**Rel 10, W 14**

**The Religions of China**

Gil Raz

Office Hours: M, F 3-4; or by appointment 10 h: MWF 10:00-11:05

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This course examines the history of religious traditions in China since the ancient period to the present. Beginning with ancient records on divination bones we will trace beliefs and practices of the Chinese from the 2nd millennium BCE, to the resurgence of religion practices in present day China. The course surveys developments of traditional Chinese religions: shamanistic practices, immortality cults, popular and imperial practices; the development of Daoism and integration of Buddhism in China. How did these diverse traditions interact to produce the religious practices by which people celebrated their lives and mourned their dead? Looking at these four millennia of religious developments and transformations, we will see the creative imagination by which people communicate their ultimate questions.

**Course requirements**  
Students are required to complete all readings, proving their abilities through active participation in class and written exercises. Performance will be graded on a competitive basis with that of the other students in the class. The final grade will be computed with proper proportional weight given to the results you have achieved in each of the four areas: Attendance and active participation in class (10%), two short- papers (2 x 20%), a mid-term in-class exam (20%) and a final take-home exam (30%).

**In-class exercises and response papers**: As preparation or summary for some class meetings you will be given a question relating to the reading for that day. In some cases, you will be given a short question to respond to at the beginning of class. You will have five minutes to answer this question in writing. These exercises will count towards your participation grade.

**Two short papers** (5pp.) Details to be given in class.

**Midterm exam** (M 2/18, in class): based on ALL assigned readings and class discussion to this date.

**Final Take-home Exam** (due March 11); based on ALL assigned readings and class discussions.

**Required texts**:

Donald S. Lopez, Jr., ed. *Religions of China in Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

**CR = Readings in Course Reader**

**BB = Readings on Blackboard**

**Reading Schedule**:

M 1/6 **Introduction**: course mechanics and basic explanations

**Unit 1: Ancient Practices**

W 1/8 **Royal Shang religion**

(1) Lopez: 41-51 “Oracle Bone Inscriptions”

(2) CR “Oracle-Bone Inscriptions” from *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, Wm. Theodore de

Bary and Irene Bloom, comp., (Columbia University Press): 3-23.

F 1/10 **Ancient Worldview**

(1) BB: Thompson, 1-30

(2) CR: “Book of Changes of the Chou people” (from Victor Mair, ed., *Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 6-11.

(3) CR: “The Formation of the Classic of Changes” (*Sources*: 318-325)

M 1/13 **Analects of Confucius**

(1) CR “Confucius and the Analects” (*Sources*: 41-63)

(2) CR David Nivison, “Classical Philosophical Writing” from *Cambridge History of Ancient China*: 745-759.

W 1/15 **Confucianism**

(1) “The Family” BB: Thompson, 31-52

(2)“Literati Tradition” BB: Thompson, 95-100

(3) CR: “The Classic of Filiality” (*Sources*: 325-329)

F 1/17 **Early Daoism**

“The Inner Cultivation Tradition of Early Daoism” Lopez: 123-148

M 1/20 **MLK day**

W 1/22 **Laozi**

(1) CR: “The Way of Laozi and Zhuangzi” (*Sources*: 77-94)

(2) CR: Nivison, “Classical Philosophical Writing”: 783-790.

F 1/24  **Laozi Cont’**

M 1/27 **Zhuangzi**

CR: “The Way of Laozi and Zhuangzi” (*Sources*: 95-111)

Nivison, “Classical Philosophical Writing”: 799-808

W 1/29  **Shamanism**

(1) “An Early Poem of Mystical Excursion” Lopez: 156-65

(2) “Spellbinding” Lopez: 241-50

\*\* **Handout Paper 1: Death and Afterlife**

**Unit 2: Death and Afterlife**

F 1/31 **The shape of the Netherworld**

(1) CR: Donald Harper, “Resurrection in Warring States Popular Religion,” *Taoist Resources* 5 (1994): 13-28.

(2) CR: *Chaohun* “Summons of the Soul” from David Hawkes, trasl. *Ch’u Tz’u The songs of the South* (Oxford University Press, 1959): 101-114

M 2/3 **Lady Dai’s Shroud**

TBA

**\*\* Short-paper** 1: **Due in Class**

**Unit 3: Institutional Daoist Religion**

W 2/5(1) “Taoist Tradition” BB: Thompson, 80-94

(2) “Laozi: Ancient Philosopher, Master of Immortality and God” Lopez 52-63

Th 2/6 “Declarations of the Perfected” Lopez 166-87

F 2/7  **Winter Carnival**

M 2/10 “Abridged Codes of Master Lu” Lopez 347-59

**Unit 4: Buddhism**

W 2/12 (1) “Buddhist Tradition” BB: Thompson, 101-13

(2) CR “The Life Story of the Buddha and its Ramifications” from *The Experience of Buddhism*: 8-29, 42-48

F 2/14 **Early Buddhism**

(1) “The Scripture in 42 Sections” Lopez: 360-71

(2) “Heart Scripture” BB: Thompson, 150

M 2/17  **MIDTERM** (in-class)

W 2/19 **The Ghost Festival**

(1) “Saving the Burning Mouth Hungry Ghost” Lopez: 278-83

(2) CR: Stephen Teiser, “Introduction” from *Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988): 3-25.

Th 2/20 **The Ghost Festival cont’**

(CR) “Mahāmaudgalyāyana Rescuing His Mother from the Underworld” from Victor H. Mair, ed. *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994): 1093-1127.

F 2/21  **Guanyin**

(1) “Earliest Tales of the Bodhisattva Guanshiyin” Lopez: 83-96

(2) “A Sutra Promoting the White-Robed Guanyin as Giver of Sons” Lopez: 97-105

M 2/24 **Chan**

(1) CR: “The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch”

(2) CR: Linji Yixuan: “Seeing into one’s own nature”

(3) “Buddhism of the Cultured Elite” Lopez: 381-89

W 2/26 **Chinese Ghost Story** (Film, in class)

CR “Nie Xiaoqian” in Pu Songling (1640‑1715) *Strange Tales of Liaozhai*, (translated by Lu Yunzhong et al.; illustrated by Tao Xuehua. Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1988): 108-15.

**Handout Short Paper 2** (due M 2/27)

Th 2/27X-hr **Chinese Ghost Story** (Film) Cont’

**Unit 5: Religion in China Today**

F 2/28(1) BB: Thompson, 134-143

(2) David Palmer, “Heretical Doctrines, Reactionary Secret Societies, Evil Cults” in Mayfair Mei-hui Yang ed. *Chinese Religiosities* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2008): 113-134.

M 3/3 **Common Religion**

(1) Fan Lizhu, “The Cult of the Silkworm Mother” *China Quarterly* 174 (2003): 359-372.

<http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayIssue?iid=164852>

(2) Diane Dorfman, “The Spirits of Reform: The Power of Belief in Northern China” *Positions* 4:2 (1996): 253-289.

W 3/5 **Falungong**

(1) Benjamin Penny, “Animal Spirits, Karmic retribution, Falungong, and the State” in Mayfair Mei-hui Yang ed. Chinese Religiosities (University of California Press: Berkeley, 2008): 135-54

(2) Benjamin Penny, “The Life and Times of Li Hongzhi” *The China Quarterly* 175 (2003): 643-61. <http://journals.cambridge.org/action/displayIssue?iid=182880>

F 3/7 **Last Day**: **Final Thoughts, Summary and Review**

**Take Home Exam**

**Due: Monday 3/11**