | 20% |
| • Final Exam | 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.

Final Paper

Students must write a Final Paper on a topic of their choice, subject to instructor approval. The paper must be at least 2,000 words and use both in-class and out-of-class scholarly materials.

Presentation

Students will present on a topic of their choice, subject to instructor approval.

Final Exam

Closed books exam covering topics covered throughout the class.

Weekly Schedule

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

Week 1

Session 1.1 Introduction to the Class

Week 2

Session 2.1 Academic Study of Religion
Topic: Theoretical Approaches to Studying Religion
Content: Overview of Durkheim, Marx, Eliade and Geertz

Session 2.2 Introduction to Japanese Religiosities
Topic: Common Themes Found in Japanese Religions
Content: Importance Placed on Family, Rituals, and Festivals
Readings: *Religion in Japan* (pp. 1-17)

Session 2.3 Fieldtrip: Temple or Shrine

Session 2.4 Shintō
Topic: Mythology and Deities
Content: Meaning of *Kami* and Foundational Myths
Readings: Reader, Ian (pp. 16-63)
Assignment: Response Paper 1

Week 3

Session 3.1 Shintō
Topic: Festivals, Rituals and Customs
Content: Ritual Calendar/ Life-Cycle Rituals



Readings: Reader, Ian (pp. 64-121)

Session 3.2

Shintō

Topic: Shintō and Popular Culture: Exploring the Cinema of Hayao Miyazaki

Content: Religious Themes in *Spirited Away*

Readings: “Shinto Perspectives in Miyazake’s Anime Film ‘Spirited Away’”

Session 3.3

Buddhism

Topic: Basic Tenets

Content: Life of the Historical Buddha; Four Noble Truths

Readings: *An Introduction to Buddhism* (pp. 8-31)

Week 4

Session 4.1

Buddhism

Topic: Early History of Buddhism in Japan

Content: Nara Schools

Readings: *Religion in Japan* (pp. 46-68)

Session 4.2

Buddhism

Topic: Heian Buddhism (Mahayana and Vajrayana Traditions)

Content: Tendai and Shingon

Readings: *Religion in Japan* (pp. 97-110)

Session 4.3

Buddhism

Topic: Kamakura Buddhism

Content: Nichiren, Pure Land, and Zen

Readings: *Religion in Japan* (pp. 128-144)

Assignment: Response Paper 2

Week 5

Session 5.1

Christianity

Topic: The “Christian Century”

Content: Francis Xavier; *Danka System*; *Kakure Kirishitan*

Readings: “The Kakure Kirishitan and Their Place in Japan’s Religious Tradition”

Session 5.2

Group Presentations

Session 5.3

Religion and Nationalism

Topic: Meiji Period Religion

Content: State Shinto and “Imperial Way” Buddhism

Readings: Reader, Ian (pp. 122-129)

“Reconsidering Zen, Samurai, and the Martial Arts”

Week 6



- Session 6.1 Japanese New Religions
Topic: Introduction to the “New” Religions
Content: Aum Shinrikyo and Soka Gakkai
Readings: “The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyo as a Religious Movement
- Session 6.2 Religion in a Global City
Topic: Migration and Multiculturalism Religious Communities
Content: Islam and Christianity in Tokyo
Readings: TBA
- Session 6.3 Final Exam

Course Materials

Readings

Benesch Oleg. 2016. “Reconsidering Zen, Samurai, and the Martial Arts” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus* 14.7 (7)

Boyd, James W. and Tetsuya Nishimura. 2004. “Shinto Perspectives in Hayao Miyazake’s Anime Film ‘Spirited Away’” *Journal of Religion and Film*.

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

Harrington, Ann M. “The Kakure Kirishitan and Their Place in Japan’s Religious Tradition” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 7.4: 318-336.

Harvey, Peter. 2013. *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reader, Ian. 1998. *Simple Guides: Shinto*. London Global Books.

Susumu, Shimazono. 2001. “The Evolution of Aum Shinrikyo as a Religious Movement” In *Religion and Social Crisis in Japan: Understanding Japanese Society through the Aum Affair* pp. 19-52 Edited by Robert J. Kisala and Mark R. Mullins. New York: Palgrave.