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 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—although all these practices involve the worship of kami, “gods.” 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:

- What is known about the formation of kami worship in early Japan?
- 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, and later “nature”?
- How has the forced splitting of Buddhism and Shinto affected the practice of these traditions in contemporary 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:


Another excellent book, but not required (readings from this book will be provided online): Inoue Nobutaka, ed., *Shinto—A Short History*, translated and adapted by Mark Teeuwen and John Breen (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003)

All other readings will be provided online for downloading.

**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. Student presentation or paper: Each student will present an overview of a specific religious site in Japan (approximately 20 min.), or will write a paper (7–10 pages) on this kind of topic (or another topic chosen in consultation with the instructor). Assuming that we will be able to meet online through Skype, students can do oral presentations (no written 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 60%  
Presentation 40%
Syllabus

Abbreviations used in the syllabus:
[M] = article provided on the Moodle course-site

Week 1
Introductions: “Shinto” vs. Kami Worship

Handout:

Part I.
That Which Is Called Shinto

Week 2
The Problem of “Shinto”

• A New History of Shinto, by Breen and Teeuwen
  Chapter 1: An Alternative Approach to the History of Shinto
• Optional: 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
The Configuring of “Shinto” in Premodern Japan

- A New History of Shinto:
  Chapter 2: Kami Shrines, Myths, and Rituals in Premodern Japan
  Chapter 4: The History of a Myth: The Sun Goddess and the Rock Cave

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 (Yuiitsu) 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

- *A New History of Shinto*:
  Chapter 3: The History of a Shrine: Hie

Some other articles of potential interest, but not required for our weekly reading:

**Week 15**
Modern Shinto: Urban Life, Globalization, and Miscellaneous Issues

- Reader and Tanabe, *Practically Religious*
  Chapter 7. Guidebooks to Practical Benefits
  Chapter 8. Conclusions
- *A New History of Shinto*:
  Chapter 6: Issues in Contemporary Shinto

**Week 16**
No class; student presentations/papers due