

Religious Studies 258/Philosophy 250
Asian Philosophies



Rhodes College
9:30 AM, Tuesdays and Thursdays
Fall 2012
Professor Mark W. Muesse

Religious Studies 258/Philosophy 250

Asian Philosophies

Asian Philosophies is a study of the foundations of Asian thought and practice. The course begins with ancient India and its grounding in the Vedic worldview and turns to explore the philosophical traditions that develop out of it. We examine the “heterodox” schools of Buddhism and Jainism before considering the six “orthodox” traditions. Then the course turns to the indigenous philosophies of China, particularly, Confucianism, Mohism, and Daoism, and concludes with a study of Zen.

Resources

Required Texts

The Upanishads. Trans., Juan Mascaró. Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965.

Glenn Wallis, *Basic Teachings of the Buddha.* New York: Modern Library, 2007.

Deepak Sarma, *Classical Indian Philosophy: A Reader,* Columbia University Press, 2011.

Bhagavad Gita: Trans., Laurie Patton. Penguin Classics, 2008.

Philip J. Ivanhoe and Bryan W. Van Norden, eds., *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy,* 2nd edition. Hackett Pub Co., 2006.

The Zen Teaching of Huang Po: On the Transmission of the Mind. Trans., John Blofeld. New York: Grove Press, 1958.

Other required readings are available in my public folder on the [Academic Departments and Programs](#) filesaver.

Required Films

Naked in Ashes
The Buddha
Yoga Unveiled
Adi Shankaracharya
Confucius

All films are available on Moodle.

Recommended

John M. Koller, *Asian Philosophies*, 6th ed. Prentice Hall, 2011.

Course Requirements

The requirements for this course are as follows:

Participation, 20% of the Final Grade

Your participation grade comprises your contributions to the colloquia. The elements of the participation grade include:

Preparation: It is important to come to class adequately prepared, having read the assignments and thoughtfully considered them. The Course Outline indicates the readings that should be completed prior to class meetings. *Please bring the day's reading with you to class.*

Daily Contributions to Discussions: It is essential that you contribute to the colloquia. If you have difficulty speaking in class, please see me. I can offer you several strategies for contributing to class discussions. See "Grades for Class Participation" appended below for more information on how contributions will be graded.

Facilitating Class Discussions: Students will initiate class discussions for most colloquia. Each student will participate in three teams during the course of the semester. Each facilitation team will write a discussion guide and make it available to all members of the course by 5:00 PM the day prior to the colloquium. See below for more details on facilitating colloquia.

Essays, 60% of the Final Grade

There will be four essays during the semester. Each writing assignment counts as 15% of the final grade.

Final Paper, 20% of the Final Grade

There will be final paper due on 11 December at 5:00 PM. The final paper will be 7-8 pp. on a topic of your choice.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

It is essential to attend class. What you learn from participating in the course goes beyond what can be measured on papers and other forms of evaluation. I do not reckon absences as excused or unexcused. If you choose to miss class to participate in an extracurricular or other activity, your choice indicates the priority you give to this course and the grade you receive will reflect that decision. Each student is permitted two absences during the semester without an

adverse effect on the grade. After the second absence, however, each subsequent absence will lower the final numeric average by one point. Missing one-third of the class sessions will result in an automatic failure in the course.

Electronic Devices

Our classroom is a Wi-Fi cold spot. The use of laptop computers, cell phones, and other media players is not permitted in class. All electronic devices must be turned off and kept off table tops and desks.

Written Assignments

All work submitted for this course should be the product of your own efforts. Students are expected to abide by the [Honor Code](#). Late papers will not be accepted unless you have made prior arrangements with me.

Guidelines for “Writing a Paper in Religious Studies” can be found on the [Religious Studies web page](#). See **How I Grade Essays** (attached below) for more information and helpful hints to improve writing.

Incompletes

An incomplete grade may be given to a student who is unable to complete the required coursework because of illness or other extenuating circumstances. Students wishing to receive an incomplete must consult with me prior to the due date of the final paper. Upon my approval, the student must submit the appropriate application to the Registrar before final grades are due. All unfinished work must then be completed and submitted by the end of the second week of the following semester.

Communication

I encourage you to check your e-mail frequently for announcements and other matters concerning this course. I will use the e-mail to communicate with you collectively and individually. It is often easier to contact me through e-mail than by telephone. My e-mail address is muesse@rhodes.edu.

Grace

You may have observed that it is not a perfect world, and from time-to-time, we all need a little slack. I recognize this. There may come a time when you need to turn in a late paper or want some other *slight* bend of the rules. You can count on *one* act of grace during the semester to help get you back on track. But since I’m not god, my supply of grace is limited. Don’t count on getting *too much* slack. (Grace is not forgiveness; you must ask for it *in advance* of your transgression!)

Office Information

My office is located in 411 Clough. You may drop in during office hours: MTWF, 1:00-2:30 PM and by appointment. If these times are not convenient for you, please call or e-mail me to make an appointment for another time. My campus number is 901 843 3909, and my home number is 901 278 0788.

Classroom Etiquette

Beginning

We will begin each class with a bow. At my cue, please rise, place palms together, and bow together.

Middle

Pay attention—or at least feign it! Please don't work on other courses (or anything else!) during class time. If you work on anything other than our course during the class period, you will receive an absence for that day.

End

It's not over until it's over. Please do not begin to pack your books until the class is concluded.

Course Outline

23 August	What is Asian Philosophy?
The Indian Context	
28 August	The Vedic Worldview Read: Koller, 12-23. Selections from the Rig-Veda, 3-36. (Readings)
30 August	The Upanishads Read: Mascaró, <i>The Upanishads</i> , 7-74. View: <i>Naked in Ashes</i>

4 September	<p>The Upanishads Read: Mascaró, <i>The Upanishads</i>, 75-143.</p>
The Heterodox Schools	
6 September	<p>The Teachings of the Buddha View: The Buddha Read: Wallis, "Introduction," <i>Basic Teachings of the Buddha</i>, xi-xlvi.</p>
11 September	<p>The Teachings of the Buddha Read: Wallis, <i>Basic Teachings of the Buddha</i>, 3-27; 71-99.</p>
13 September	<p>The Teachings of the Buddha Read: Wallis, <i>Basic Teachings of the Buddha</i>, 28-30, 100-103; 36-39, 111-127; 45-48, 136-149.</p>
18 September	<p>Interdependent Arising and No-self Read: Wallis, <i>Basic Teachings of the Buddha</i>, 31-35, 104-110; 40-44; 128-135.</p>
20 September Meditation Room	<p>The Practice of Mindfulness Read: Wallis, <i>Basic Teachings of the Buddha</i>, 57-67, 163-170. Muesse, "Cultivating a Quiet Mind."</p>
Sunday, 23 September India Cultural Center and Temple	<p>Optional Engagement Opportunity See: Ganesh Immersion Festival</p>
25 September	<p>Yogacara and Madhymaka Read: Sarma, <i>Classical Indian Philosophy</i>, 20-49.</p>
27 September	<p>Jainism View: <i>Jainism</i> (Moodle) Read: Sarma, <i>Classical Indian Philosophy</i>, 50-89.</p>

The Orthodox Schools	
2 October International Ahimsa Day	Hindu Theism Read: Patton, <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> , "Introduction"; 3-110.
4 October	Hindu Theism Read: Patton, <i>Bhagavad Gita</i> , 111-205.
9 October	Samkhya and Yoga Read: Sarma, <i>Classical Indian Philosophy</i> , 167-194. View: <i>Yoga Unveiled</i>
11 October	Nyaya and Vaisheshika Read: Sarma, <i>Classical Indian Philosophy</i> , 93-166.
16 October	Fall Break
18 October	Mimamsa and Vedanta Read: Sarma, <i>Classical Indian Philosophy</i> , 195-233. View: <i>Adi Shankaracharya</i>
23 October	Advaita, Vishistadvaita, Madhva Vedanta Read: Sarma, <i>Classical Indian Philosophy</i> , 207-233.
Chinese Philosophies	
25 October	China before Confucius Read: Muesse, 68-90 (Readings); Ivanhoe and Van Norden, <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> , vii-xvii; 345-362.
30 October	Confucius View: <i>Confucius</i> Read: Ivanhoe and Van Norden, <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i> , 1-53.

1 November	<p>Confucius Read: Ivanhoe and Van Norden, <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i>, 1-53.</p>
6 November	<p>Mozi Read: Ivanhoe and Van Norden, <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i>, 55-109.</p>
8 November	<p>Mencius Read: Ivanhoe and Van Norden, <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i>, 111-155.</p>
Thursday, 8 November 4:15 PM Rhea Lounge	<p>Optional Engagement Opportunity See: Bhagwan Sri Sri Sri Viswayogi Viswamjee Maharaj</p>
13 November	<p>Daodejing Read: Ivanhoe and Van Norden, <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i>, 157-201.</p>
15 November	<p>Zhuangzi Read: Ivanhoe and Van Norden, <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i>, 203-245.</p>
20 November	No Class
22 November	Thanksgiving
27 November	<p>Xunzi Read: Ivanhoe and Van Norden, <i>Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy</i>, 247-293.</p>
29 November	<p>Zen Read: Blofeld, <i>The Zen Teaching of Huang Po</i>, 7-66 (Introduction, Preface, and Chün Chou Record).</p>
4 December	<p>Zen Read: Blofeld, <i>The Zen Teaching of Huang Po</i>, 67-132 (The Wan Ling Record).</p>

11 December, 5:00PM

Final Paper due

How I Grade Essays

Writing and critical thinking are, I believe, the most important parts of a liberal arts education. I therefore take essay writing very seriously and make it a significant part of your final grade. In grading students' essays, I take care to mark them as accurately and as painstakingly as possible. My own experience tells me that one's writing cannot improve unless mistakes are clearly pointed out. Learning to write well is hard work and takes much practice. In this sense, we are all beginners.

To help you in your writing practice for this course, I have outlined below the general principles I use in assessing grades for essays. I readily admit that grading essays—especially papers in the humanities—involves subjective judgments, particularly in the area of content. Ultimately, the grade you receive is the consequence of a judgment part objective and reasonable, part intuitive and aesthetic. In general, I try not to evaluate the particular position or point of view you express; rather, I look at how well you have argued that position, how fully and sympathetically you have considered alternative views, how logical and coherent your point of view is. In the final analysis, I am not really interested in whether or not you believe in God, for example, but I am very interested in *why* you believe or do not believe.

A—The A paper is, above all, interesting and effectively written. It demonstrates knowledge of the subject and evidences much thought about it. It is clearly structured and has a carefully argued thesis. The A paper is outstanding in all respects: it is devoid of any mechanical, grammatical, or typographical mistakes. Formal errors will reduce a paper's grade, regardless of content.

B—The B paper is missing some element that distinguishes the A essay. Perhaps the paper demonstrates sufficient knowledge and thought, but the presentation is pedestrian. Perhaps the content is thoughtful and interesting, but the essay suffers from mechanical or typographical mistakes.

C—The C paper fulfills the terms of the assignment without distinction.

D—The D paper is uninteresting, lacking in comprehension, and flawed by mechanical errors.

F—The F paper is without merit. It is flagrantly lacking in insight and comprehension, and appears insufficiently acquainted with academic standards for written work.

Some Hints for Better Writing

I expect proper form for papers in the humanities.

It is okay to use the first person.

Do not use the passive voice unless it is absolutely necessary.

Use inclusive language: that is, do not use “man” or “mankind” as the generic term for all of humanity (humankind, humans).

Create an interesting title.

Use “that” and “which” appropriately. (“Which” generally follows a comma.) Use “who” when you are talking about a human being.

If a quotation is more than three lines long, it should be indented and single-spaced, omitting the quotation marks.

Use two spaces between sentences.

Avoid vague abstractions like “the Church.” Specify exactly what you mean.

Number the pages.

Do not use the word “feel” as a substitute for “think.”

Avoid inappropriate use of slang (e.g., “It really sucked to be a slave in Egypt.”)

Avoid clichés like the plague.

Quote the dictionary only if absolutely demanded by the context. Ordinarily, Webster is not an authority in this course. Never begin an essay with “According to Webster’s Dictionary....”

Always edit. I rarely receive a paper that cannot be improved by eliminating verbiage. Get a pencil (or edit online) and see how many words you can cross out. At the same time, watch for typos, misspellings, and grammatical mistakes. Remember, a spell-checker will help, but does not always help with the specialized vocabulary that is part of this course.

Always keep a copy of your paper.

Please staple the paper in the upper left corner. Do not waste your money on plastic or paper report holders. They are useless, and I will throw them away.

When you receive your graded paper, read it carefully. I spend much time and energy grading these essays and usually provide detailed commentary. You will not profit by our efforts--yours and mine--unless you review the graded essay. Always feel free to talk to me about the paper, both before and after it is graded. If you do not understand why the paper receives the grade it does, then we should talk. The essay is only part of what I hope is a semester-long dialogue.

If you are serious about improving your writing skills, you may wish to consult:

Ronald Walters and T.H. Kern, [“How to Eschew Weasel Words”](#)

William Strunk, Jr. and E. B. White, *The Elements of Style*, 3rd edition, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1979.

Natalie Goldberg, *Writing Down the Bones: Freeing the Writer Within*, Boston: Shambhala, 1986.

Grades for Class Participation

“A” Range:

- Consistently demonstrates mastery of content and context of readings through careful preparation and analysis.
- Connects daily readings to recurring themes of the course by contrasting and comparing them with past readings; makes and adequately defends judgments about texts and ideas; consistently raises questions and highlights issues of importance connected to the readings.
- Initiates discussion; listens respectfully to the ideas and opinions of others and responds in a way that benefits the discussion rather than dominates it.
- Always arrives on time for class.

“B” Range

- Frequently demonstrates attention to content and context of readings by raising good questions about texts and ideas.
- Shows improvement over the semester in understanding texts and their significance and connecting daily assignments to past readings; makes and adequately defends judgments about texts and ideas; often raises questions and highlights issues of importance connected to the readings.
- Listens respectfully to the ideas and opinions of others and responds in a way that benefits the discussion rather than dominates it.

“C” Range

- Does not always complete assigned readings prior to class; is unable or unwilling to engage in discussions and/or respond to questions or raise questions related to the readings.
- Makes connections between texts rarely and with difficulty; makes judgments about texts and ideas based solely on opinion or feeling; demonstrates little grasp of the overall significance of the readings and makes little effort to investigate further their significance.
- Waits for others to initiate discussion and usually speaks only when called upon.

“D” Range

- Is minimally prepared for class, having only scanned the reading assignments if at all; consistently fails to bring assigned materials to class and shows no sign of engagement with the texts prior to class.
- Makes indefensible connections between reading and judgments about the readings that are free from thoughtful analysis; is uninterested in the significance of the readings apart from passing the course.

- Is passive in class; shows little respect or interest in the points raised by peers and the professor.
- Forgets to turn off cell phone before class.
- Whispers or writes notes to other students during class

Guidelines for Facilitating Colloquia

Each facilitation team will write a guide to its discussion session and make it available to the all members of the course by 5:00 PM the day prior to the colloquium. The guide should contain these elements:

- A one page summary of the day's reading material. The summary should discern the central point or points of the text.
- An outline of particular issues for discussion. These issues may concern matters that need clarification or they may be presented as questions or as topics for conversation. As much as possible, try to connect issues with subjects raised in previous discussions.
- A critical perspective on the theory in question. State, in other words, what you like and dislike about the topic and your reasons.

It is not necessary to consult secondary sources for the discussion guide; on the other hand, you are not forbidden to do so.

Remember, this guide will be read by your colleagues. Be as creative, interesting, and as clear as you can.

Learn and Live: Some Thoughts about Teaching

Teachers open the door, but you must enter by yourself.

Chinese Proverb

Teaching is an act of faith. I have long given up the expectation that I will see and enjoy immediate results in my teaching. The things I really want students to know—how to live well, how to be and do good, how to think about the wonders of the world and the mysteries of being alive—are not things that can be measured by tests, grades, or evaluations. I can only hope that my influence will someday have a salutary effect in their lives and that consequently I will contribute modestly to making the world a better place.

Accepting that the real value of my teaching is manifested in the future has transformed my way of thinking about what I teach and how I teach it. Five years—maybe five weeks!—after my course, most students will have little recollection of the material we studied. But they will remember me. For better or worse, the way I comport myself, treat others, and approach the business of learning is what makes an indelible impression. The Hasidic tradition of Judaism relates the story of Leib Saras who returned from a visit to his rabbi and was asked by family and friends what words of Torah he learned. Leib Saras replied, “I did not go to my teacher to hear his words of Torah; I went to see how he ties his shoelaces.” I am very much aware that

many of my students are there to see my shoelaces, and those who aren't, observe them anyway.

What I want my students to see in me is a real individual who aspires never to stop learning, a person who struggles to understand the world and to live a life of genuineness and sincerity, one who often falls short of that aspiration and gets discouraged, and yet tries again. It is more important to me that they regard me as a master of learning than as a master of a subject. As teacher, my goal is to be the best student in the classroom. I want students to learn from me how to learn, how to teach themselves, and to see the value of never giving up the spirit of inquiry and curiosity.

Foremost among my pedagogical aspirations is humility, but I confess this is more an ideal than a reality. I have come to prize humility as the greatest of virtues, but I lament how far away from me it often is. Humility is imperative to the work of learning, and hence of teaching. The students I have found to be the hardest to teach are those who lack humility; it is difficult to inspire someone who thinks he or she already knows. Seeking to be humble as a teacher means recognizing my own limitations both as student (there are still so many things I do not know and never will) and about how best to encourage and inspire others to learn. Being humble means striving to keep learning how to teach.

I have also come to embrace the virtue of risk and its companion courage, although, again, I make no special claims to having attained either. I have learned that becoming a better teacher means risking innovation, trying out new approaches and new ideas. Taking pedagogical risks has to be done with courage, because it is quite possible to fail.

But I'm consoled by the words of one worthy philosopher: "You can ultimately succeed only at unimportant things. The loftiest things in life often end in failure." Because learning and teaching are among the most important things in life, it is inevitable that we will sometimes fail at them. The best teachers, I believe, make that moment the occasion for another lesson.