

# ASIAN RELIGIONS IN AMERICAN CULTURE

REL 351-001 | Spring 2018

Mon. 3:30-5:50pm | Manly 210

**Professor: Dr. Michael J. Altman**

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or by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar introduces the history and development of Asian religions in America from the nineteenth century to the present. Focusing mainly on various forms of Hinduism and Buddhism, consideration will be given to immigrant groups, American-born converts, and the ways Asian religions have been represented and imagined in American culture. Writing proficiency within this discipline is required for a passing grade in this course.

## STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Analyze primary sources from the history of Asian religions in the United States.
2. Analyze the themes of category construction, representation, and cross-cultural encounter in the history of Asian religions in America.
3. Synthesize the broad history of Asian religions in America.
4. Critique the writing of their peers.
5. Construct arguments in coherent, logical, and carefully edited prose.

## BLACKBOARD

We will use Blackboard for its grade book and to turn in your final essay at the end of the semester.

## READINGS

Underneath each date on the schedule readings are listed. Some readings come from the required books, others are posted on **UA+Box**. Complete the readings before you come to class that day. You should also read your classmate's blog posts before you come to class.

## REQUIRED BOOK

*Asian Religions in America: A Documentary History*, Thomas A. Tweed and Stephen Prothero eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). (labeled ARIA on schedule)

## UA+BOX

<https://alabama.box.com/v/REL351SP18>

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

### Participation (20%)

This class is a seminar and is built to be a place for discussing and arguing over the readings each week. To that end, your participation in class discussion is critical to your success in the class. Your participation includes three things:

1. Your attendance. Unexcused absences will reduce your participation grade.

2. Your preparation. Read and take notes on the assigned readings each week before you come to class.
3. Your ideas. Engage with the class discussion, challenge your classmates, be challenged by your classmates.

### **Reading**

The readings for each weekly meeting consist of primary sources from the *Asian Religions in America* book (available at the SUPestore) and secondary readings from various books/articles. Read and take notes on all the readings before you come to class. For many weeks you have a choice for one of the readings from two or three options. Pay particularly close attention to these readings as you may be called upon to summarize the reading and its important points for your classmates who chose differently.

### **Reading Reflection Grids (20%) DUE WEEKLY**

For each weekly class meeting you must complete a Reading Reflection Grid. Each reflection should focus on one document from *Asian Religions in America* or one of the assigned secondary readings. While you may reference other readings for the week in your reflection, you should focus the reflection on only one text. You will find the Reading Reflection Grid as a .doc file in the UA Box folder. You may type or handwrite your response but only handwrite it if you have legible handwriting. I, for example, could not handwrite one because my handwriting is chicken scratch.

Reading reflections are graded based on how much engagement and detail they demonstrate. Be specific, be clear, be thoughtful. Show you not only read the text but engaged with it. Put it into larger context, connect it to other readings and documents. Ask interesting and insightful questions of the text. It's a matter of both quantity of engagement and quality of thought.

While you only have to complete a reading grid for one reading a week, the questions on the grid are a good guideline for what you should know about each reading in order to prepare for class.

### **Essay #1 (20%) DUE MARCH 5**

1. Find a representation of "Asian religion" in American culture. It could be a song, a video, an ad, a TV episode, etc. Be creative.
2. Go to <https://padlet.com/michaeljaltman/REL351SP18> and post your representation so we can discuss it in class.
3. Write a **1000-1500 word (4-6 pages)** essay that uses the readings we have done thus far in the course to interpret, explain, and analyze your representation. What does this representation reveal about Asian religions in America? How does this representation connect, expand, challenge, repeat, or borrow from the representations and ideas about Asian religions that we have learned about so far? Put your representation into a larger historical context. Use at least 3 specific texts (primary or secondary) from our readings thus far to help you analyze and understand your representation. You should not need to do any research beyond the readings/documents we've read in the course so far.

You do not need to provide a bibliography but you should cite the course materials you quote in the essay with footnotes following the Chicago Manual of style.

Evaluation Criteria:

1. Essay uses specific examples from the course readings.
2. There is a clear thesis and argument in the essay.
3. Essay demonstrates deep engagement with the course materials.
4. The essay is well-structured. It has an introduction with a thesis, supporting paragraphs that make good use of evidence, and a strong conclusion.
5. The prose is coherent, logical, and carefully edited.

### **Research Essay (40% total)**

Throughout the semester you will be working on a research project that will culminate in an essay of roughly **2000-2500 words (8-10 pages), double spaced, 12pt font**. We will walk through these projects as a class from project ideas to proposals to bibliographies to rough drafts to final drafts. You will get feedback from your peers. There are due dates for each stage in the schedule. The project begins with a research consultation where you will visit office hours and discuss your ideas for a project with me. Deadlines for the various stages of the project are on the syllabus schedule.

### **Research Topic Meeting**

You must meet with me to discuss your research topic by **MARCH 8**. I will have a schedule where you can sign up for a meeting with me or if none of those times work we can schedule over email.

Come to the research meeting with a typed one paragraph statement describing what your topic is, what you think you'll say about it, and what sources you think you can use to do it.

### **Annotated Bibliography (5%) DUE APRIL 2**

Students will turn in an annotated bibliography in preparation for the final essay in the course. The annotated part of the bibliography means you will include a 3-4 sentence description of the source and how you will use it in your essay. More details on this as we get closer.

### **Essay Draft (10%) DUE APRIL 16**

Students will turn in a draft of their final essay that will be peer-edited by a classmate. The essay draft grade is a combination of turning in a proper essay draft and a thorough review of your partner's essay. The draft must fulfill the required word count of the assignment (2000-2500 words). **An outline or outline-essay combination will not be sufficient for full credit.** I will provide a guide for the peer-review with the requirements for it.

## **Final Draft (25%) DUE APRIL 30**

The final draft of your essay after it has been discussed, peer-edited, and revised.

### **Evaluation Criteria:**

1. There is a clear thesis and argument in the essay.
2. Essay demonstrates deep engagement with the course materials, themes, and topics.
3. Essay demonstrates a deep engagement with research sources.
4. The essay is well-structured. It has an introduction with a thesis, supporting paragraphs that make good use of evidence, and a strong conclusion.
5. The prose is coherent, logical, and carefully edited.
6. Essay follows the Chicago Manual of Style, with proper foot/endnotes and a bibliography.

### **GRADE SCALE**

A+	95-100%	C	70-74
A	90-94	D+	65-69
B+	85-89	D	60-64
B	80-84	D-	50-59
		F	below 50

### **GROUND RULES**

#### **Late Work**

I do not accept late work. I do give extensions in the case of extraordinary circumstances, but I expect that you will ask for the extension promptly. Do not email asking for an extension unless it is under extreme circumstances outside of your control (like a relative died over the weekend and you need to leave immediately. See technology policy regarding technological “emergencies.”)

#### **Technology policy**

Let’s face it: technology breaks. Servers go down. Transfers time out. Files become corrupt. The list goes on and on. These are not considered emergencies. They are part of the normal production process. An issue you may have with technology is no excuse for late work. You need to protect yourself by managing your time and backing up your work.

#### **Accommodations**

Students with a documented physical and/or learning disability should contact the professor outside of class time as soon as possible to review documentation and discuss accommodations. Also, students should familiarize themselves with the Office of Disability Services at <http://www.ods.ua.edu>.

#### **In Case of Emergency/Weather**

UA’s primary communication tool for sending out information is through its web site at [www.ua.edu](http://www.ua.edu). In the event of an emergency, students should consult this site for further directions. In the event of an emergency, I will use Blackboard to provide additional course information.

**Honor Code**

Academic misconduct is a serious offense and is taken very seriously at UA and in the class. Suspected cases of plagiarism, cheating, or other forms of academic misconduct will be referred to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. You are bound by UA's [Honor Code](#) in this class.

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

### Jan 22- What is an Asian Religion?

Michael J. Altman, "Preface" and "Prologue" from *Heathen, Hindoo, Hindu*

ARIA: "General Introduction"

"Introduction to Asian Religions"

### Jan 29- Asia in the Early American Imagination

Edward Said, "Introduction" from *Orientalism*

David Weir, "The Eighteenth Century: From Politics to Theology" from *American Orient*

ARIA: Chapters 2 "Views from Home"

Choose 1 of the following

- Thomas Tweed, "An American Pioneer in the Study of Religion: Hannah Adams (1755-1831) and Her 'Dictionary of All Religions,'"
- Altman, "Heathens and Hindoos in Early America" from *Heathen, Hindoo, Hindu*

### Feb 5- Heathens and Americans

Carl T. Jackson, "The Missionary View" from *Oriental Religions and American Thought*

ARIA: Chapter 1 "Views from Abroad"

Choose 1 of the following:

- Altman, "Hindoo Religion in American National Culture" from *Heathen, Hindoo, Hindu*
- Kirin Narayan, "Refractions from the Field at Home: American Representations of Hindu Holy Men in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries,"

### Feb 12- Transcendentalists

Weir, "The Nineteenth Century: From Theology to Scholarship"

Altman, "Transcendentalism, Brahmanism, and Universal Religion"

ARIA: Chapters 4 & 5

### Feb 19- Chinese, Hindoos, and American Identity

Rick Fields, "Gold Mountain and Rice Bowl Country: The First Chinese and Japanese in America" from *How the Swans Came to the Lake*

Jennifer Snow, "The Civilization of White Men: The Race of the Hindu in *United States v. Bhagat Sing Thind*," from *Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas*

ARIA: Chapter 3

### Feb 26- Theosophy and Yoga

Andrea Jain, "From Counterculture to Counterculture" from *Selling Yoga*

ARIA: Chapters 7 & 8

Choose 1 of the following:

- Altman, "The Theosophical Quest for Occult Power" from *Heathen, Hindoo, Hindu*
- Fields, "The White Buddhists: Colonel Olcott, Madame Blavatsky, and the Theosophical Society"

**Mar 5- Asian Religions Representations Show and Tell  
PAPER #1 DUE**

**LAST DAY FOR RESEARCH MEETING IS MARCH 8**

**SPRING BREAK**

**Mar 19- Research Workshop**

**Mar 26- Early Teachers, Early Converts**

Jane Iwamura, "The Post-War Religious World, 1945 and Following: The Case of Asian Religions in the United States"

ARIA: Chapters 10 & 11

Choose 1 of the following

- Fields, "The Fifties: Beat and Square" from *How the Swans Came to the Lake*
- Polly Trout, "Paramahansa Yogananda" from *Eastern Seeds, Western Soil*
- Trout, "Jiddu Krishnamurti" from *Eastern Seeds, Western Soil*

**Apr 2- The Post-1965 Movements**

**ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE**

Philip Goldberg, "Blowin' in the Wind" and "The Baby Boomer's Babas" from *American Veda*

ARIA: Chapters 13, 14, & 15

Choose 1 of the following

- Fields, "And Around: The Sixties" from *How the Swans Came to the Lake*
- Hugh Urban, "Osho, From Sex Guru to Guru of the Rich: The Spiritual Logic of Late Capitalism" from *Gurus in America*
- Tamal Krishna Goswami and Ravi M. Gupta, "Krishna and Culture: What Happens When the Lord of Vrindavana Moves to New York City" from *Gurus in America*

**Apr 9- Post-1965 Immigrant Religions**

Raymond Brady Williams, "A New Pattern: Made in the U.S.A." from *Religions of Immigrants from India and Pakistan*

ARIA: Chapter 16 & 17

Choose 1 of the following

- John Stratton Hawley, "Global Hinduism in Gotham" from *Asian American Religions: The Making and Remaking of Borders and Boundaries*
- Fields, "The Other Zen and the Pure Land: The Chinese, Koreans, and Vietnamese" from *How the Swans Came to the Lake*
- Vasudha Naryanan, "Hinduism in Pittsburgh: Creating the South Indian 'Hindu' Experience in the United States" from *The Life of Hinduism*

**Apr 16- Asian Religions in Popular Media**

**ESSAY 2 ROUGH DRAFT DUE (BRING 2 HARD COPIES)**

Iwamura, "Introduction" from *Virtual Orientalism*

ARIA: Chapter 18

Choose 1 of the following

- Iwamura, “The Monk Goes Hollywood: *Kung Fu*” from *Virtual Orientalism*
- Tweed, “Buddhism, Art, and Transcultural Collage: Toward a Cultural History of Buddhism in the United States, 1945-2000,” *Gods in America: Religious Pluralism in the United States*
- Jain, “Branding Yoga: The Cases of Iyengar Yoga, Siddha Yoga, and Anusara Yoga”

**Apr 23- Peer Review and Paper Discussion**

**PEER REVIEW DUE (BRING 2 HARD COPIES)**

**FINAL DRAFT OF ESSAY #2 DUE AS .DOC FILE VIA EMAIL BY NOON MONDAY  
APRIL 30**