

Chinese Religions: Filial Piety, Ancestor Worship, and Popular God Cults
Fall 2011 T-TH 2:35-3:45 Comenius 105
REL224

Professor Eichman
Office: Comenius 201
Office Hours: Th 3:45-5:00

Feel free to email me for an appt. or pop by during office hours. I encourage all students to see me in my office at least one time during the semester.

Course Description:

This course will serve as an introduction to the cultural building blocks of Chinese religion. We will pay especial attention to family structure, the treatment of ancestors, and the creation of various God cults. Filial piety has been a cornerstone of Chinese thought and practice for over two millennia. We will read the *Classic of Filial Piety* and look at how filial piety has influenced Confucian and Buddhist traditions, and popular religiosity. Temples dedicated to local God cults were/are a prominent fixture of the Chinese religious landscape. We will study several local God cults in-depth, looking specifically at religious festivals and operatic performances. While this course does not focus specifically on Confucian, Buddhist, or Daoist traditions, we will touch upon these three with respect to how they impinge, intersect, or support the more pervasive popular religious traditions of the vast majority. Although this course attends to past historical structures, we will not ignore the twentieth century, especially in our attention to ethnographic evidence.

Course Objectives:

1. Students will learn how to analyze primary Chinese sources in translation.
2. Students will cultivate the ability to synthesize material and ideas across religious traditions and time periods from each unit of the course.
3. Students will sharpen their critical thinking skills with respect to how we conceive of the differences between Judeo-Christian traditions and Chinese religions, leading to a deeper understanding of what constitutes “religion.”
4. Students will be expected to hone their ability to ask good research questions, write a thesis, and present a polished paper.

Course Requirements:

It is imperative that you do the reading before you come to class! This will foster lively, inquisitive, and insightful discussion of the material. Because this class is run

as a seminar and not a lecture, class participation is 15% of your grade. Each student will be expected to lead discussion at least twice this semester.

On How to Read the Texts for Our Course:

Please use the margins in your texts to make your own copious notes or have a notebook handy. Always have a pen or pencil in hand as you read. Instead of merely underlining, stop and think about why you are about to underline a sentence or phrase: what is important about it? What part of the overall argument does it represent? Document this with shorthand in the margin. Use the margins to summarize the text, ask questions, agree or protest with the argument.

Bring your readings to class. We will hone our critical reading skills by looking at specific passages, terms, and concepts in class. Having the book or article handy will help you better participate and understand the materials.

Weekly Blackboard Posting:

I will post questions about each week's reading. You will be expected to write a 600 word response by 10pm each Wednesday evening. You must do ten posts @ 2% of your grade to complete this part of the course. This means that you will need to do 10 of 12 possible posts. Failure to post results in a zero. Although each post is worth only 2% of your grade, getting zeroes on your posts will drop your grade rather quickly.

Three short 5-page papers:

I will post these assignments in greater detail on Blackboard as the semester progresses. In brief, these assignments will help you synthesize the material and rethink what you have learned. Two of these papers will not require any outside research. The final paper will require that you read something on the subjects we have covered and analyze the work based on the materials read in this course.

Absence policy: Students are expected to be in class, with the only allowed excuses for 1) serious illness; 2) religious observance; 3) family emergency. In the case of any absence, contact me *in advance* of the class, and plan to have a note explaining why you have to miss. Please be on time. You may bring a beverage, but I prefer that you not eat during class time.

Students with Disabilities: Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Academic Honesty: Students are advised to review the Moravian College Academic Honesty Policy. You will be held to the standards outlined therein. Cheaters will receive zero credit.

Grading:

Class participation 10%
Weekly Blackboard posting 20%
Three short five-page papers 20% each

Texts for this Class:

Wilt Idema, *Filial Piety and Its Divine Rewards*
Rosemont and Ames trans. *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence: A Philosophical Translation of the Xiaojing*
Jun Jing. *The Temple of Memories: History, Power, and Morality in a Chinese Village.*
Scott, Janet Lee. 2007. *For Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: the Chinese Tradition of Paper Offerings.*

Other readings will be posted on Blackboard or be on reserve in Reeves library

Weekly Assignments:

Week One August 30th -- September 1st Introduction to the course

Stephen Teiser, "Introduction," *Religions of China in Practice*, pp. 3-37. [BB]

Week Two September 6th and 8th A Classic Text

The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence

Week Three September 13th and 15th Filial Sons and Daughters

Keith Knapp, *Selfless Offspring*, pp. 1-12, 137-164, 82-112. [BB]

Li Chenyang. "Shifting Perspectives: Filial Morality Revisited," *Philosophy East and West* 47.2 (April 1997): 211-232. [BB]

Week Four September 20th and 22nd Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors

Wolf, Arthur P. 1974. "Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors." In *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. pp. 159-68. [BB]

Scott, Janet Lee. 2007. *For Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: the Chinese Tradition of Paper Offerings*. Read Chapter on Ancestors

Week Five September 27th and 29th Filial Piety in Literature

Wilt Idema, *Filial Piety and Its Divine Rewards*

Bosco, Joseph. 2007. "Young People's Ghost Stories in Hong Kong." *Journal of Popular Culture* 40(5): 785-807 [BB].

Week Six October 4th and 6th Buddhist Teachings on Filial Piety

Stephen Teiser *The Ghost Festival, Mulian Saves his Mother* [BB]

"An Episodic History of the Ghost Festival" pp. 43-112.

"Buddhism and the Family" pp. 196-214.

Short film

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smqyC2HU5Rk&feature=related>

Week Seven October 11th and 13th Visualizing Filial Piety

Fall Recess no class on October 11th

24 Filial Exemplars

<http://www.photodharma.net/Malaysia/Filial-Piety/Filial-Piety.pdf>

Week Eight October 18th and 20th Guanyin Giver of Sons

25th Chapter of the Lotus Sutra [BB]

Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin [BB]

Week Nine October 25th and 27th Contemporary Ritual Practices

Scott, Janet Lee. 2007. *For Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors: the Chinese Tradition of Paper Offerings*.

Read chapters on Gods and Ghosts

Week Ten November 1st and 3rd Celebrating Mazu

Tuesday:

Nyitray, Vivian-Lee. "Becoming the Empress of Heaven: the life and bureaucratic career of Mazu." Benard, Elisabeth; Moon, Beverly, eds. *Goddesses Who Rule*. Oxford, Eng.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 165-180. [BB]

Watson, "Standardizing the Gods: the Promotion of Tien Hou (Empress of Heaven) Along the South China Coast, 960-1960," in Johnson, Nathan, and Rawski, eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial and Modern China*, 1985, pp. 292-324. [BB]

Thursday:

DVD: *Happy Birthday Mazu Empress of Heaven, Goddess of the Sea*

Read this article before you see the DVD:

“Creating a Transnational Religious Community: The Empress of Heaven, Goddess of the Sea Tianhou/Mazu, from Beigang, Taiwan to San Francisco U.S.A.,” in *On the Corner of Bliss and Nirvana: Politics, Identity, and Faith in New Migrant Communities*, edited by Lois Ann Lorentzen, Joaquin Jay Gonzalez III, Kevin M. Chun, and Hien Duc Do. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. [BB]

Week Eleven November 8th and 10th God Cults in Northern China

Adam Chau, *Miraculous Response: Doing Popular Religion in Contemporary China*

“Beliefs and Practices,” pp. 59-77. [BB]

“Red-Hot Sociality” pp. 147-169. [BB]

Week Twelve November 15th and 17th Chinese Opera

David Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice: The Ritual Foundations of Village Life*

“Shanxi Village Ritual Opera, An Overview” pp. 145-176. [BB]

“The Hou Yi Temple on Mt. Longquan” pp. 235-282. [BB]

Week Thirteen November 22nd

Library work on your 5-page paper

Week Fourteen November 29th and December 1st

Jun Jing. *The Temple of Memories*

Week Fifteen Last Class December 6th

Jun Jing. *The Temple of Memories*

Final Paper Due by noon on December 15th