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ENG 3110G-001: Cultural Foundations II: India, China, and the Middle East

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Cultural Foundations II: India, China and the Middle East

Course Description: This course introduces students to the cultural foundations of India, China and the Middle East through literary, philosophical and sacred texts that have helped shape and define these civilizations. In the first segment on India, we shall consider the Upanishads to discuss Brahmanism and the development of Hinduism, then continue with an introduction to the epic Mahabharata and follow with a close reading of the Bhagavad Gita. From classical Hinduism, we shall consider the basic doctrines of Buddhism, with a particular emphasis on Zen practice and approaches to Buddhism. The second segment examines Chinese civilization through the study of Confucius and his ideals of self and humanity and through the study of Taoism as reflected in the works of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu. The final segment focuses on the civilizations of the Middle East by first considering Arab culture and the dawn of Islam through substantial excerpts from The Qur’an. Next, we shall turn to Sufi spiritualism through short readings from Rumi.

Course Format: As instructors in a team-taught interdisciplinary course, we shall provide introductory contexts for our readings through lectures and responses that we hope will provoke your questions and comments so that discussion can become an integral aspect of our time in class. Exploring these traditions in reference to Western philosophical issues and literary themes whenever appropriate, we encourage you to relate your questions and perceptions to your own experiences and beliefs by focusing on differences and similarities. What are the implications for these systems of thought? Do these cultural ideas and traditions help illuminate current socio-political and cultural events?

Course Texts:
Reza Aslan, No god but God
W. T. Chan, A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy
E. Easwaran, The Bhagavad Gita
E. Easwaran, The Upanishads (1996)
E. Easwaran, The Dhammapada
Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Victor H. Mair, trans.
The Qur’an, Tarif Khalidi, trans.
W. Rahula, What the Buddha Taught

Prerequisite: All students must have completed ENG 1002G, 1092G or the equivalent.

Course Requirements and Grading: Requirements and Grading:
The course format will be informal lecture and exploratory discussion; course requirements will consist of three essay examinations (20% each, including the final) and two five-to-six page essays (15% each) [90%] as well as participation (10%)—consisting of discussion, quizzes and written responses to reading assignments.

To encourage preparatory reading, regular short writing assignments on the assigned reading or short quizzes will be given. These will be several paragraphs in length and will address some aspect of the reading assignment, will be due (or given) at the beginning of class and will not be accepted on a make-up basis. Quizzes will generally consist of one or two paragraphs on a straightforward question based on the assigned reading. Both will be returned marked with a check to show acceptable performance.
or an X to indicate unacceptable performance. These assignments/quizzes will not be factored directly into the final grade percentage, except as an element of participation. They are, however, a required part of the course, and a student who does not complete them will not have met the course requirements. Students will be allowed three missed assignments or inadequate quizzes.

All course materials to be graded will be divided equally between the instructors, rotating sets for subsequent assignments until the end of the term. (Group 6 in the English Department requirements.)

Please note that adjustments to the syllabus will be ongoing, and, if students miss class for any reason, excused or unexcused, it is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructors for updates to the schedule or assignments.

Office: Dannie Otto: Coleman 2280; Phone: 581-3063
TR 8:00-9:00 & 12:30-1:30; or, by appointment;
Email: diotto@eiu.edu

Michael Loudon: Coleman 3361; Phone: 581-6312
MW 1:30-2:30; TR 1:00-2:00; or, by appointment;
Email: mdloudon@eiu.edu

General Policies:

Grading Standards: We shall follow the EIU English Department Guidelines, distributed in class. In all cases, we shall use a plus and minus system to distinguish, say, a high B from a low one.

Attendance: We do take roll, and we evaluate attendance only indirectly in the context of your participation in the course.

Conferences: These are at your request unless we ask to see you. Please ask for help as soon as you feel you need it; please don’t wait until the last couple of weeks of class.

Submission of work: Essays should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, titled and indicate the following: name, date, course and section number. Exercises and quizzes must be legible.

Late Essays: For each day that the essay is late, the letter grade will fall by one full grade: an A essay due on Friday will be an F by the next Thursday. If there are particular difficulties, please see one of us.

Plagiarism: The English Department Policy

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism--"The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and the representation of them as one's own original work" (Random House Dictionary of the English Language)--has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs Office.

If we discover an act of plagiarism, we shall exercise the right to the fullest extent possible. (See The Blair Handbook (4th ed), pp. 505-516, for a further discussion of what constitutes plagiarism and how to integrate properly your material from sources.)

Academic Dishonesty: Obviously, any act of cheating other than plagiarism will also carry an academic penalty, that to be determined by Judicial Affairs, depending upon the dishonest act and the circumstances.

Information for Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.
Syllabus—Cultural Foundations II: India, China and the Middle East

January
T 11: Course Introduction and Organization
R 13: **Hindu and Buddhist Thought**
   "Kena" and "Katha" Upanishads from Easwaran
   "The Mahabharata" (handout)

R 20: (continued); chapters 3-7

T 25: (continued); chapters 8-12
R 27: (continued); chapters 13-18

February
T 1: W. Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*
R 3: (continued)

T 8: E. Easwaran, *The Dhammapada*
R 10: (continued)

T 15: The Japanese expression of Buddhism: Zen
   "The Story of My Hut" (handout)
R 17: **Essay examination (#1) on Hinduism and Buddhism**

T 22: **Chinese Thought**
   Confucius, from W. T. Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy:*
   "The Great Learning" (pp. 84-94); "The Doctrine of the Mean" (pp. 95-114);
   "The Humanism of Confucius" [*The Analects*] (pp. 14-48)
R 24: (continued)

March
T 1: Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, V. H. Mair, trans.  **Essay #1 Due**
R 3: (continued)

T 8: (continued)
R 10: (continued)

Spring Break  (March 14-18)

R 24: **Essay examination (#2) on Confucianism and Taoism**

T 29: Arabic and Islamic Thought
R 31: Early Arabic poetry

April
T 5: Reza Aslan, *No god but God* (Chapters TBD)
R 7: *The Qur’an*, Tarif Khalidi, trans. (*Surahs TBD*)

R 14: Women in Islam; Violence in Islam
T 19: Islam continued; orientation for field trip
R 21: **Field Trip to Central Illinois Mosque and to Japan House**

T 26: Sufism and Sufi poetry; from *The Essential Rumi*, Coleman Barks, trans.
R 28: (continued); video *Rumi*; (**Essay #2 Due**)

**Essay Examination (#3) on Islamic Thought**
Tues., May 3 2:45-4:45 p.m.

***Please note:*** We may—from time to time—alter slightly the above syllabus, so please be sure that you keep abreast of developments in the class.