Final Syllabus

Spirituality and Practices of Asian Religions

Course Description
This course is intended for students to be introduced to religious life and spirituality throughout Asia, with a focus on daily practices. One way to approach religion is through doctrinal, theological, or philosophical studies, but there should also be other paths toward understanding living religions through other ways of interpretation. For example, there are rituals, exercises, and asceticism, on the one hand, and symbolism, iconography and iconology, on the other, especially those experienced in people’s physical performances and practices. This course will emphasize in particular these latter approaches to understand the spirituality and practices of Asian religions. Each instructor is a specialist in one tradition of Indian, Chinese, Korean or Japanese religions, and will introduce the class to not only scholarly reading materials, but also to material objects, images, or videos. In some cases the instructor will lead students into an example of performance or practice to reach a deeper understanding. This course is sponsored by Shinnyo-en Foundation, a secular and philanthropic arm of the Shinnyo-en Buddhist Order and concludes with a field trip to the Shinnyo-en NY Temple in White Plains, NY.

Recommended book

Recommended articles and book chapters
Learning Goals of the Course

- To learn basic ideas and teachings, as well as spirituality and practices, in different Asian religious traditions
- To understand each tradition and its worldview through the believers/followers point of view
- To recognize the differences/similarities between Asian religious traditions and one’s own religious traditions
- To think about the possibilities of further mutual understanding, coexistence, and collaboration among believers/followers of various religious traditions

Class Schedule


Assessment Expectations

One 15 page research paper is required for the students who wish to take this course for credit. Students can choose one of the following two subjects for the research paper: a) a comparative study on aspects of two traditions from India, China, Korea, or Japan covered by the class instructors; b) a summary of observations and analyses based on the field trip to the Shinnyo-en NY Temple.
Due Date for the Assignment
The research paper must be submitted by e-mail by July 31, 2015 to Michiaki Okuyama.

Hartford Seminary Email Policy
The instructors will use the official Hartsem student email addresses for all communication. Please check your Hartsem email account regularly. Auditors who don't have a Hartsem email address must report their own email address on or before the first day of the course.

Attendance Policy
Attendance in class is required. If you know you will be unable to attend a class session please inform the professor in advance. Missing one session (one day) will result in an automatic lowering of your final grade by 10%. Missing two or more sessions (two days or more) will result in automatic failure of the course.