Scope of the Course:

Why should the philosophical and religious traditions of East Asia be of interest to students in the United States? A number of answers could be offered. China has the largest population of any country of the world. The philosophies and religious thought and practices of this country should be of interest, if nothing else simply as a matter of curiosity. China also has one of the oldest traditions of philosophy in world history. For this reason, it evokes particular interest. Moreover, the philosophical traditions and the traditions of religious thought and practice of East Asia remain very much alive and active today. As communication, travel, and trade, facilitate the encounter with East Asia, the worldviews of these countries are also of interest. Because the West has tended to dominate the philosophical and religious traditions of the world, popular understanding of East Asia has been limited. Western traditions of philosophy have tended to view and understand these traditions as the other. Thus, in the West today we find bits and pieces of Asian wisdom often expressed in caricatures of the sayings of Confucius, in Taoist proverbs, or in the insights of Zen. We have the impression that these traditions of thought must have had an impact upon the life and history of East Asia just as Western ideas have influenced scientific and social developments in the West. A fertile mind is bound to be interested in more than just the received sprinklings of these traditions we find in popular culture. Such a mind is likely to be interested in the sources from which they came, and their meaning in the context from which they were originally spoken.

Common comparisons between Eastern and Western thought have given rise to a number of widely held popular views: Western religion, we often hear, is dualistic; Eastern religion is “holistic.” Western philosophy is objective and utilitarian; Eastern thought is “spiritual.” Generalizations like this fail to do justice to the history or the varieties of thought among even the principal traditions of East Asia. Such generalizations will be found inadequate as we examine specific traditions of Chinese and Japanese thought.

At this university, the Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies, treats the history of Western philosophy, which represents a single intellectual tradition, in a four-semester sequence. The philosophical and religious traditions of East Asia merit as much attention as we have traditionally given to the West. But it has not received this kind of attention. In the exploration of this subject we are limited to a single semester. For this reason, our attention must
focus upon the most influential of these traditions. To focus our attention upon China and Japan may seem limiting, yet the traditions of both of these regions are vast. To deal with the philosophical and religious traditions simply of China and Japan in a single semester will necessarily be selective. Nevertheless, we shall undertake the study of original texts in translation as often as possible.

Our study of Chinese philosophy and religion will begin with an examination of the legendary and archeological sources concerning the earliest period of Chinese history, proceeding to the establishment of the Ch’in Dynasty (221 BCE), and the kingdom of what has been called the first emperor. In this section of the course, we will explore the principal features of the culture of ancient China as this is expressed in such practices as divination, the veneration of ancestors, and the religious regard for nature, family, and government. In this section, much of our attention will be devoted to some of the principal competing traditions of thought in this period: Lao Tzu, Confucius, Mencius, Han Fe Tsu, Yang Shu, Hsun Tsu, Mo Tsu and others. We will examine the impact of these traditions during the Han dynasties and the period following.

Following this we will undertake an analysis of the fundamental features of the early history of Buddhist thought. To do this, we will examine the origin of Buddhism in India, the development of the principal early schools of Buddhist thought and the spread of Buddhism from India to Tibet and China in the first millennium CE. In this section of the course we will examine some of the principal ideas of Tibetan Buddhism. Our examination of Chinese intellectual and religious history will conclude with an exploration of the development of Neo-Confucianism and its influence upon Chinese civilization to the establishment of the Peoples Republic in 1949 CE.

Our study of East Asian Philosophy and Religion will continue with an introduction to the earliest cultural and religious traditions of Japan, as these illuminate the development of Shinto. We will trace the influence of Chinese Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism upon Korean and Japanese life and culture, the development and influence of the Japanese Tendai and Shingon sects, and the development of Pure Land Buddhism, Nichiren, and Zen Buddhist traditions. Following a brief examination of medieval Shinto, we will examine the religious, philosophical, and intellectual climate of the Tokugawa period in Japan (1603-1867), and the changes in this climate that begin with the Meiji restoration (1868 CE) that sets the stage for Japan’s involvement with the modern world.

Requirements:

Your coming to terms with the material of this course will require your careful attention to reading assignments, your thoughtful reflection upon the material, and your full participation in class discussions and presentations. Attendance is required. Because important background material not available from your reading will be given in classroom lectures, and because an understanding of the material will require interaction with others dealing with the material, your regular attendance in class will be crucial to your successful completion of the course.
To receive a grade of “A” for the course you must complete a thoroughly researched, appropriately documented, clearly written research paper, and achieve an average grade of 90% on all exams for the course. Without the research paper the highest grade you can earn is a “B.” Doing the research paper does not guarantee an A, but without a research paper an A is not possible. Research papers are intended to represent a significant research effort. They are not the sort of assignment that can be completed overnight, or over a sleepless weekend. The topic for the paper should be chosen in consultation with your instructor. If you wish to write a paper but cannot find a topic sufficiently specific for a research paper your instructor can help. Please come and talk to me. All topics should be discussed with your instructor before beginning. The topic for your paper should be chosen in the first four weeks of the course. Dates will be specified for the completion of the various phases of the project: preliminary reading and research, completion of a tentative outline, completion of the first draft of the paper, and submission of the final draft complete with bibliography. The topic for the paper must pertain to the subject matter of the course. Research papers must represent your own original work. Plagiarism will result in an automatic "F" for the paper and the course, as well as disciplinary action by the appropriate university authorities. As time permits, some of the papers will be presented to the class as a whole.

Besides the research paper there will be a quarter-term exam, a mid-term, and a final exam. The quarter term, and the mid-term exam will cover all material dealt with in the first half of the course. The final exam will cover material from the course in its entirety, but stress the topics covered in the last part of the course. These exams will contain both objective and subjective questions. In addition, small unannounced quizzes may be given at any time in the course of the semester. These will deal with the reading assignment of the week. Conscientious daily preparation for class will prove to be the best preparation for all exams.

Grades:

Grades will be based upon the quality of class participation, the quality of research papers, and the results of quizzes and exams. The quarter-term and the midterm together will count about equally with the final paper: i.e., (quarter term + midterm) + (final) = grade. If you do a research paper it will count about equally with the quarter-term and midterm together, and the final: viz. (quarter term + midterm) + (final) + (research paper) = grade. However, your attendance, your participation, and the results of unannounced quizzes and assignments also count. In many cases they can make the difference between one letter grade and another. All requirements for the course must be completed to receive a passing grade for the course.

Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to be in attendance in class, every class session, unless prevented by accident or serious illness. The teaching assistant will normally take attendance every class day. You are permitted three (3) unexcused absences in the course of the semester. After three unexcused absences, your final grade will be reduced by one letter grade for every unexcused absence. Excused absences are restricted to accident, serious illness, or similar extenuating circumstances. For an absence to be excused, a note from a health professional must
be presented to the teaching assistant promptly after any absence. A record of perfect or near perfect attendance will also be considered in the calculation of final grades, and may be crucial when the result of other material puts you on the margin of a grade category. The presumption is that if all your absences are the result of serious injury or illness they will be rare, and your record of attendance will be nearly perfect. Inordinate absences from class will constitute grounds for dropping you from the course for non-attendance.

**Policy on Absences from Exams:**

If you will be missing any major exams because of accident or serious illness, arrangements for a make-up exam will be made only on receipt of a letter or other notification from the appropriate medical authority. *There are no make-up exams for unannounced quizzes.*

**Policy on Papers Printed by Computer:**

Your answers to essay questions for the course must be typed and handed in on time. You are welcome to use a computer to produce the final copy of your paper. Nevertheless, it is your responsibility to see that the paper is submitted by the date and time required. Any malfunction that may have caused a file to have been mysteriously lost by the computer is your responsibility alone.

**Policy on Grades of I (Incomplete):**

A grade of “I” will be given for the course only in the case of extenuating circumstances such as accident or serious illness that make it impossible to complete all the requirements for the course and only when the material remaining to complete the course is minimal.

**Drop Policy:**

A student may drop the course with instructor's permission until the last day allowed by the university to drop the course with instructor's permission [http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-registration-guide](http://registrar.unt.edu/registration/spring-registration-guide)

**Academic Dishonesty:**

An explanation of the university’s Academic Dishonesty policy is available at the following web site: [http://www.vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm](http://www.vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm)

**The Americans with Disabilities Law and the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA):**

The University of North Texas is committed to both the spirit and the letter of the federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act
(ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

Textbooks:

Books for the course are available at the University Book Store:

1. H. G. Creel, *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-Tung*.
5. Thomas Berry, *Buddhism*.

**Approximate Schedule of Topics:**

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>“The Mandate of Heaven”. Comparing Asian Cultures w/ Western Religions</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>The Origins of Chinese Civilization. Thompson (chapters 1 to 4); Creel pp. 1-24.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The Period of One Hundred Schools: Mo Tzu and Mencius in Wing-Tsit Chan, pp. 49-83; Creel pp 46-67, 68-93</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The Period of One Hundred Schools: Hsun-Tzu, Chuang-Tzu, Yang Chu and Han Fei Tsu, in Creel pp 115-134, 135-158. Wing-Tsit Chan, pp. 115-135</td>
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**1st Exam is due on Sept 30th, 2017**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Indian origins of Buddhist thought and practice. Buddhism pp. 11-46.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The formation of the principal schools of Buddhist thought. Thomas Berry Buddhism pp. 47-79.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>The Influence of Buddhist Thought in China: Mahayana Buddhism. Thomas Berry Buddhism pp. 83-146.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The Influence of Tibetan Buddhism on China. Thomas Berry Buddhism pp. 147-184; Chan pp. 343-396</td>
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**2nd Exam is due on Oct 30th, 2017**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Neo-Confucianism as an Integral Philosophy of life: The life and thought of Chu</td>
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Hsi and Wang Yang-Ming

Chinese Buddhism in Korea and Japan: The Tendai and Shingon Sects Earhart, pp. 74-88

12 Native Japanese Buddhism: Pure Land, Nichiren, and Zen. Earhart, pp. 89-105

13 Medieval Shinto. Earhart, pp. 106-114

3rd Exam is due on Nov 30th, 2017

14 The Religious Climate of Tokugawa Japan. Earhart, pp. 134-149


Final Paper is due on Dec 12th, 2017

Acknowledgement: Thanks to Prof. George James for sharing his syllabus for this course.