

Syllabus: Reflective Perspectives on “Japanese Religions”

Kyoto Consortium for Japanese Studies

Fall 2016

Instructor: Professor Jun'ichi ISOMAE

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Classroom: Fusokan Building, Room No. 504.

Class date and time: Tuesday and Friday, 1:10-2:40 p.m.

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We are able to meet before or after our class. When asking questions about course content, papers, etc. it is best to ask these questions in class so that others may benefit from the responses.

Objective and Content:

Today critical scholars of Japanese religion agree that there does not exist such a unified entity called “Japanese religion.” Not just “Japanese religion,” but also the concept of “religion” itself, which has been thought of as a universal concept, is also questioned by scholars of religion who have shown that the modern concept of “religion,” previously understood as universal, is actually derived from Protestantism. In this sense, we can understand religious phenomena in general to result from dynamic interactions between the Protestant notion of “religion” and non-Western indigenous religious traditions. Consequently Japanese religion can be comprehended as a hybrid space occupied by plural forms of “Japanese religion”, a space where institutionalized notions of “Japan” and “religion” must be always interrogated.

This course provides a basic guide to how to approach the phenomena of “Japanese religions” by strategically focusing on changes from the early modern to modern periods because this is the period when the Protestant notion of religion came to Japan and interacted with local traditions. It is necessary to look into this period in order to reflect on our own

western-derived assumptions when investigating the concept of “religion.” The course is divided into four sections, each of which serves to sharpen one particular perspective for understanding religious phenomena as traces of human activity: first, conceptual belief and bodily practice (concept of “religion”); second, peace and violence (state power and colonialism); third, indigenization and universalization (folk religion and “world religion”); and four, sacralization and discrimination (women and outcasts). Your study of these perspectives will be strengthened if you are familiar with postcolonial criticism, anthropology and critical theory. These theoretical discussions provide key concepts for understanding religious activities.

Requirements:

1. Reading Assignments

You are required to read the assigned books and papers listed in CLASS SCHEDULE, except for the books and papers listed as RECOMMENDED. Reading materials are available in PDF format by email or reserve copies in the KCJS office.

2. Attendance and Class Participation count for 20% of the course grade. Regular attendance and oral discussion at all scheduled class meetings and field trips is required. Unexcused absences will lower your course grade.

3. Class Participation counts for 10% of the course grade.

Each student is required to make three presentations with handouts (see Writing Assignments) in addition to a self-introduction and his or her oral commentaries on assigned readings during the semester. The perspective of your presentation; How to explain the topics and key terms he or she addresses; How to contextualize his or her argument; How to criticize his argument.

3. Writing Assignments (all papers should be double-spaced and in 12 point font)

Three short discussion papers, and one research paper on a topic chosen by the student.

(a) Three Short Discussion papers (each 5-6 pages) count for 30%.

Each student must **prepare a discussion papers** for his or her oral presentation at least **two days** prior to the day of the presentation.

(b) One research paper (8-12 pages) related to your special, individual interest in “Japanese Religions”, which counts for 40% of the course grade. Due date for this paper is on December 15.

Each page must be clearly numbered. Include a cover sheet listing the title of your paper or the assignment, your name, title of this course, and the date when you submitted the paper.

Class Schedule

September 6: Orientation meeting. 5 min. oral presentation: Introduce yourself; talk about your education, the field of specialization, academic interests, etc.

Required Reading: Jun’ichi Isomae, “Deconstructing ‘Japanese Religion’: A Historical Survey,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 32/2, pp. 235–248. (<https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/2876>)

September 9: Instructor’s PPT presentation, “Religions in Northeast Japan Disaster.”

Section 1. The Concept “Religion” and Westernization

September 13: Jun’ichi Isomae, “The Concept of “Religion”: From the Modern Opening of Japan to the Emergence of Religious Studies,” in *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan: Religion, State, and Shinto*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp.27-67.

September 16: Mark Mullins, “Christianity as a Path of Self-Cultivation,” in *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements*, University of Hawaii Press, 1998, pp.68-94.

September 20: Talal Asad, “The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,” in *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, pp. 27-54.

Recommended:

Trent Maxey, *The "Greatest Problem": Religion and State Formation in Meiji Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2014.

James Ketelaar, *Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan*, Princeton University Press, 1993

Section 2. State Shinto, Public Sphere and Secularism

September 23: Jun'ichi Isomae, "The Emperor System and State Shintō: Dislocation of 'Religion' and the 'Secular'," *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan*, pp.264-296.

September 27: Todd Henry, "Spiritual Assimilation: Namsan's Shinto Shrines and Their Festival Celebrations," in *Assimilating Seoul: Japanese Rule and the Politics of Public Space in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, University of California Press, 2014, pp.62-91.

October 4: Talal Asad, "Religion, Nation-State, Secularism," in *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, Stanford University Press, 2003, pp. 181-205.

Recommended:

Helen Hardacre, "The Modern History of Relations between Shinto and the State," in *Shinto and the State, 1868-1988*, Princeton University Press, 1991, pp.21-41.

Jun'ichi Isomae, "Discursive Formation around 'Shinto' in Colonial Korea," in *The Religion and Culture Web Form*, Divinity School at University of Chicago, 2012.

(<http://divinity.uchicago.edu/martycenter/publications/webforum/archive.shtml>)

Section 3. *Sui Generis* "Religion" and the Politics of Religious Studies

October 7: Jun'ichi Isomae, "The Process of Development of Religious Studies: From History of Theory to History of Reflective Discourse," in *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan*, pp.199-230.

October 11: Ian Reader, “The World of the True Victors – The Development and Nature of the Religion of Supreme Truth,” in *Religious Violence in Contemporary Japan: The Case of Aum Shinrikyo*, Routledge, 2000, pp.95-125.

October 14: Russel McCutcheon, “The Category Religion in Recent Scholarship,” in *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 127-157.

Recommended:

Jun’ichi Isomae, “Modern Shinto Studies and Tanaka Yoshito,” in *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan*, pp.233-263.

Eric Sharpe, *Comparative Religion: A History*, Bristol Classical Press, 1986.

Section 4. Buddhism, “World Religion” and Indigenization

October 18: Jun’ichi Isomae, “Buddhism: From Premodern Traditions to Modern Religion,” in *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan*, pp.98-118

October 21: Toshio Kuroda, “The discourse on the “Land of Kami” (*shinkoku*) in medieval Japan: National consciousness and international awareness,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23/3-4, 1996, pp.353-385. (<http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/2609>)

October 25: Tomoko Masuzawa, “Buddhism, a World Religion,” in *The Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved In The Language Of Pluralism*, University of Chicago Press, 2005, pp.107-120.

October 28: Field Trip: Kiyomizu Temple in Kyoto.

Recommended:

Thomas Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism, 1844-1912: Victorian Culture and the Limits of Dissent*, The University of North Carolina Press, 1992/2000.

Carmen Blacker, *The Catalpa Bow: A Study of Shamanistic Practices in*

Japan, George Allen & Unwin, 1975.

Section 5. Folk Religion, Emperor Worship and Appropriation

November 8: Ellen Schattschneider, “The Work of Sacrifice in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction: The Enigma of Fascist Aesthetics at Yasukuni Shrine,” in *The Culture of Japanese Fascism*, edited by Alan Tansman, Duke University Press, 2009, pp. 296-320.

November 11: Karen Ann Smyers, “A God of One’s Own: Individualizing Inari,” in *The Fox and the Jewel: Shared and Private Meanings in Contemporary Japanese Inari Worship*, University of Hawaii Press, 1998, pp. 150-183.

November 15: Susumu Shimazono, “The Living Kami Idea in the New Religions of Japan,” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 6:3, 1979, pp.389-412. (<http://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/nfile/2192>)

November 18: Field Trip: Fushimi Inari Shrine in Kyoto.

Recommended:

Ellen Schattschneider, *Immortal wishes: labor and transcendence on a Japanese sacred mountain*, Duke University Press Books, 2003.

Harry Harootunian, *Overcome by Modernity: History, Culture, and Community in Interwar Japan*, Princeton University Press, 2001.

Section 7. The Sacred, Impurity and Discrimination

November 22: Barbara Ambros, “The Medieval Period: Buddhist Reform Movements and the Demonization of Fertility,” in *Women in Religions*, New York University Press, 2015, pp.76-96.

November 25: Mikiso Hane, “The Outcaste in Japan,” in *Peasants, Rebels and Outcasts: The Underside of Modern Japan*, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003, pp.138-171.

November 29: Giorgio Agamben, “Part Two: Homo Sacer,” in *Homo Sacer:*

Sovereign Power and Bare Life, Stanford University Press, 1998, pp.71-118.

December 3: Ashihara-bashi, Osaka Human Right Museum and Ikasuri Shrine in Osaka

December 6: Instructor's PPT Presentation, "Reconsidering State Shinto: Visit at Izumo Shrine."

Recommended:

網野善彦『中世の非人と遊女』講談社学術文庫、2005.

Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Tabo*, Routledge, 2002.

December 9: General Discussion: Rethinking of "Japanese Religions"

Final meeting. 10 min. oral presentation: What do you learn from the course "Japanese Religions"? Does "Japanese Religion" or "Japanese Religions" exist as any kind of entity? What is the relationship between Shinto, Buddhism, Christianity and folk religion? What kind of difference and similarity to compare with Judeo-Christian tradition?