

## Buddhism, Daoism, Shintoism

PHIL 3680 • Spring 2026 • Course location and hours provided in Canvas.  
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*Do you feel calm?* Or do you feel agitated and anxious? Can you *focus* on your tasks and *concentrate* when needed? Or does your mind wander? If you're like me, you feel like you face a constant stream of news and information, a daily onrush of stressors, and a never-ending to-do list. In this class, we will learn about a variety of philosophical and religious traditions that address themselves to the existential uncertainties of everyday life and offer strategies not only for coping but for thriving. These traditions range from the spiritual to the political, with emphasis on personal liberation, societal transformation, and the possible connections between the two.

### Required Texts

- Holder, ed., *Early Buddhist Discourses*
- Wong Mou-Lam, ed., *Diamond Sutra and the Sutra of Huineng*
- Josephson, *The Invention of Religion in Japan*
- Other texts will be provided via Canvas.

The philosophical, religious, spiritual, and scholarly traditions of East Asia are built upon a diverse array of cultural and linguistic sources. This class focuses on the rich interplay between **Buddhism**, a widely popular East Asian religion whose roots lie in the Indian subcontinent; **Daoism**, one of the oldest indigenous religions of China; and **Shintoism**, an indigenous tradition of Japan whose contemporary form is related to ongoing issues of modernization and globalization in Asia today.

### Outcomes

- Familiarity with key primary sources in historical, philosophical, and cultural context.
- Increased religious fluency, including a facility with some terms in the primary source languages.
- Preparedness to engage intelligently on issues of religious diversity outside the classroom.

*All class goals, assignments, and policies are designed to enhance your learning experience in this course. You are expected to engage the class material with active interest, thoughtful attention, and critical reflectiveness. If you are having trouble engaging in this course, you should meet with me.*

### Grades

Letter grades are assigned as follows: F = 54.99% or below, D = 55–69.99%, C = 70–79.99%, B = 80–89.99%, A = 90–100%. All assignments are worth 100 points. They are distributed into weighted categories in the gradebook as follows:

**Reading Quizzes / 40%** The homework readings are the backbone of the course—they are the foundation for everything else that we learn. Frequent reading quizzes help to ensure that you complete the readings *before* class. **These are due in Canvas before class starts.**

**Participation / 29%** I will give you a variety of in-class and/or post-class review, reflection, and engagement activities. These will be completed in or uploaded to Canvas.

**Exams / 20%** Two exams (midterm and final) worth 10% each. These aim to help you sum up and consolidate your understanding of major course themes. You will receive a detailed study guide ahead of time.

**Final Projects / 11%** The final project will involve self-directed research on a topic of your choice. It can take the form of an essay or a video/presentation.

### **Attendance Policies**

**There are no exceptions to the policy below.** You may, however, earn back attendance credit by coming to various pre-approved departmental events.

- An attendance score of at least 70% has no impact on your grade.
- If your attendance score is below 70%, then your course grade is capped at a B.
- If your attendance score is above 95%, then you can skip the final exam.

### **Preparation Policies**

You are responsible for attending all class sessions and coming to class prepared, having read (or watched) the assigned material, taken time to reflect on it, completed assigned study questions (if any), and in general having gathered your thoughts for class discussion. You are responsible for being an active, not a passive, reader. This means paying attention to what you are reading, looking up vocabulary that you don't know, and taking notes as you read, especially when you have questions. You are asked to invest your time in this class—not because I am making you, or because I am giving you a grade, but because you are here in college to do valuable and meaningful things.

### **Participation Policies**

Together, we foster a culture of openness and understanding in the classroom. It is our responsibility, together, to make sure that everyone feels comfortable speaking in class, raising questions, and having conversations. All students are expected to come to class prepared, having read the assigned readings and having reflected on topics for class discussion. Your participation will be assessed by short in-class or post-class review and reflection activities assigned on a regular basis. Your participation will be also assessed by the attention that you pay to your peers. When your peers are speaking, you are expected to listen, be engaged, and respond where relevant. **I reserve the right to lower your course grade by up to one full letter grade, if your lack of participation in class becomes a persistent problem.**

### **Late Assignment Policies**

- **Quizzes, discussions, and other assignments:** Even if you need to miss class, you can still plan ahead to complete your reading quizzes and other assignments on time. Canvas automatically deducts 5% per day for each day an assignment is late until the deductions equal 70% of the assignment's point value. You can continue to make up late assignments for 70% credit thereafter. **There are no exceptions to this policy.** Late assignments remain available to make up until the start of finals week.

- **Exams:** If you need to reschedule an exam, let me know in advance. I will work with you to ahead of time to accommodate your schedule, but I will not hold a make-up exam if you miss the test without warning.

## **Integrity Policies**

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and will result in an automatic zero. Students who plagiarize or otherwise violate UNT's policies on academic integrity may also, at my discretion, be referred to the administration for disciplinary action. Students are responsible for reading, understanding, and knowing UNT's Academic Integrity Policy that can be found at:

<https://policy.unt.edu/policy/06-003>. As stated there: "According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University."

## **Technology Policies**

Do not use your computer, cell phone, or tablet in class for social media, texting, or any other communications not relevant to class activities. You may use these to take notes, or view class readings, or to utilize software or technologies that meet your learning needs.

**I reserve the right to lower your course grade by one full letter grade, if you persistently violate this technology policy.**

*There are no approved uses of any AI, such as ChatGPT, or any other software or tool used to generate written content on your behalf or to check or revise content you have written. Any assignment completed with the help of AI will be treated as a case of plagiarism and be subject to the integrity policy.*

## **Accommodations**

I am committed to making it possible for all student in this class to achieve their learning goals, whatever these may be. Please share with me any information that will help me do this, including any circumstances for which you may need specific accommodations. Per the UNT Office of Disability Access: "The University of North Texas makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking reasonable accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide you with a reasonable accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding your specific needs in a course. You may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to deliver letters of reasonable accommodation during faculty office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website at <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/office-disability-access>. You may also contact ODA by phone at (940) 565-4323."

## Emergency Notification & Procedures

UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Canvas for contingency plans for covering course materials.

In the event of an emergency, the UNT Office of Emergency Management and Safety Services has a [table for a variety of situations](#), including active shooter, inclement weather, medical emergencies, etc. You may wish to bookmark above site, as well as the [Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness webpage](#) with a list of contacts for a variety of emergency situations.

## Schedule

The schedule below is subject to change. Please listen in class regarding schedule changes.

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
1	<b>1/13: Introduction to the class</b> In-class reading: "The Dart of Painful Feeling"	<b>1/15: Life of the Buddha</b> Homework reading/quiz: Holder, Ch. 1 <i>Quiz due via Canvas before 11 am</i>
2	<b>1/20: What the Buddha does &amp; doesn't teach</b> Homework reading/quiz: Holder, Ch. 2 & 8	<b>1/22: Monks, Nuns, and Laypeople</b>
3	<b>1/27: Doctrine of no-self</b> Hw/quiz: Holder, Ch. 7 & 10	<b>1/29: Meditation</b> Hw/quiz: Holder, Ch. 4
4	<b>2/3: Karma and reincarnation</b> Hw/quiz: Holder, Ch. 3 & 6	<b>2/5: Parable of the Raft</b> Hw/quiz: Holder, Ch. 9
5	<b>2/10: Poems of Theravada nuns</b> In-class readings: Poems of Theravada nuns <a href="#">Video</a> on Theravada nuns	<b>2/12: Introducing Māhayānā</b> Hw/quiz: <i>Diamond Sutra</i> PA: before-and-after activity (in class)
6	<b>2/17: Introducing Chan</b> Hw/quiz: <i>Sutra of Huineng</i>	<b>2/19: Poems of Chan nuns</b>
7	<b>2/24: Bodhisattvas and pure lands</b> Hw/quiz: <i>Contemplation Sutra of Queen Vaidehi</i>	<b>2/26: Online session + review</b>
8	<b>3/3: Bodhisattvas and pure lands, continued</b> Hw/quiz: selections from Shinran	<b>3/5: Midterm Exam</b>
9	Spring Break	
10	<b>3/17: Introducing Daoism</b> Hw/quiz: Selections from the <i>Guanzi</i>	<b>3/19: Introducing Daoism</b> Hw/quiz: Kohn, <i>Introduction to Daoism</i> , 1–14
11	<b>3/24: Daoist Practices</b> Hw/quiz: Kohn, <i>Sitting in Oblivion</i> , 1–32	<b>3/26:</b> Hw/quiz: <i>Daodejing</i> reading TBA
12	<b>3/31: Zen and Dao in advertising</b>	<b>4/2: Introducing Shintō</b>
13	<b>4/7: Shintō in popular culture</b> Begin <i>Princess Mononoke</i>	<b>4/9: Shintō in popular culture, continued</b> Continue <i>Princess Mononoke</i>

14	<b>4/14: Religion in Japan</b> Hw/quiz: Josephson, Intro and Ch.1	<b>4/16: Religion in Japan</b> Hw/quiz: Josephson, Ch.2 and 3
15	<b>4/21: Religion in Japan</b> Hw/quiz: Josephson, Ch.4 and 5	<b>4/23: Religion in Japan</b> Hw/quiz: Josephson, Ch.6 and Conclusion
16	<b>4/28: Class time for final projects</b>	<b>4/30: Review and wrap-up</b>
17	<b>5/5: Final exam</b> <u>10:00am-12:00pm in the usual classroom</u>	