

Religious Studies 275
RELIGION IN JAPANESE CULTURE

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Spring 2013
MWF 2:10-3:00 (Per. 7)
Ascension 226
Office hours: MWF 3:10-4, Th 2-4
and by appointment

- [Links](#)
- [Selected handouts, etc.](#)
- [Paper format guide](#)
- [Paper criteria](#)

This course is a historical and contemporary survey of religious life in Japan, focusing on the Shinto and Buddhist traditions. We will pay special attention to the ways in which religious ideas, values, and practices are integrated into the common forms of Japanese culture today. Classes will be a mixture of lecture and discussion, supplemented by films.



Mt. Fuji and the *Shinkansen* (bullet train)



The Great Buddha (*Daibutsu*) at Kamakura (Amida Buddha).

READINGS

- Robert Ellwood, *Introducing Japanese Religion*
- Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan*
- Alfred Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace*
- William R. LaFleur, *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan*
- Readings on **Moodle**: You must print these out and bring them to class when they are being discussed.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

1. Participation (15% of course grade): Regular attendance, timely completion of reading assignments, *active participation in class discussions*, and one short conference with me in my office no later than **Friday, Feb. 1**. Grading criteria are as follows:

- A: Regular attendance (no more than 3 unexcused absences), regular contribution to discussion (at least once a week)
- B: Regular attendance, occasional contribution
- C: Too many absences OR too little contribution
- D: Too many absences AND too little contribution
- F: Other serious problems

Option: To supplement the *class discussion* portion of your participation grade for any week, you may turn in a written "reaction paper" (1-2 pages, typed, maximum one per week) containing your reactions to, reflections on, and/or questions about course readings, films, and lectures. These will be graded 1 (credit), 2 (good), or 3 (excellent) and will be returned within a week with comments. The best times to turn these in would be on Mondays, after we have completed a section.

2. Two short quizzes (12.5% each), consisting of fill-in-the-blank questions.

3. Two research papers (20% each): 6-10 pages double-spaced, plus bibliography (following the [Paper Format Guide](#); see also the [Paper criteria](#)). The first is due anytime before spring vacation and the second is due by the last day of class. You must send me, by e-mail, a proposed *topic* and *preliminary bibliography* at least *two weeks* prior to turning in the paper. This is to give you time to get sources that might not be available in our library. Each paper must make use of at least *two* books or articles outside of assigned class readings.

4. Final exam (20%), similar to the quizzes but with a few short essay questions.

5. Notes:

- *Laptops* are not allowed in class.
- *Cellphones* must be turned completely off.
- *Online readings* must be printed out and brought to class. This is because I want you to engage with the readings by marking them up with notes.
- No written assignments except the paper topics and bibliographies will be accepted electronically.
- If you have a disability that will affect your work or participation in this class, please contact Erin Salva, Coordinator of Disability Services, at 427-5453 or salvae@kenyon.edu, and speak to me individually, early in the semester, about any arrangements you will need.



New Year's display of sake at a Shinto shrine.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1 Jan 14-18 Introduction

- Read:**
- Ellwood, *Introducing Japanese Religion*, chs. 1-2
 - [Moodle:](#)
 - Daijosai articles

Film: "The Electronic Tribe"

2 Jan 21-25 Overview

- Read:**
- Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan*, chs. 1-2

3 Jan 28-Feb 1 Shinto

- Read:**
- Ellwood, ch. 3
 - Reader, ch. 3
 - [Moodle:](#)
 - Breen and Teeuwen, "An Alternative Approach to the History of Shinto"
 - Creation myths

Film: "New Year's Rituals at Tsubaki Grand Shrine"



Off-shore rock kami.

4-5 Feb 4-15

Monday: Quiz 1

Buddhism: Introduction; Nara and Heian periods

- Read:**
- Ellwood: Interlude, chs. 4-5
 - [Moodle:](#)
 - Adler, "Buddhism"
 - Williams, "Emptiness"



Great Buddha Hall (Daibutsuden) at Tōdaiji (Nara)

6 Feb 18-22

Buddhism: Pure Land and Nichiren

- Read:**
- Ellwood, ch. 6
 - Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace* (entire)

7 Feb 25-Mar 1 **Buddhism: Zen**

- Read:**
- Ellwood, ch. 7
 - Reader, ch. 4
 - **Moodle:**
 - Yampolsky, "The Development of Japanese Zen"
 - Foulk, "The Zen Institution in Modern Japan"

Film: "Land of the Disappearing Buddha"



<< Spring Break >>

8 Mar 18-22 **Tokugawa period: Confucianism, Christianity, and Bushidō**

Friday: Quiz 2

- Read:**
- Ellwood, ch. 8
 - **Moodle:**
 - Tucker, "Kaibara Ekken's Precepts on the Family"
 - LaFleur, "Japan" (on attitudes toward death)

9 Mar 25-29 **Meiji period: religion and the state**



Protesting against...

- Read:**
- Ellwood, ch. 9
 - **Moodle:**
 - Mullins/Shimazono/Swanson, "Religion and the State"
 - Gardner, "Nationalistic Shintō: A Child's guide to Yasukuni Shrine"

Film: "Spirits of the State"



..Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine.

10 Apr 1-5 **Asceticism and Pilgrimage**

- Read:**
- Reader, chs. 5-6
 - **Moodle:**
 - Reader, "Pilgrimage as Cult"
 - Grapard, "Flying Mountains and Walkers of Emptiness: Toward a Definition of Sacred Space in Japanese Religions"

Films: "Between Two Worlds: A Japanese Pilgrimage" (30 min)
 "Fuji: Sacred Mountain of Japan" (27 min)

11 Apr 8-12 **Ritual and ancestor worship**

- Read:**
- Reader, ch. 7
 - [Moodle:](#)
 - Hendry, "Ritual and the Life Cycle"
 - Roehmer, "Thinking of Ancestors (and Others) at Japanese Household Altars"
 - Rowe, *Bonds of the Dead*, "Introduction"

12 Apr 15-19 **New Religions**

- Read:**
- Ellwood, ch. 10
 - Reader, ch. 8
 - [Moodle:](#)
 - Earhart and Mita, "Makuya: Prayer, Receiving the Holy Spirit, and Bible Study"



Tenrikyō main temple (Tenri City)

Film: "The Yamaguchi Story"

13 Apr 22-26 **Buddhism and abortion in Japan**

- Read:**
- LaFleur, *Liquid Life*, chs. 1-4, 9-12
 - [Moodle:](#)
 - Danely, "Encounters with Jizo-san in an Aging Japan"

14 Apr 29-May 3 **Conclusions**

- Read:**
- Ellwood, ch. 11
 - Reader, Conclusion



Final exam: Thursday, May 9, 1:30-3:30 p.m.