

Institute of Buddhist Studies - Graduate Theological Union
HRHS-8307: History of Shin Buddhist Tradition: Premodern

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Online

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

An introductory survey of themes and problems in the history of Jōdoshinshū Buddhism, from pre-Hōnen into the nineteenth century, focusing especially on issues other than Shinran's doctrine and text per se (institutionalization, women's roles, evolution of teachings, interaction with political and economic regimes, etc.). Online course, with readings and written interactions among students and instructor. Evaluation primarily based on weekly student writings but includes a final paper. For all students concerned with Shin Buddhism's interaction with Japanese history, but assumes some familiarity with Buddhist traditions.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

To build up a broader framework for understanding Shin Buddhism in Japan. Shin really cannot be understood as a tradition of textual interpretation alone—in addition, by neutralizing the monastic *vinaya*, Shin's reinstitutionalization of Buddhism became a significant sociopolitical phenomenon in Japanese history.

CLASS FORMAT:

This is an online directed reading course. The main activities are readings, required summaries, and written forum discussions among participants based on the assigned materials. Keeping up steadily week-by-week is strongly expected.

READING MATERIALS:

A major purpose of the course is to introduce students to the books and authors most commonly referred to for this subject in English (e.g. James Dobbins on the early Honganji, or Minor Rogers on Rennyo) For convenience, almost all materials will be available online on the Moodle site in pdf form. All essential reading materials are in English.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATIONS:

Since this is an online course, class activity is heavily based on interactions on the Moodle page. Each week's work will involve reading introductory material composed by the instructor and then undertaking readings in sources. Afterwards, students are required to post responses to the week's readings, reply to each another's responses, and pose questions online. In grading, dominant emphasis is laid on those weekly written interactions (80%). However, a final research paper is also expected (20%) following the usual GTU/IBS conventions (Turabian, etc.) (This means 15 pages or more focusing on some topic relating to Pure Land; students should communicate with the instructor about their specific topics during the semester and the work will be due at the end per the normal GTU schedule.) Phone calls or Skype are other possible means of communication.

Outline of Topics (Fourteen Weeks)

- 1. Introductory: Something about how Shin Buddhism has been treated in Japanese history*
- 2. Pure Land backgrounds in Japan*
- 3. Hōnen*
- 4. Shinran*
- 5. Shinran*
- 6. The early Shin communities (kyōdan)*
- 7. Women and Shin*
- 8. Rennyō*
- [9. Reading week]
- 10. Shin and the sixteenth-century warring period (sengoku)*
- 11. Shin under the Tokugawa regime (1600-1868)*

12. Shin religiosity during the Tokugawa period

13. Shin religiosity during the Tokugawa period: the example of Issa

14. Transformation during the Meiji period (1868 -1912)

15. Transformation during the Meiji period (1868 -1912)

16. Conclusion: Overview and Reflection