

Osaka Gakuin University 2017-18 Fall Semester

**Japanese Religions**

**Instructor :**

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Lesson: Friday 14:30-16:00 & 16:10-17:40

Office Hours : Friday after class, or by appointment

Subject code : 1038

**Course Description:**

This course will examine the histories, teachings, beliefs, and practices of various religions in Japan, including Shinto, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity as well as other minor religions (i.e. Shugendo, Onmyodo, and other folk religions). In addition, modern/contemporary religious phenomena referred to as New Religions will be studied. Students are encouraged to (1) challenge the traditional division of Japanese religions by analysing the relationship between various religions and recognizing the interconnectedness and/or syncretism between them and (2) have discussions on their religious, political, and/or socioeconomic issues. There will be a series of field trips in which students will visit various religious sites and experience ceremonies and rituals if possible.

**Resources**

Earhart, H. Bryon. Japanese Religion: Unity and Diversity (2004)

**Note:** Other necessary hand-outs will be provided for each class

**Evaluation**

- Class Attendance/Multiple Assignments **(15%)**
- An Individual or Group Presentation(s) **(35%)**
- Field Trip Worksheets/Reports **(20%)**
- Final examination **(30%)**

- Note:** (1) Class attendance and participation, particularly taking field trips, are very important since this course places emphasis on the actual observation and experience of Japanese religions.
- (2) Evaluation method may change at the instructor's discretion depending on the class size and other factors.

**Notes:**

No Previous knowledge on Japanese religions or culture is required.

**Course Schedule:**

- Week 1: Course orientation and introduction:** What is religion?  
What do you know about Japanese culture and religions?  
**Persistent themes in Japanese religious history:**  
Human beings and nature, family, and purification  
**\*Reading for Wk 1:** Earhart, Chapter 1 and Chapter 2
- Week 2: Persistent themes in Japanese religious history (cont.):** Local festivals, individual cults, and religion in everyday life  
**\*Reading for Wk 2:** Earhart, Chapter 3  
**Field Trip (1) Festival:** A festival 祭 in the Kansai area (TBA)
- Week 3: Group discussion:** The reflection on Field Trip (1)  
**The prehistoric heritage:** The religious significance of burial and the dead, fertility, and divine descent  
**\*Reading for Wk 3:** Earhart, Chapter 3 (cont.) and Chapter 4
- Week 4: Field Trip (2) Prehistoric heritage:** Burial Mound 古墳 (TBA)  
**Group discussion:** The reflection on Field Trip (2)  
**Early Shinto:** Mythology and the origins of Shinto  
**\*Reading for Wk 4:** Earhart, Chapter 4 (cont.)
- Week 5: Early Shinto (cont.):** The organization of Shinto—priests and rituals in shrines

**\*Reading for Wk 5:** Earhart, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6

**Documentary or commercial film:** Shinto (TBA)

**Week 6: Field Trip (3) Shinto:** Shinto shrine 神社 (TBA)

**Group discussion:** The reflection on Field Trip (3)

**Early Japanese Buddhism:** Indian and Chinese influence; the Buddhism as a state religion; and the six philosophical schools of Nara Buddhism

**\*Reading for Wk 6:** Earhart, Chapter 7

**Week 7: Early Japanese Buddhism (cont.):** Indian and Chinese influence; the Buddhism as a state religion; and the six philosophical schools of Nara Buddhism

**Confucianism and Taoism:** Chinese importation; Confucianism and Taoism as Japanese traditions (i.e. Onmyodo)

**\*Reading for Wk 7:** Earhart, Chapter 7 (cont.)

**Week 8: Folk Religion:** Religiosity outside organized religion

**Documentary or commercial film:** Folk Religion (TBA)

**Field Trip (4) Folk Religion:** A place of worship and activities (TBA)

**\*Reading for Wk 8:** Earhart, Chapter 7 (cont.) and Chapter 8

**Week 9: Group discussion:** The reflection on Field Trip (4)

**The development of Japanese Buddhism:** The new Buddhism of the Heian period (Shingon and Tendai) and the way of mountain asceticism (Shugendo)

**\*Reading for Wk 9:** Earhart, Chapter 9 and Chapter 10

**Week 10: Elaboration within Japanese Buddhism:** The Emergence of Pure Land, Nichiren, and Zen Buddhism in the Kamakura period

**Documentary or commercial film:** Buddhism (TBA)

**\*Reading for Wk 10:** Earhart, Chapter 10 (cont.) and Chapter 11

**Week 11: Field Trip (5) Japanese Buddhism:** Buddhist Temple 寺・寺院 (TBA)

**Group discussion:** The reflection on Field Trip (5)

**The appearance of Christianity in Japan:** The Introduction, acceptance, and expulsion of Christianity

**\*Reading for Wk 11:** Earhart, Chapter 12 and Chapter 13

**Week 12: The appearance of Christianity in Japan (cont.):** Christians in Japan

**Buddhism, Neo-Confucianism and restoration Shinto in the Tokugawa period:** The Tokugawa government and religion; Neo-Confucianism, political stability, and social conformity; Motoori Norinaga and restoration Shinto

**Documentary or commercial film:** Religions during the Edo period (TBA)

**\*Reading for Wk 12:** Earhart, Chapter 14 and Chapter 15

**Week 13: The Meiji Restoration and State Shinto:** The political and religious significance of the Meiji Restoration; Shrine Shinto as an expression of nationalism and militarism

**New Religions:** Tenrikyo, Soka Gakkai, and others;

Religion in post-war Japan: Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity, and the post-war boom of New Religions

**Religious life in contemporary Japan:** Transformations of religious life in contemporary Japan

**\*Reading for Wk 13:** Earhart, Chapter 16 to Chapter 19

**Week 14: Review**

**Individual or group presentations**

**Week 15: Individual or group presentations (cont.)**

**Final Examination**

**Note:** Course contents and schedule are subject to change depending on the class size and the discretion of the instructor.