

**ASIAN RELIGIONS IN AMERICA**  
**REL3123W Spring 2017**

“While we are turning upside down the material world of the East with our technical proficiency, the East with its psychic proficiency is throwing our spiritual world into confusion...while we are overpowering the Orient from without, it may be fastening its hold upon us from within”  
(C.G. Jung)

“When East meets West all you get is the neo-Sannyasi, the instant Nirvana... You have the karma, we’ll take the Coca-Cola, metaphysical soft drink for a physical one”  
(Gita Mehta)

“God came to America in the form of LSD”  
(Ram Dass)

Professor: Ann Gleig (Ann.Gleig@ucf.edu)  
Location: Virtual Reality  
Office Hours: PSY: 236 Tuesday 2-3pm (or by appointment)

**COURSE SYNOPSIS**

Classes on Asian religions in America tend to focus on either the Euro-American assimilation of Asian religions, thereby minimizing the experience of Asian immigrants, or concentrate on Asian American communities, and issues of ethnicity, to the neglect of the Euro-American reception. This class will endeavor to give voice to both immigrant and non-immigrant experiences and also to religious actors, communities and phenomena that blur and unravel the distinction between the two. In doing so, we will address issues of power, legitimacy, and authenticity, such as who has the authority to represent Asian religions in America and what counts as “real” Asian religious practice? We will also consider the ways in which the practice of Asian religions in America has both reflected and continued the insidious legacy of colonialism and Orientalism and the ways in which it has challenged and subverted Western ethnocentrism and dominant narratives

Following the Euro-American lineage we will trace the various ways that Asian religions (particularly Hinduism and Buddhism) have been received in America. Such a history seldom resulted in a direct translation of Asian traditions into American culture. Rather, every event within this transcultural encounter was also a selective translation, creative interpretation, and re-combination that affected both cultures. We will follow this cross-cultural encounter from the nineteenth-century Transcendentalists, and missionaries, through to the counterculture and guru phenomena of 1960s and 70s, to the current popular culture diffusions of Eastern spirituality.

Tracing this history, however, is only one side of the story. We will also think through Asian religions in America from the perspective of Asian Americans themselves.

How have Asian immigrants practiced their religions on foreign soil? In what ways is ethnicity and cultural identity preserved or adapted through religious practice? What do Asian American immigrants make of the Euro-American appropriation and transformation of their religious and cultural worlds? What does it mean to be Asian and American and how is this produced by and translated into religion?

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- To familiarize students with the historic and cultural processes that facilitated the transplantation of Asian Religions onto American soil.
- To explore the fusion of “conceptual horizons” affected by the cross-cultural encounter of American and Asian cultures and the new religious forms arising from this.
- To reflect on points of contact and conflict in the practice of Asian religions by Euro-American and Asian immigrants as well as those communities and phenomena which undermine differences between the two categories.
- To evaluate the contested legacies of Orientalism and the “Oriental Renaissance.”

## **COURSE STRUCTURE**

The course is organized around four modules each of which is between three-four weeks long:

- Module One: Theoretical and Historical Foundations
- Module Two: Case Studies: Mindfulness & Yoga in America
- Module Three: Sex, Scandal and the Shadow of the Guru
- Module Four: Asian American Voices

The course is structured on the model of a face-to-face 3 hour class meeting once a week over a 15 week semester. Each week you will have a "class" that will typically consist of the following: a Powerpoint lecture, the class reading(s), the class assignment, and optional activities. **At the start of each Powerpoint, there is a content page, which gives the list of the contents for that class including the required reading.** Readings will either be from the textbooks or will be provided as a PDF or web-link. At the end of each class, I will also provide you with a list of ungraded review terms to get you ready for the module exam. Although these are ungraded, I strongly advise you to work on them with your classmates; they basically function as a virtual class discussion space, and they are the terms from which I will draw the exam questions. At the end of each week, I will visit these discussion spaces and clarify any issues and respond to questions. I will also leave exam tips as an encouragement for participation. At the end of each module, you will have a graded module exam, which will test your comprehension and digestion of the module material and a graded) writing assignment that will test you ability to apply the theoretical lens of the module to new data. See Assignment module for more details of the exam and writing assignments.

## **COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

## **There are two types of assignments in the class: graded and ungraded**

**Ungraded:** Every week you will have discussion review terms from that class, which you are encouraged but not required to complete. These are designed for two things: (i) to act as a virtual discussion space where you can interact with classmates and ask for clarification from me. They are the equivalent of a small group in-class discussion and (ii) they are to help you revise for the module exam. The terms are basically the most important things from the readings and the powerpoint lectures and I will use these to write the module exams. Each discussion board will be open for one week and then close. This should allow for flexibility but also keep you on track with time.

## **Graded: There are 4 types of graded assignments in the class:**

- (1) **Exam Preparation:** There is a lot of material covered in this class and it is essential that you keep up with the discussion review terms for exam success. To help you prepare for the exams, you will do an exam preparation activity called "You're the Professor," in small groups. Instructions for this are provided but essentially it involves writing multi-choice question exams from the discussion review terms to help you study and think about the material for the exams. You will have 4 of these activities over the course of the semester, one for each exam and in total they will make up 8% of your final grade. Exam preparation is designed to test your attendance and participation in the class. [You will have two written assignments for your first week of class that will be worth 2% of your overall grade.]
- (2) **Module Exams:** At the end of each module you will have a multi-choice exam consisting of between 40 multi-choice or true and false questions. The exam will be open for 48 hours (Friday 11.59pm - Sunday 11.59pm ) but you will only have 60 minutes to take this exam. There is more information on the exams in the "Exam under the Assignment Guidelines section found on the "Modules" section. Each exam is worth 12.5% ( 4 exams = 50%).
- (3) **Module Writing Assignment:** At the end of each module, you will have a short (500-600 words) writing assignment. Each writing assignment has a specific prompt, which you will be required to respond to. This writing assignment is designed to test your ability to apply the analytic knowledge acquired in each module to new data. There is more information of the writing assignments under "Writing Assignments" in the Assignment Guidelines found on the "Modules" page. Each writing assignment is worth 5% (4 writing assignments = 20%).
- (4) **Final Project:** At the end of the course, you will be required to complete a final project, which should bring together the knowledge and analytic skills acquired over the course of the semester. There are 2 choices for the final projects: (1) Creating a thesis based website on the theme of Asian Religions in America or (2) A powerpoint presentation based on a site visit to an Asian religions site in America. Both projects may be done alone or in pairs. There is specific

information on each project under the "Final Project Assignment" found on the "Modules" page. The final project is worth 20% of your final grade.

**Extra Credit:** I will offer one extra credit assignment for this class only. This will be worth 1% on your final grade. It is designed to help those who are just 1 point off a higher grade at the end of the class. There is specific information on the extra credit assignment titled "Asian Religions in American Media" under the Assignment Guidelines found on the "Modules" page.

### **GRADING:**

Grade Scale: Grades: A = 100-90, (a- 90-93) B = 89-80, C = 79-70, D = 69-60 F= 60- (0-2: minus. 7-9: plus)

Grade Submission: I will be using the system at UCF that allows me to report your grades to you when you log into your "MyUCF" page. The university follows the [national FERPA \(Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act\) code](#), which does not allow the communication of grades to a student by email (including embedding them in documents, which means they cannot be placed on a paper emailed to me), or by posting them outside a professor's door. This is a confidentiality issue. Please do not ask me for your grade by email - by law I cannot send it.

**Withdrawal Deadline: March 18<sup>th</sup>**

**FINANCIAL AID: Please note that there is a new policy regarding financial aid. UCF must report attendance or non-attendance after the first week of class. To prove attendance you must complete the assignment on webcourse by Friday 16<sup>th</sup> 11.59 pm.**

### ***Class Rules of Engagement***

**Email format:** When writing an email to your Professor, please begin with (Dear) Dr. X (Gleig). If we have a continuous conversation on email, then you don't have to address me with every mail but all conversations should begin with the appropriate address. Please also check spelling and grammar on emails. This is a habit that I really want to encourage you to cultivate as in some of the larger UCF classes in which your Professor might never get the chance to know you personally, your emails are your sole representations. Please think about what an unaddressed, misspelt, text-style message conveys about you as a student, and how this might affect you when it comes to negotiating absences, handing in assignments late, and border grades.

**It's on the Syllabus!** Please check the syllabus before writing to ask me a question, as in 99% of questions, the information is on here and my reply will only be, (Dear X), "It's on the syllabus!" Please check page 9 of the syllabus for further essential information

### **UCF Academic Integrity Code**

All written assignments require strict adherence to the honor code and must include the following "I (print name) hereby certify that I have adhered to the UCF academic integrity code (signature)." I have a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism, which I consider an essentially cowardly and uncreative activity that undermines education, character and community:

UCF is committed to promoting a culture of academic integrity where faculty and students work together to meet our personal, professional, and social responsibilities. A degree from UCF is only valuable to the extent it reflects valid assessments of student learning. Misrepresenting your learning on texts, projects, reports, or papers invalidates your grades and tarnishes the credibility of UCF. While collaboration is encouraged in the learning and studying process, you should assume all tests, quizzes, ect. require your individual effort unless explicitly directed otherwise. Unauthorized collaboration, whether voluntary or not, is cheating. Unauthorized use of materials during a test, quiz or other assessment is cheating. Regarding papers and projects, one of the core fluencies that students need to demonstrate is the ability to discern information that is common to the public from the intellectual property of individuals. Use of protected ideas, processes or language without attribution or proper citation is plagiarism.

**Accessibility** Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in this course must contact Accessibility Support Services: <http://sas.sdes.ucf.edu> Please feel free to chat to me also.

### **REQUIRED READING:**

**Full Texts: The first three of these texts are in bookstore and will be read in their entirety**

Vijay Prashad, *The Karma of Brown Folk*

Jeff Wilson, *Mindful America*

Scott Carney, *Death on Diamond Mountain*

J.J. Clarke, *The Oriental Enlightenment (Available free to read as an online E-text via UCF Library)*

**Selected Reading** There are a number of readings available as either web-links or available to read online via the UCF library. Please check the content page for each class to see the required reading.

### **Videos:**

Two writing assignments require you to watch and analyze:

The Karate Kid (1984 original version)  
Kumare (available from UCF library)

## **JANUARY**

*Preliminaries:*

Week One: Introduction & Orientation

*Module 1: Historical and Theoretical and Historic Foundations: Colonialism and Orientalism*

Week Two: Colonialism & Orientalism & Oriental Renaissance

Week Three: Enlightenment and Romanticism

Week Four: From the Transcendentalists to the Hippies: Asian Religions and the Counter-Culture

*Module 2: Case Studies: Buddhism and Mindfulness in America*

Week Five: Buddhism and Mindfulness in a Traditional and Historic Context

Week Six: Mindfulness Comes to America

Week Seven: The Mindfulness Revolution

Week Eight: The Mindfulness Critiques

*Module 3: Sex, Scandal and the Shadow of the Guru*

Week 9: The Guru in Traditional Asian Context

**Week Ten March 12<sup>-19<sup>th</sup></sup> SPRING BREAK**

Week 11: Death on Diamond Mountain

Week 11 Death on Diamond Mountain

**Withdrawal Date: Wednesday March 22nd**

*Module 4: The Asian American Experience*

Week 13: Camp Dharma: Japanese Immigrant Experiences

Week 14: *The Karma of Brown Folk* The South Asian immigrant experience

Week 15 *The Karma of Brown Folk*: The South Asian immigrant experience continued.

**Final Projects due Saturday April 30<sup>th</sup> 11.59 pm**



**KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
READ YOUR  
Syllabus**

