Religion 173
Religion in China

Fall 2017, Westminster College
Prof. Bryan Rennie

Office: Patterson Hall 366
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Required Reading:

Gonick, Larry, The Cartoon History of the Universe, Vols. 8-13. (New York, Doubleday, 1994. This is a 300-page cartoon history which devotes almost one-third of its content to a pictorial reproduction of Ssu-ma Chien’s Historical Records (Ssu-Ma Chien, also transliterated Sima Qian, lived from 145 BCE until about 85 BCE).


Other readings will be provided by the instructor.

Schedule:
T, Th 9:20 - 10:50 Patterson Hall 210
Class will meet from 9:20 to 10:50 in PH 210. You are responsible for having read the assignments before class on the day they are listed, and for being prepared for discussion.

Tues. 8/29 Introduction to the course
Thur. 8/31 Who are the Chinese? Language, Culture, and Geography.
Tues. 9/5 Can we really understand another religion, especially from a foreign culture?  
Thur. 9/7 Fingarette *Confucius--The Secular as Sacred.*

Tues. 9/12 Gonick, pages 53-110. Prehistory to Confucius to the advent of the First Emperor.  
Thur. 9/14 Gonick, pages 110-150. The rise of the Han to the writing of Sima Qian's *History.*

Tues. 9/19 Thompson's *Chinese Religions,* “Introduction” and chapter one  
Thur. 9/21 QUIZ #1.

Tues. 9/26 “Prescientific Theory and Religious Practice” (Thompson, chapter two).  
Thur. 9/28 The Family: Kindred and Ancestors (Thompson, chapter three).

Tues. 10/3 “The Community: Gods and Temples” and “The State: Emperor and Officials”  
(Thompson, chapters four and five).  
Thur. 10/5 “The Taoist tradition” (Thompson, chapter six).

Tues. 10/10 Video: Taoism: A Question of Balance and review.  
Thur. 10/12 The Introduction of a Foreign Tradition into China.  
(Thompson, chapter eight and Sommer 119 - 154.)

The topic and thesis of your paper should be determined by this time. Please submit a title and a brief (c. 50 words) outline of each.

Tues. 10/17 "Basic Buddhism and its appeal in China." Ch'an and T'ien-t'ai Buddhism.  
Thur. 10/19 Hua-yen, and Ching-t'u (Pure Land) Buddhism

**Fall Break: Saturday October 21st through Tuesday 24th.**

Thur. 10/26 - QUIZ #2.

Tues. 10/31 - Confucianism: The Tradition of the Literati. (Thompson, chapter seven and Sommer 41 – 48).  
Thur. 11/2 - The lasting effects of Confucianism.

Tues. 11/7 - Cults and Sects and the Festival Year. (Thompson, chapters nine and ten.)  
Thur. 11/9 - Contemporary Religion in China.

**You must submit an initial bibliography for your term paper today. This should contain at least five appropriate sources with a brief (no more than 50 words) description of the contents of each source.**

Tues. 11/14 - The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Communism in China and the contemporary situation. (Sommer 281 – 316 and 317 - 348).  
Thur. 11/16 - QUIZ #3.

Tues. 11/21 - Thompson chapters eleven and twelve.
Thanksgiving Break: Wednesday November 22nd through Sunday 26th.

Tues. 11/28 - Student oral presentations.
Thur. 11/30 - Student oral presentations.
Tues. 12/5 - Student oral presentations.

Thurs. 12/7 - Last Class: Your essays are due in today. Student Assessments of the course.

Wed. 12/13 - Final Exam.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

REL 173 is an introductory course and will be taught as introductory to the subject. A chronological survey will introduce students to indigenous Chinese religion and philosophy beginning in the Classical or pre-Confucian period (10th century BCE). There will be a brief introduction to the texts of that period and their major concepts. The development of the Confucian and Daoist traditions from their earlier forebears will be considered (6th century BCE). The introduction of Buddhism into China and its subsequent adaptations to the Chinese environment will be discussed (1st century CE). The interactions of the three traditions (San Chiao) in China will receive especial consideration. These traditions continued to interact without substantial outside influence until the European incursions of the modern period. The development of Chinese Communism in the contemporary period will be given close consideration with focus on the possibility of regarding Marxism as a competing religio-philosophical tradition.

COURSE OUTCOMES

The aims of this course are firstly to acquire the basic information and skills of the study of Chinese religion. This requires a knowledge of the history of Chinese religion along with some critical understanding of what "religion" is taken to be. Various theories of religion will be considered as tools for the construction of relevant and durable opinions about Chinese religion, which is often confusing and uncertain. The skills required to communicate those opinions clearly and persuasively will be practiced.

So-the acquisition, the analysis, the assessment, and the articulation of information will all be practiced and evaluated.

All student work should be well-researched, well-reasoned, and well-written

The successful student in this course will demonstrate their abilities:

- to acquire reliable knowledge of the religious expressions characteristic of the religious traditions of China
- to consider critically various theories and definitions of religion as it is manifest in the Chinese context
- to acquire a critical understanding of what "religion" is taken to be
• to articulate that understanding
• to construct relevant, informed, and durable answers to their own questions about Chinese religious faith and traditions
• to articulate and communicate those answers clearly
• to describe ways in which Chinese philosophical and religious thought and the events of Chinese history have influenced each other
• to discuss these understandings and answers openly and cordially with people of different traditions whose own understanding might be different.

GRADING

Attendance and participation will constitute 10% of the grade, repeated absences will not only lose these percentage points but will finally result in a subtraction of points earned elsewhere.

Students will be required to take notes in class, which will be periodically and randomly inspected by the instructor. These notes will be graded up to 10% of the course. Earlier low grades can be expunged by later improved grades. That is to say, if a student gets a C on their first inspection, but an A on the second, they will not earn an averaged grade of B, but will earn the later A.

Quizzes (x 3 @ 10%) will be held to ensure that the required reading is being properly done and the material understood. These will constitute a combined total of 30% of the grade.

Final Examination. There will be a final worth 20% (There is no midterm exam).

Term Paper. All students will submit a word-processed critical essay of 2,000 to 2,500 words (that is, roughly 8-10 pages, double spaced), due in on Thursday, December 7th. Your bibliography does NOT count as part of the word-length of your paper. Students will have the whole of the semester to work on this paper and it will be their major opportunity to improve and display their potential. In order to maintain an acceptable level of technical writing, students are asked to consider the information on this website. This paper will constitute 20% of the grade. Rough drafts of this paper can be submitted to me for comments and corrections up to Thursday, November 30th (one week before the final due date). The topic of this paper will be selected by each student and approved by me no later than week seven. (I can provide a list of sample essay topics but I much prefer that students use their own imagination in the selection of their topic.) An annotated bibliography must be turned in by week eleven. Bibliographies should include a minimum of five acceptable sources. If only five sources are cited, then no more than two Internet sources should be used. In any case there must always be at least as many print as Internet sources used.

Students will give short (c. 10 minutes) oral presentations of their papers to the class for peer review during weeks fourteen and fifteen. The smart classroom facilities will be available to enhance and support the oral presentation of your material and students will grade their fellow students' presentations, which will be worth 10%. See your handouts on D2L for "Criteria" useful for grading these presentations.