

34010 JAPANESE RELIGIONS II

INSTRUCTOR: Raj Susai

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to introduce the student to the religious life of the Japanese people today. The first part of the course will focus on some of the recurrent themes in the history of religion in Japan. The second part of the course will deal with contemporary religious movements and trends in Japan. Here comparison will be made with the current religious situation in other societies, in order to place the Japanese situation within the broader context of contemporary religious developments worldwide. Please note that auditing is not permitted for this course.

COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Japanese Religiosity and Secularization
2. Annual Rites and Festivals
3. Japanese Funeral Rites
4. Religion and Matsuri
5. Saints and Founders
6. Curses and Blessings
7. Women in Japanese Religion: Early New Religious Movements
8. Urban Mass Buddhism: Post-War New Religions
9. Religion, Peace and Politics
10. Field Trip- Shinto or Local Matsuri
11. The New Age Movements in Japan
12. Aum Shinrikyo
13. The Post-Aum Religious Situation in Japan
14. Concluding Remarks

TEXTS

Required Readings

1. Robert Kisala, *Prophets of Peace: Pacifism and Cultural Identity in Japan's New Religions*. University of Hawaii Press, 1999.
2. Mark R. Mullins, et. al. eds., *Religion & Society in Modern Japan*, Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1993.
3. Ian Reader and George Tanabe, *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan*. University of Hawaii Press, 1998.

ASSESSMENT

1. Class participation (20%).
2. Mid-term reflection paper - should include the student's own perspective, thoughts and reflections on religion in contemporary Japan. This paper should be about five pages in length (1,250 words).
3. A final written report. This report should be about ten pages (2,500 words) in length. Report topics should be discussed with the instructor.