HRHS-8450 Topics in Japanese Religions
Shinto and Buddhism in Japanese History

Tentative Syllabus
Fall 2014

Instructor: Lisa Grumbach
Email: lgrumbach@earthlink.net
Skype name: lisagrumbach

NOTE: Assuming that there will be fewer than 4 students, this online class will be taught using voice-to-voice discussion sessions (via Skype) each week, either with the class as a whole or individually, as necessary. These lecture and discussion sessions will also be recorded (so that those who may not be able to make a certain week’s session can listen to them). Students should get a Skype account, if they do not already have one, and should contact the instructor by email as soon as possible to set up an initial Skype meeting. If there are more than 4 students, we will have a combined recorded lecture/discussion plus written Moodle discussion. Please contact the instructor for further details.

Course Overview:
A major issue in the study of Japanese religions is the long relationship between Shinto and Buddhism. Both this long relationship, and the epoch-ending, state-ordered split of the two systems in 1868, have been great forces in the shaping of Japanese culture and society. However, the term “Shinto” is difficult to define. This single term is applied to diverse practices in different time periods. Thus a primary question in this course is, “What is Shinto?” We will examine the various definitions that have been applied to “Shinto”; look at what kinds of practices are included in “Shinto”; and consider to what extent “Shinto” has been co-terminal with Buddhism. Some of the topics we will cover include:

- How did the advent of Buddhism to Japan impact kami worship?
- What was the relationship between religion and the state in ancient and medieval Japan?
- How did “average” people experience the kami (e.g., how did they worship kami, how did they conceive of kami) in the past, and how do they do so in the present?
- In the modern era, how did Shinto become the “unchanging, indigenous religion of Japan,” in association with worship of the emperor?
- How has the forced splitting of Buddhism and Shinto affected the practice of these traditions in contemporary Japan?

Student Learning Objectives:
• Students will fully grasp the significance of the way the term “Shinto” has been constructed at various points in Japanese history, particularly in the modern period.

• Students will learn of the significant overlap between “Shinto” and other religious traditions, notably Buddhism, but including Daoism, Confucianism, as well as unclassified popular religious practices.

• Students will understand the ways in which Buddhism and Shinto were an integrated system through most of Japanese history, as well as the tensions that nevertheless remained between Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, and between Buddhist priests and Shinto priests.

• Students will learn about Buddhist and Shinto practices and the ways in which deities are conceived of in Japan.

**Prerequisites:**
This class has no specific prerequisites, but it is not an introductory class. It is assumed that students have some knowledge of Japanese religion, culture, and/or language, achieved either through course work or personal experience.

**Required books:**

All other readings will be provided through the Moodle website.

**Course requirements:**
1. Class participation: If we have fewer than 4 students, we will try to arrange online meetings via Skype. If this will not be possible, we will have online, asynchronous written discussion on Moodle.
2. A 3–5 page book review of a specific book to be assigned by the course instructor (due by the 6th week of class).
3. Student presentation or paper: Each student will present an overview of a specific religious site in Japan (approximately 20 min.), or will write a short paper (7–10 pages) on this kind of topic. Assuming that we will be able to meet online through Skype, students can do oral presentations (no paper required); if we cannot meet online, then students will write papers. Presentations and/or papers will be due in the last week of class.

**Grading:**
Class participation 50%  Book review 20%  Presentation 30%
Syllabus


[R] = article provided online through the Moodle website

**Week 1**
Introductions: “Shinto” vs. *Kami* Worship


**Part I.**
That Which Is Called Shinto

**Week 2**
The Problem of “Shinto”

- *Shinto in History*, Introduction by John Breen and Mark Teeuwen, 1–12.

**Week 3**
The “Common” Elements of Buddhism and Shinto

- Reader and Tanabe, *Practically Religious*  
  - Introduction  
  - Chapter 1. Benefits in the Religious System: Settings and Dynamics  
  - Chapter 2. Scripture and Benefits  
  - Chapter 3. Buying Out Chance: Morality, Belief, and Prayer

**Week 4**
Shinto/Buddhism as Practice(s)

- Reader and Tanabe, *Practically Religious*
  Chapter 4. The Providers of Benefits: Gods, Saints, and Wizards
  Chapter 5. The Dynamics of Practice

**Week 5**
Shinto/Buddhism as Place(s)


**Book reports due in Week 6**

**Week 6**
Tearing Up the Religious Landscape: The Meiji Government’s Creation of Religion and Non-religion

- Nicola Liscutin, “Mapping the Sacred Body: Shinto versus Popular Beliefs at Mt. Iwaki in Tsugaru,” in *Shinto in History*, 186–204.
Part II.
Kami Worship in Ancient and Medieval Japan

Week 7
Clan Shinto and the First “State Shinto”


Week 8
READING WEEK
NO CLASS

Week 9
Shinto-Buddhist Combinations:
The Development of Honji suijaku Thought and Practice


Week 10
Honji suijaku Thought in Religious Practice,
Government, and Society

Week 11
Shinto as Anti-Buddhism?
Japan as the “Land of the Kami,” “Reverse” honji suijaku,
and the Development of Yoshida (Yuitstu) Shinto


III. Tokugawa Developments

Week 12
The Early Tokugawa Period:
Shinto, Neo-Confucianism, and *Juke* (Confucian) Shinto


Week 13
Japanese Nativism: Becoming Japanese

IV. Shinto in the Modern Period

Week 14
The Impact of the Meiji Restoration:
Shinto and Nationalism


Week 15
Modern Shinto: Urban Life, Globalization

- Reader and Tanabe, *Practically Religious*
  Chapter 7. Guidebooks to Practical Benefits
  Chapter 8. Conclusions

Student presentations or papers due in the last week of class.