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 2020

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


