ENG 3099G-099: Myth and Culture, Honors

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Course Description:

This course will involve an in-depth look at the myths and culture of three Asian countries, namely, India, China, and Japan. In the Indian segment, we will read the Hindu and the Buddhist (the Hinayana or the Theravada) myths. The study of Hinduism will include the Vedic and Pauranic (The Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita) Mythology. The Chinese segment will include the study of Confucianism and Taoism. Finally, the Japanese segment will focus on Zen Buddhism and Shinto Mythology. The primary orientation of this study will be to develop a clear understanding of (a) philosophical and religious interpretations of such concepts as creation/origin of the world, death, divinity, fate, the ultimate goal/s of human life, etc., and (b) social systems and moral/ethical values of these cultures. Whenever possible, we will also compare the commonalities and differences among these three Asian cultures and mythologies.

Course Requirements:

Active preparation and class-participation – 15%
Mid-term exam – 25%
Final exam – 25%
One research paper, 5-6 pages – 35%

Text Required:

Ananda Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita. *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*
Eknath Easwaran. *The Bhagavad-Gita*
Rajeshwari Pandharipande. *The Eternal Self and the Cycle of Samsara*
R.K. Narayan. *The Mahabharata*
Victor Mair. *Tao Te Ching* (Reference)
Walpola Rahula. *What the Buddha Taught* (Reference)
Wing-Tsit Chan. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*

Course Policies:

Discussion (participation) is an important component of this course. Your presence in class is important for everyone, but especially for you. Papers are due at the beginning of the class on the day they are due. For each day that the paper is late, the letter grade will fall by one full grade: an ‘A’ essay due on Friday will be an ‘F’ by next Thursday. ALWAYS MAKE COPIES AND BACK UP YOUR WORK!

Plagiarism Policy (English Department):
Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism – “The appropriation or imitation of the language, of ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one’s own original work” (Random House Dictionary of the English Language) – has the right and 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.

Academic integrity:

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU’s Code of Conduct (http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Information for Students with Disabilities:

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

The Student Success Center:

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center (www.eiu.edu/~success) for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call 217-581-6696, or go to 9th Street Hall, Room 1302.

Tentative Syllabus:

Week 1

8/25 – Introduction to the Course, Myth: Definition, form, content and function

Week 2

9/1 – Introduction to Aryan Ideology and Vedic Mythology from Rajeshwari Pandharipande’s The Eternal Self and the Cycle of Samsara: Chapter 3

Week 3

9/8 – Continued, Introduction to The Mahabharata (Chapters 1-5 from R. K. Narayan’s The Mahabharata)

Week 4

9/15 – Mahabharata (continued, Chapters 6-11 from R. K. Narayan's The Mahabharata) and Chapter 3 from Ananda Coomaraswamy’s The Myths of Hindus and Buddhists, pp. 123-125)
Week 5

9/22 – Mahabharata (continued, Chapters 12-16, and Epilogue from R. K. Narayan’s The Mahabharata), Review for Midterm Exam

Week 6

9/29 – Midterm Exam (75 minutes), Introduction to The Bhagavad Gita (Chapters 1-2 from Easwaran)

Week 7

10/6 – Bhagavad Gita (Chapters 3-6 from Easwaran), Introduction to Buddhism (Chapter 5 from Ananda Coomaraswamy’s The Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists pp: 245-250, 261-276, and 283-285).

Week 8

10/13 – Buddhism (continued, Chapter 9 from Rajeshwari Pandharipande’s The Eternal Self and the Cycle of Samsara, pp. 109-116)

Week 9


Week 10

10/27 – Confucianism (continued), Conferences for the Research Paper

Week 11

11/3 – Conferences for the Research Paper

Week 12


Week 13

11/17 – Taoism (continued), Introduction to Zen Buddhism from Rajeshwari Pandharipande’s The Eternal Self and the Cycle of Samsara: Chapter 12

Week 14
12/1 – Zen Buddhism (continued), Introduction to Shinto Mythology from Rajeshwari Pandharipande’s *The Eternal Self and the Cycle of Samsara*: Chapter 13

**Week 15**

12/8 – Shinto mythology (continued), Review for the Final Exam