

RELI 103

**Paths to Enlightenment: Introducing
Asian Religions**



SCHOOL OF ART HISTORY, CLASSICS & RELIGIOUS STUDIES

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

Trimester 2, 2007

RELI 103

Paths to Enlightenment: Introducing Asian Religions

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Tutors: Jonette Crysell; calebh@paradise.net.nz
Caitlin Ramsey; Caitlin.ramsey@vuw.ac.nz
Where and when: Lectures: HU 323
Wednesday 11:00 – 12:50
Tutorials: Times and Seminar Room tba.

Religious Studies is at Hunter. The programme administrator, Aliko Kalliabetsos, is in HU 318 (ext 5299), aliko.kalliabetsos@vuw.ac.nz. **Notices regarding the course or any information on changes will be posted on the department notice board outside her office.**

Office Hours: The main office is open Monday - Friday, 9.30 – 12:00 noon and 2:30 - 4.30 pm. You can arrange to meet with Michael Radich by appointment.

Course outline

1 The course aims:

This course will focus on contemporary beliefs, practices and forms of religiosity in the cultural regions of South and East Asia. The course aims to introduce class participants to the practical dimensions of Asian religion.

The paper uses a mixture of lectures, small-group discussions, guest speakers and field trips to make connections between theory and lived religious experience.

2 The main objectives for this course are threefold:

- a. to impart knowledge of the contemporary forms of religious practice in South and East Asia;
- b. to teach the study of religion as a critical discipline; that is, to examine the political, economic, and social dimensions of religious activity;
- c. to help the students develop their research and writing skills, their ability to make and defend arguments, and their critical awareness.

3 Rationale for assessment: The assessment of this course relates directly to these objectives.

- **The weekly tutorial assignments** are to be short (one page maximum) written responses to each week's required readings and lectures. They ensure that students read and think about the required readings prior to tutorial discussion. They also provide continuous feedback to students on their level of understanding and their development of the analytical skills required in the essays.
- **The essays** allow students to apply their analytical skills to information retrieved through library research on a set topic. Essays demonstrate the students' level of proficiency in finding, understanding, and using sources. They develop the skills of critical reading, analysis and organizing material necessary for continued study. The process also gives them the opportunity to develop a more in-depth knowledge of an area covered in the lectures and weekly readings.
- **The test** allows students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the material presented in the course and allows students the opportunity to reflect on their learning process throughout the term.

Students who do not understand the grades they have been assigned or are concerned about their progress are encouraged to meet with their tutors for a discussion.

4 The lecture programme follows. Lectures may be varied from time to time. As much notice as possible will be given when changes occur and, if necessary a revised programme will be issued at lectures.

5 Tutorials are held weekly and deal with topics which complement the lecture programme. They provide an opportunity to discuss aspects of the course in a small group and develop the ability to contribute to discussions.

Rationale: why a weekly assignment? At every tutorial we require students to submit a written response to the readings of that week. These responses should not exceed one page in length and need only address the required readings. They will be marked according to the scheme below and returned to students the following week. These written responses are designed to accomplish the following three objectives, each of which is vital to successful completion of the course:

- They ensure students are keeping up with the required readings and enable tutors to monitor student progress on a regular basis.
- They provide students the opportunity to develop critical reading skills (i.e. a focus on the material most pertinent to the question).
- They develop students' analytical skills.

The mandatory requirements for this course are handing in 2 essays, 8 tutorial assignments, sitting the class test, and attendance at 80% of tutorials.

Assessment for Tutorial Assignments

Tutors will assign one of the following grades to the tutorial assignments:

- **2.5/10 unsatisfactory**
the student shows evidence of having read the set work, but shows little comprehension;
the question has not been answered.
- **5/10 satisfactory**
the set work has been read and the question addressed but comprehension is unclear.
- **7.5/10 good**
question is addressed, readings have been understood but writing and analysis require work.
- **10/10 excellent**
clear comprehension, pertinent examples, the question is answered.

The marks for each assignment will be added up and averaged to calculate the 10% of the overall grade delegated for tutorial assignments. Missing assignments will receive a 0/10. Late assignments will be accepted only with medical documentation.

- 6 The course is internally assessed** by means of two essays, 8 tutorial assignments and one class test as follows:
- **two essays**, each to be between **1,500 and 2,000 words**, and **each worth 30%** of the final grade.
essay 1 due Friday August 10 by 5 p.m.
essay 2 due Friday September 28 by 5 p.m.
 - **8 tutorial assignments**; short (one page) weekly written assignments to be submitted **at each tutorial**, collectively worth **10%** of the final grade.
 - **a class test in class time on Monday October 10** worth **30%** of the final grade.
- 7 Required text:** There is no set textbook. The *RELI 103 Course Reader* should be obtained from the Student Notes shop at a cost of approximately \$35.
- 8 Work-load (Recommendation of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences):** For 100-level 18 points one trimester courses, 12 hours per week are recommended. An average student should spend 9 hours per week for preparation, reading and writing in addition to attendance at lectures and tutorials.

[100 – level 1 trimester 18 points 12 hours]

- 9 Aegrotat regulations apply** to internally assessed courses. Students who are ill, or who have difficult personal circumstances may be having problems completing assessment. The aegrotat provisions apply to all courses and apply to assessment which falls within the last three weeks of teaching or the final examination period, including preparation time for final tests and examinations.

Aegrotat provisions are detailed in section 4.5 of the Assessment Statute (*2007 Calendar*, p. 96) and also on p. 23 of the *2006 Assessment Handbook*. Students can refer to the University's website for further information: <http://www.vuw.ac.nz/timetables/aegrotat.aspx>. Application forms and information pamphlets should be obtained from the Faculty Student and Academic Services Office (MY 411) or the Manager, Student & Academic Services (MY 410).

10 General University policies and statutes

Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar available in hard copy or under 'About Victoria' on the VUW home page at www.vuw.ac.nz.

11 Student and staff conduct

The Statute on Student Conduct together with the Policy on Staff Conduct ensure that members of the University community are able to work, learn, study and participate in the academic and social aspects of the University's life in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The Statute on Student Conduct contains information on what conduct is prohibited and what steps are to be taken if there is a complaint. For information about complaint procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct, contact the Facilitator and Disputes Advisor or refer to the statute on the VUW policy website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/studentconduct

The Policy on Staff Conduct can be found on the VUW website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/staffconduct

12 Academic grievances

If you have any academic problems with your course you should talk to the tutor or lecturer concerned; class representatives may be able to help you in this. If you are not satisfied with the result of that meeting, see the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean; VUWSA Education Coordinators are available to assist in this process. If, after trying the above channels, you are still unsatisfied, formal grievance procedures can be invoked. These are set out in the Academic Grievance Policy which is published on the VUW website at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/policy/academicgrievances

13 Students with Impairments (see Appendix 3 of the Assessment Handbook)

The University has a policy of reasonable accommodation of the needs of students with disabilities. The policy aims to give students with disabilities the same opportunity as other students to demonstrate their abilities. If you have a disability, impairment or chronic medical condition (temporary, permanent or recurring) that may impact on your ability to participate, learn and/or achieve in lectures and tutorials or in meeting the course requirements, please contact the course coordinator as early in the course as possible. Alternatively, you may wish to approach a Student Adviser from Disability Support Services (DSS) to discuss your individual needs and the available options and support on a confidential basis. DSS are located on Level 1, Robert Stout Building:

telephone: 463-6070

email: disability@vuw.ac.nz

The name of your School's Disability Liaison Person is in the relevant prospectus or can be obtained from the School Office or DSS.

14 Student Support

Staff at Victoria want students to have positive learning experiences at the University. Each faculty has a designated staff member who can either help you directly if your academic progress is causing you concern, or quickly put you in contact with someone who can. In the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences the support contacts are **Dr Allison Kirkman, Murphy Building, room 407** and **Dr Stuart Brock, Murphy Building, room 312**. Assistance for specific groups is also available from the Kaiwawao Māori, Manaaki Pihipihinga or Victoria International.

Manaaki Pihipihinga Programme

This programme offers:

- Academic mentoring for all Māori & Pacific students at all levels of undergraduate study for the faculties of Commerce & Administration and Humanities & Social Sciences. Contact Manaaki-Pihipihinga-Programme@vuw.ac.nz or phone 463 6015 to register for Humanities & Social Science mentoring and 463 8977 to register for mentoring for Commerce and Administration courses
- Postgraduate support network for the above faculties, which links students into all of the post grad activities and workshops on campus and networking opportunities
- Pacific Support Coordinator who can assist Pacific students with transitional issues, disseminate useful information and provide any assistance needed to help students achieve. Contact; Pacific-Support-Coord@vuw.ac.nz or phone 463 5842.

Manaaki Pihipihinga is located at: 14 Kelburn Parade, back court yard, Room 109 D (for Humanities mentoring & some first year Commerce mentoring) or Room 210 level 2 west wing railway station Pipitea (commerce mentoring space). Māori Studies mentoring is done at the marae.

Student Services

In addition, the Student Services Group (email: student-services@vuw.ac.nz) is available to provide a variety of support and services. Find out more at:

www.vuw.ac.nz/st_services/

VUWSA employs Education Coordinators who deal with academic problems and provide support, advice and advocacy services, as well as organising class representatives and faculty delegates. The Education Office (tel. 463-6983 or 463-6984, email at education@vuwsa.org.nz) is located on the ground floor, Student Union Building.

- 15 Taping of Lectures:** All students in the School of Art History, Classics and Religious Studies are welcome to use audio-tapes to record lectures. If you want to do this, please see your lecturer, tutor or the relevant programme administrator and complete a disclaimer form which advises of copy right and other relevant issues.
- 16 Class representatives:** Class representatives are elected in the first week or two of term. They are supported by the VUW Students' Association, and have a variety of roles, including assistance with grievances and student feedback to staff and VUWSA. Contact details for your class rep will be available from the Religious Studies Administrator.
- 17 Student Learning Support Services:** A range of workshops, drop-ins and other assistance is provided by SLSS, covering such things as study techniques, essay writing, exam preparation and note taking skills. They are on the ground floor of Old Kirk, near the Hunter Courtyard on Kelburn Parade, tel: 463 5999.
- 18 Supplementary Materials:** A website of materials related to RELI 103 is being maintained in Blackboard. You can find it by visiting <http://blackboard@vuw.ac.nz>. Your user name is the one issued to you by Student Computing Services. Your password is your Student ID Number. If in doubt, please contact the Student Computing Services Help Desk, 463-6666 (extension 6666 from VUW phones) or by email scs-help@vuw.ac.nz
- 19 Evaluation:** This course will be assessed by UTDC

Lecture Programme

The lectures constitute the core of the course. The readings supplement the lectures, but are not a substitute for them. As lecture material is crucial for both the class test and the essays, it is important that students attend all lectures.

11 July Introduction: The Invention of Asian Religions

Readings:

Req: J.Z. Smith, "Map is Not Territory"

18 July Hinduism: Karma, Rebirth, and Many Gods

Readings:

Req: Eck, "Seeing the Sacred"

Sup: Madan, "Living and Dying"

Sup: Vanamali, "Cosmic Play"

25 July Hindu Society

Readings:

Req: Fuller, "The Structure of Indian Society"

Req: Baker, "A Brahman Family in Tamil Nadu"

Req: *The Ordinances of Manu*

Sup: Adhopia, "Sacred Motifs, Symbols and Articles"

1 August Introduction to the Basics of Buddhism

Readings:

Req: Harvey, "The Buddha and His Indian Context"

Req: Kumaraswami, "Dhamma, The Doctrine and Discipline"

Sup: Ti Wari N. Kapil, "Suffering in Theravada Buddhism"

ESSAY WRITING: Significant class time this week will be devoted to discussion of how to enhance your essay-writing (and maximise your marks!).
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8 August Buddhism in Practice

Readings:

Req: Gombrich, "The Buddhist Tradition in Sri Lanka"

Sup: Robinson and Johnson, "Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia"

FRIDAY AUGUST 10 FIRST ESSAY DUE

15 August Visit to a Buddhist Temple

Readings: Tibetan Buddhism (I)

Req: Per Kvaerne, "Tibetan Religions. An Overview"

Req: Geoffrey Samuel, "The Ritual Cosmos and Its Inhabitants"

Mid-trimester break 20th August – 2nd September 2007

5 September Buddhism and Politics in Tibet

Readings: Tibetan Buddhism (II)

Req: Franz Michael, *Rule By Incarnation*

**12 September A Case Study in Contemporary Chinese Religion:
Falun Gong and the Communist State**

Readings

Req: Richard Madsen, "Understanding Falun Gong", *Current History*, September 2000, 243-247.

Req: Maria Hsia Chang, *Falun Gong: The End of Days* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), "Beliefs and Practices", 60-95.

Library Skills: Lecture this week will feature a guest appearance from James Duncan of the VUW library, who will introduce you to resources in the library and the skills you need to use to write good essays.

19 September Unity and Diversity in Traditional Chinese Religion

Readings:

Req: Jochim, "The Many Faces of Chinese Spirituality"

Req: Ebrey, ed., "Book of Rewards and Punishments"

Sup: L. Thompson, "The Family: Kindred and Ancestors"

Sup: David K. Jordan, ""The Religion of the Taiwanese"

**26 September A: Introduction: Shinto and Buddhism
B: Japanese Family I: Birth, Marriage and Family Ritual**

Readings:

Req: H Byron Earhart, "Persistent Themes in Japanese Religious History"

Req: Ian Reader, "'Born Shinto...': Community, Festivals, Production and Change"

Sup: S. Ono, "Worship and Festivals"

FRIDAY 28 SEPTEMBER SECOND ESSAY DUE

**3 October B: Japanese Family II: Death, Abortion and Buddhism
Conclusion**

Readings:

Req: Ian Reader, "Buddhism as a Religion of the Family"

Sup: Bardwell Smith, "Buddhism and Abortion in Contemporary Japan: Mizuko Kuyo and the Confrontation with Death"

10 October CLASS TEST IN REGULAR LECTURE ROOM AND TIME

Field Trip: We will visit the Bodhinyanarama Buddhist temple in Stokes Valley on **Wednesday 15 August 2007**, during class time. Buses will be arranged for the 40 minute trip to the temple. Further details will be provided in class.

Tutorial Programme

The required readings are essential background for the lectures and tutorials. Weekly readings should be completed **before each lecture**. The readings will be further discussed in the tutorials. The readings are all found in the *RELI 103 Course Reader*, which can be purchased at the Student Notes shop.

Remember that completion of **8 tutorial assignments** is a mandatory requirement for the course, and will account for **10%** of your final grade. These should be easy marks, and you should not throw them away. Every year we see students who end up with a borderline fail grade who would have passed if only they had completed the tutorial assignments. Each tutorial assignment is a short (one page) written piece, to be submitted **at each tutorial**. These assignments are not as formal as your major essays, but they should still be carefully composed pieces of writing; we are not just asking for notes jotted down as you read.

Tutorial assignments should basically be **answers to the questions listed below**. The suggestions following each question are intended only to help you think about the question; they are not mandatory parts of the question, and you can feel free to ignore those suggestions and develop the question in other directions if you see fit.

Week beginning

9 July **No tutorial this week**

16 July **"How do Hindus interact with their deities?"**

It may help you, in answering this question, to compare what the readings tell you about Hinduism with things you know about other religions. What seems to be common to Hinduism and one or more other religion(s)? What seems unique to Hinduism?

23 July **"Why are arranged marriages important for Hindus?"**

You might consider, in answering this question, how arranged marriage is part of larger social systems in Hindu society; what traditional beliefs support arranged marriage or require it; the understanding of the nature and purpose of marriage implied by arranged marriage; the understanding of the person and the forces that should shape their life; etc. It may also help you to compare, carefully and reasonably, to the understanding of marriage in one or more other cultures you know.

30 July **"What does Buddhism mean when it says that ordinary life is all suffering? What solution does it propose to this problem?"**

It will help you to answer this question well to pay close attention to the way the term "suffering" (*dukkha*) is used in the readings, and what it means.

- 6 August "In a Buddhist society, what is the relationship between monks and lay Buddhists?"**
It may help you arrive at interesting answers to this question to consider the relationship from both sides; and also to consider the way the readings suggest this relationship may differ in theory and in practice.
- 13 August "What differences do you notice between Tibetan Buddhism and the Buddhism we studied in Weeks 4 and 5?"**
It might be interesting to consider differences in the role of monks and their relations to laypeople; ways that the beliefs of Tibetan Buddhism, as described in the readings, might seem to contradict older Buddhist beliefs; or ways that the general religious environment of Tibet, as described by Kvaerne, might have led to changes in Buddhism when it enters the Tibetan context.

Mid-trimester break 20th August – 2nd September 2007

- 3 September "Is political Buddhism a corruption of the Buddha's teaching?"**
It might help in answering this question to think about whether the Buddha's teachings are different for monks and nuns or laypeople. Also, pay careful attention to what the readings say about the reasons and justifications Tibetan Buddhists themselves gave for political Buddhism. Can you think of analogies from elsewhere in the world that might help you understand what is going on?
- 10 September "Why has Falun gong (FLG) come into such direct conflict with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)?"**
Like any question about the reasons for historical or political events involving large organisations, this question has more than one answer: there is more than one reason for this conflict. You can think about whether FLG deliberately courted conflict, and if so, what reasons they might have had; reasons the CCP might have found FLG threatening; reasons FLG may have persisted in its course after CCP persecution began; analogies with other situations elsewhere in the world or in history; and so on.
- 17 September "Identify one theme in traditional Chinese religions that you consider to be unique" OR "Identify one theme in traditional Chinese religions that you think is paralleled in some other tradition."**
It will probably be most useful for you to take as your point of comparison some other tradition we have studied in this course, but you should feel free to consider other traditions you know about too. Please identify the theme (phenomenon, observance, belief etc.) that you are talking about as clearly as you can, and consider places where the analogy or distinction you are arguing for might break down.

24 September "What sort of religion is Shintō, in your opinion? Is it unique, or is it an example of an identifiable type of religion?"

This question obviously asks you to compare what you read about Shintō this week to what you have learnt about other religions in this course, or what you might otherwise know about other religions.

1 October "Is *mizuko kuyō* in your opinion blatant exploitation of women's insecurities for monetary gain, a profound use of religious meaning to attain healing in the face of natural human grief, or a special outgrowth of unique Japanese religious beliefs? Or what?"

Mizuko kuyō has been a controversial topic in Religious Studies, and has provoked all of these interpretations, and more. How do you interpret it? Please back up your interpretation with careful argument based on the readings.

8 October No tutorial this week

Essays

Submission of essays and assignments

Essays and assignments must be placed in the locked assignment box located near the programme administrator's office, Hunter 318, and students must date and sign the essay register to indicate an essay has been submitted. **No responsibility will be taken for assignments for which there is no record.** Students should keep a copy of all their work until it is returned.

Academic integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity is about honesty – put simply it means *no cheating*. All members of the University community are responsible for upholding academic integrity, which means staff and students are expected to behave honestly, fairly and with respect for others at all times.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating which undermines academic integrity. The University defines plagiarism as follows:

The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published or unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students or staff.

It is still plagiarism even if you re-structure the material or present it in your own style or words.

Note: It is however, perfectly acceptable to include the work of others as long as that is acknowledged by appropriate referencing.

Plagiarism is prohibited at Victoria and is not worth the risk. Any enrolled student found guilty of plagiarism will be subject to disciplinary procedures under the Statute on Student Conduct and may be penalized severely. Consequences of being found guilty of plagiarism can include:

- an oral or written warning,
- cancellation of your mark for an assessment or a fail grade for the course,
- suspension from the course or the University.

Find out more about plagiarism, and how to avoid it, on the University's website:

www.vuw.ac.nz/home/studying/plagiarism.html

Essays

Each essay should consist of a thoughtful investigation of the topic of your choice. It is up to each student to define a focus for the essay and to design an appropriate title, even where you are writing in answer to a set question (for the first essay only; see below). Where you choose your own topic, **your choice of topic must be approved prior to writing by your tutor or the lecturer.**

For the **first essay**, you will have the option of working on a set question, from materials handed out in class. You will also have the option of choosing your own topic, if you feel confident and interested in doing so.

For the **second essay**, all students will have to choose their own essay topic and find materials upon which to base the essay. We will have a **session in class time on the use of the library** to research your essay a couple of weeks before the second essay is due, to help you in this process.

The required readings may be used as sources for the essays, but if you define your own topic for the first essay, and in all cases for the second essay, **you must consult at least two other sources**, one of which can be drawn from the supplemental readings in the reader. Reading suggestions can be sought from the lecturer or from your tutor.

Each essay is to be between **1,500 and 2,000 words**, and **each is worth 30%** of the final grade.

Essay 1 is due Friday August 10 at 5 p.m.

Essay 2 is due Friday September 28 at 5 p.m.

ESSAY TOPICS

Please note that the questions below are intended as **suggestions** to help you think of a topic; none of them is intended as a rigid straitjacket that you must comply with. Some of the questions below have been set out with too many complications for you to successfully address them all in one essay (e.g. the questions on Falun gong), and in such cases you will have to be **selective to keep your focus**. If you have any doubts about what kinds of answers to these questions will meet our requirements, talk to your tutor or the lecturer.

If you have a **topic other than those listed** below you would really like to pursue, you are encouraged to do so, but it is vital you **talk to your tutor or lecturer first** to ensure it is workable and that sufficient resources are available for you to have a reasonable chance of completing an essay successfully.

Note also that in Week 4 we will devote **significant time in class to an explanation of how to write successful essays.**

Possible topics for Essay 1: (Choose one)

- What does the practice of household *pūja* tell us about the nature of the divine in Hinduism?
- "Hierarchical values and institutionalised inequality are at the heart of both Hinduism and Indian society." Do you think this statement accurately describes Indian religion?
- How does the caste system work? What are some of the effects, good, bad or indifferent, do you think it has on the operation of Indian society?
- Is Hinduism a patriarchal (male-dominated) religion? If so, in what ways? If not, what is the actual position of women and/or the feminine in it?
- How does pilgrimage feature in Hindu religion, and why is it so important? Do you discern anything in this aspect of Hinduism that is not, to your knowledge, paralleled in other traditions?
- Buddhism famously makes the claim that we are in fact "without self" (*anattā*). Is this a coherent claim? If so, what does it mean? If not, might it be effective to make it anyway, and why?
- What is the place of the worship of gods and goddesses in contemporary Theravāda Buddhism? How do we account for claims that Theravāda contains no such worship, or reconcile them with the facts of religion on the ground?
- "Today, in Theravāda Buddhism, the practice of monks and the practice of lay people are becoming more alike." Is this true? If so, why might it be so? If not, why might someone be motivated to make such a claim?
- Buddhist monastics (monks and nuns) seem to remove themselves from society as part of their renunciation, yet they perform an important social function. How might we reconcile this apparent contradiction?
- Can the Buddhist Saṃgha be entirely explained in terms of its role for non-monastic society? If not, what other functions does it also serve? How?

Possible topics for Essay 2

- Is Chinese ancestor worship in fact a "religion"? If so, is it like any other religions you know of or can find about, and which ones? If not, what is it? (PLEASE NOTE that a successful essay on this topic will have to define its terms very clearly.)
- Is Confucianism in fact a "religion"? If so, what kind of religion is it? If not, what is it? (PLEASE NOTE that a successful essay on this topic will have to define its terms very clearly.)
- What is the relationship between the world of gods and that of humans in Chinese religion, and what can it tell us about power structures in Chinese society?
- Investigate some examples of Falun gong religious art (it can be easily found on the Internet; see your lecturer if you have trouble). What can we discern about the nature of Falun gong as a religion from this art? Is it different from what we could learn from Falun gong texts, or by reading Maria Chang's description? If so, how? Does the nature of this art change over time? If so, can these changes be related to changes in the real-world status of the movement?
- Analyse *Zhuan fa lun* by Li Hongzhi (the founder of Falun gong). Is there a coherent religious vision in this text? If so, what is it? If not, what kind of text might this be, and how would you account for the appeal of Falun gong as a movement? Does the text appeal on some other level, or is the primary appeal of Falun gong perhaps not located in Li's texts at all?
- We have seen that the Chinese Communist Party claims that Falun gong is an "evil cult" and that followers claim it is not even a religion at all. Why are these respective claims made? What do they mean? What audience are they intended for? What might the CCP or FLG stand to gain or lose on the basis of such claims?
- Analyse the structure of a representative Tibetan tantric ritual and/or meditation (sometimes the two are combined). What are the aims of this religious practice? How do you think it is supposed to work? What does it tell us about how the world is understood by the religious culture that produces such practices?
- What political role has Buddhism played in Tibet? How has this been justified in Buddhist terms? Feel free also to critique such justifications if you wish to do so.
- Why do Japanese go to Shintō shrines when so few of them say they believe in Shintō?
- How has it changed Japanese Buddhism, in comparison to the past or to other Buddhisms from around Asia, that monks have been permitted to marry since the mid-19th century, and the vast majority of monks now have wives and children?
- In both Indian and Chinese religion, the most ancient materials remaining to us are intimately tied up with elaborate ritual systems. Compare the basics of Vedic and Bronze-age Chinese (Shang and Zhou) ritual. Try to identify some similarities and some differences, and allow yourself to speculate (but not wildly) on the reasons for what you observe.

- Compare SELECTED ASPECTS (only) of Shintō and Hinduism. If you find yourself noting similarities more than differences, you might speculate carefully, in the closing section of your essay, on the reasons these similarities might exist. If you find yourself focusing on differences, you might similarly speculate carefully in closing your essay on the question of whether there is something unique about each religion in comparison to the other.
- Both Hinduism and Shintō have become deeply embroiled in right-wing nationalist politics in their respective countries. Briefly explore this phenomenon, and consider why it might have occurred in two countries otherwise so different, and what it might tell us about the relationship between religion and politics.
- Compare Falun gong with an influential new (i.e. modern) religion from the United States (Scientology or Theosophy, for example, might yield interesting results).
- Compare Falun gong with one or more apocalyptic religions from the Chinese past.

FINDING RESEARCH MATERIALS FOR YOUR ESSAYS

Encyclopedias such as *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1987) in the Reference Reading Room in the library can be helpful as each article also contains a bibliography, but **the research for the essay must extend beyond such sources.**

Some of the most useful sources in the library have been put on **Closed Reserve**. To obtain a list of these books you must look them up in the library computer system. Under the library menu, choose "Closed Reserve", and then type in the course code (**Reli103**) to access the list.

The following **journals** may also have articles that you can use for your essay:

History of Religions
Japanese Journal of Religious Studies
Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion
Journal of Chinese Religions
Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion
Monumenta Nipponica
Numen
Philosophy East & West
Religion
T'oung-pao

If you have never done so, you will probably find it interesting just to go to the shelves and browse through one or more of these journals, to see the sorts of things researchers publish on in the field. Doing this may also give you ideas for essay topics.

Reading List

- Jonathan Z. Smith, "Map Is Not Territory", in *Map Is Not Territory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993 (rpr. 1978), pp. 295-298.
- Diana Eck, "Seeing the Sacred", in *Darsan: Seeing the Divine Image in India*. Pennsylvania: Anima Books, 1985, pp. 3-31; 77-78.
- T. N. Madan, "Living and Dying", in *Non-Renunciation - Themes and Interpretations of Hindu Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 118-141.
- Vanamali, "Lila - The Cosmic Play", in *The Play of God: Visions of the Life of Krishna*, San Diego: Blue Dove Press, 1996, pp. 371-373.
- C.J. Fuller, *The Camphor Flame*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 11-24.
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