

RE240G Religion, Power, and Difference



Prof. Langenberg/Office: Siebert 208/Office Hours: M 5-6, W 10-12, TR 9:30-11:30, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Becoming a global citizen, a major aim of liberal education, requires study, critical reflection, and intentionality. It is not something that happens automatically as a result of travel or uncritical exposure to other cultures, especial in cases of religious difference. This course critically examines the historical realities of encountering religious difference. A major way in which certain groups of people have conceptualized and even justified dominance over other different groups is in terms of essentialized binaries such as: us/them; man/woman; native/alien; civilized/savage; rational/mystical; progressive/static; adult/childlike; West/East; saved/damned; superior/inferior, and so forth. Religion has played a major role in these discourses of the Other. In this course, we explore three provocative case studies – responses to 9-11, the figure of the Dalai Lama, and the practice of footbinding in China – to examine how Euro-Americans have positioned themselves and their own religions and knowledge traditions with respect to other culturally different peoples, religions, and knowledge traditions. We will also examine how non-Euro-Americans have positioned themselves with respect to the religions and knowledge traditions of “the West.” This is a writing intensive course.



COURSE OBJECTIVES:

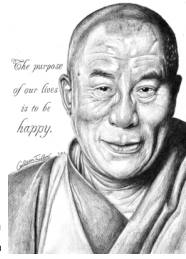
- To appreciate the importance and difficulty of studying “other people’s” religions.
- To gain a better understanding of what concepts like “the East” and “religion” and “diversity” actually mean and do in our everyday speech and public discourse
- To improve writing competency and to find some joy and pride in the process
- To become liberally educated citizens of the world

REQUIRED TEXTS (all other readings to be posted to Moodle):

- Melvyn Goldstein, William Siebenschuh, and Tashi Tsering, *The Struggle for Modern Tibet*
- Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding*
- Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*
- This syllabus

GRADED WORK:

- Attendance and class citizenship (20%)
- Eight 400-word reading responses (12%)
- Eight 200-word peer responses (8%)
- Four 1200-2000 word papers (15% each). See class schedule for due dates.



CLASS SCHEDULE

9.2 Introduction to the class

- Kai Schultz, "A Critic's Lonely Quest: Revealing the Whole Truth About Mother Teresa," NYT August 26, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/27/world/asia/mother-teresa-critic.html?ref=collection%2Fnewseventcollection%2Fmother-teresa-saint&action=click&contentCollection=europe®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=6&pgtype=collection

I. RELIGION, POWER, and DIFFERENCE

Profound Unknowings

9.4 the study of religion in liberal education

- Natalie Gummer, "A Profound Unknowing: The Challenge of Religion in the Liberal Education of World Citizens." [Moodle]
- Due: Blog 1

9.9 approaches to "religion"

- Elijah Siegler, "Working through the Problems of Study Abroad Using the Methodologies of Religious Studies" [Moodle]
- Bruce Lincoln, "Theses on Method" [Moodle]
- Due: Blog 2

9.11 approaches to difference or "the Other"

- J. Z. Smith, "Differential Equations: On Constructing the Other" [Moodle]

Orientalism

9.16 Said on orientalism

- Edward Said, "Introduction," *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books: 1979), 1-28 [Moodle]

9.18 Responses to Said

- Bernard Lewis, "The Question of Orientalism," *The New York Review of Books*, June 24, 1982 [Moodle]
- Talya Zemach, "American Students Abroad Can't be 'Global Citizens'," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 7, 2008. [Moodle]
- Due: Blog 3

9.23 Persuasive essay (1250 words) on Gummer, Siegler, Smith, or Lincoln's understanding of religion or value of Orientalism as a lens for understanding East/West relationships. Please bring two hard copies to class and post an electronic version to Moodle.

II. THREE CASE STUDIES at the intersection of religion, power, and difference

1. How Islamist movements disturb our deeply held convictions about "religion"

9.25 9-11's challenge to "religion"

- Bruce Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11*, 1-18

- 9.30 Bush and Bin Laden
- Lincoln, 19-32 plus Appendices A, B, and C
 - Due: Blog 4

- 10.2 Jerry Falwell
- Lincoln, 33-61 plus Appendix D
 - Due: Blog 5

10.7 epistolary essay (1250 words) on 9-11 due. Please bring two hard copies to class and post an electronic version to Moodle

2. *Dreams of the God King*

- 10.9 Buddhist modernism, Buddhist exceptionalism
- "Are you spiritual but not religious?" and "Is Buddhism a religion?" in *Shambhala Sun*, November 2013, 43-57 [Moodle]
 - Due: Blog 6

10.14 FALL BREAK!

- 10.16 Whiteness and American Tibetan Buddhism
- Lama Justin von Bujdoss, "Excoriating the Demon of Whiteness from Within" [Moodle]
 - Recommended (but not required): Donald Lopez, "Foreigner at the Lama's Feet" [Moodle]
 - Due: Blog 7
- 10.21 America <3 HHDL
- Pico Iyer, *The Open Road: The Global Journey of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 33-79. [Moodle]
 - Justin Whitaker, "Dalai Lama's Statements about Women and Refugees Lead to Outcry and an Apology," *Buddhistdoor Global*, July 3, 2019, <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/the-dalai-lamas-statements-about-women-and-refugees-lead-to-outcry-and-an-apology>
 - Clarification and Context of Remarks Made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in a Recent BBC Interview, July 2, 2019, <https://www.dalailama.com/news/2019/clarification-and-context-of-remarks-made-by-his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-in-a-recent-bbc-interview/amp>
 - Recommended (but not required): John Powers, "The Free Tibet Movement: A Selective Narrative," in *Engaged Buddhism in the West*, ed. by Christopher Queen (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 218-244. [Moodle]
- 10.23 "Kundun"
- In-class viewing and discussion
 - Tsering, 1-65
- 10.28 Another (Tibetan) point of view
- Tsering, 66-123
 - Due: Blog 8
- 10.30 Another (Tibetan) point of view, cont.
- Tsering, 124-201

11.4 Short research paper (2000 words) due in class. Please bring two hard copies to class and post an electronic version to Moodle.

3. *One person's barbarism is another's refinement: the case of footbinding*

- 11.6 Western perspectives on footbinding
- Angela Zito, "Secularizing the Pain of Footbinding: Missionary and Medical Stagings of the Universal Body" [Moodle]
 - Due: Blog 9

Wed. 11.6, 7:30 pm, Fox Hall: Dr. Ann Gleig, "Building the Beloved Community: Racism in American Buddhism." Extra credit available if you attend and write me 400 words on what you learned.

11.11 "Raise the Red Lantern"

In-class viewing and discussion

- Dai Qing (Translated by Jeanne Tai), "Raised Eyebrows for *Raise the Red Lantern*" [Moodle]
- Begin reading Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*, 1-68.

11.13 China's modern nationhood and the letting out of feet

- Finish Ko, 1-68

11.18 the literary history of the bound foot

- Ko, 109-144
- Due: Blog 10

11.20 the agency of the shoe

- Ko, 187-225

11.25 Class cancelled. (Professor Langenberg will be attending the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion)

12.2 Primary source or image analysis (1500 words) due in class. Please bring two hard copies to class and post an electronic version to Moodle.

12.7 Final Thoughts



ASSIGNMENTS

Reading Responses (20% total)

You are required to write eight 400-word reading responses (12%), plus eight 200-word peer responses (8%) to classmate's submissions during the course of the semester. I will seed the online discussion with a prompt, to be posted on MOODLE. This is an informal writing exercise. Although I expect your submission to be spellchecked and grammatical, I don't need the level of polish I would expect in a formal paper. Your reading responses should include at least three direct references to the class text that it concerns in support of your points. All submissions should include appropriate citation of sources. Author and page number is sufficient. You needn't provide full bibliographic information or works cite list as all sources will be class readings. All reading responses are due at the beginning of class. I do not accept late reading responses.

Your reading responses will be graded on a 0-2 scale. "0" is for no submission or late submission. "1" is for submissions that either fail to meet the basic requirements of the assignment or meet the basic requirements but poorly. "2" is for submissions that meet all the requirements and demonstrate thoughtfulness and engagement with class materials. Submissions are due at 3:00 pm on the day for which the blog is posted. Late submissions will receive no credit.

Your peer responses will be graded on a 0-1 scale. You will receive no credit only if: your peer response is late OR your peer response is not thoughtful OR your peer response is uninformed by the reading/class discussions OR your peer response is inappropriate (not something I expect to happen! Eckerd students are above that!).

Attendance and Class Citizenship (20% total):

The success of the class requires that I fulfill my responsibilities, but also that you fulfill yours. This means that you come to class, class texts in hand, prepared to ask and answer questions and participate in class discussion. Even if you are shy person, speak up! We are a learning community. We can't learn if we don't talk to each other. Not all class discussions and activities will involve the entire group. We will break up into small groups on a regular basis, so those not as comfortable with speaking in front of the larger group will also encounter less nerve-racking situations in which to share their thoughts. And there are lots of other ways to show engagement. Be visibly awake and alert. Make eye contact with speakers. Pay attention and take notes. Bring your closely read and amply annotated texts to class. Approach me with questions or comments before or after class.

Your class citizenship grade is a reflection of your verbal and bodily engagement with the course, but attendance is also a major component of class citizenship. You are allowed 2 unexcused absences during the course of the semester. If you have excellent attendance (perfect, perfect minus 1, or perfect minus 2), you will start with a base grade of a solid B+. Every unexcused absence will lower your basic attendance grade by 1/3 of a letter grade (for example from a B to a B-). Only written excuses from a doctor or a dean will be accepted as an excused absence. When I assess your final attendance and participation grade, I will raise or lower your grade depending on your participation in class. If you are a class leader, your grade will be bumped up to an "A." If you are a solid citizen but not a leader, you will probably receive a "B+" or "A-" If you contribute little but also show no blatant signs of disengagement or disaffection, your grade will stay where it is. If you sleep in the corner, are late on a regular basis, attempt to text behind your backpack throughout class, regularly come to class unprepared, fail to bring your readings to class, chat continuously with your neighbor, and/or make no attempt to take notes, you cannot reasonably expect a solid attendance and participation grade, even if you attend all classes. Phone-users will be asked to leave.

IMPORTANT: You will earn a portion of your attendance and class citizenship grade (3%) by being responsible for taking excellent notes in class one day, and then briefly reminding the class about what we learned and discussed at the beginning of the class following. As part of this small assignment, you also must raise a question or muse on a point that you found particularly interesting, intriguing, or mysterious.



Important Class Policies

Electronics: Students may pull up readings on their laptops or tablets during class when necessary. Otherwise, laptops and tablets should be shut. No phones are allowed in class except mine, which I only use as a time-telling device. Unless you have a specific accommodation of some kind, you should plan to take notes by hand in this class, so bring a notebook and a pencil.

Late Assignments: I do not grant extensions on written assignments unless a very serious emergency has arisen. Late assignments will receive lower grades on the order of 1/3 letter grade per day. These policies exist out of fairness to other students who, despite jammed schedules and personal crises, complete their work on time. This is a general policy but does not apply to the blogs. No late blogs will be accepted. If your blog is late, you will no receive no credit for the assignment.

Reading Class Emails: Part of your obligation as a student in this class is to read and, if necessary, respond to emails I send to you regarding the course. Check your email regularly!

Use of the Internet: As a general rule, the internet should not be used as a source for reliable scholarly information, unless you can be sure that the on-line material is a reproduction from a scholarly journal or unless the website itself originates from a well-established academic venue (e.g. academic journals that publish on-line, scholarly conference proceedings that are posted electronically, and in some cases even lectures posted on-line by professors at other colleges or universities). If, however, you do choose to consult the internet in the preparation of essays, blogs, or other written or oral assignments, you must cite the web resource specifically, just as you would cite a book or an article in hard-copy format. Please understand that using internet material, whether directly quoted or merely summarized, without the proper citation constitutes a violation of the honor code.

Hurricane Contingency: Students who leave campus for overnight stays or longer should bring all course materials with them, to include: class notes, syllabus, and books. This provision will ensure that we can continue our course work together if the college should close for any reason. If the college does close, I will email the class with further instructions and will post materials on Moodle to be completed during the period of closure. In the event of a hurricane, I will also post lecture notes and slides. Be sure that you maintain email contact with me in the event of such an emergency.

Students with Disabilities: Students with physical, cognitive, or psychological disabilities must contact Accessible Education Services to discuss potential accommodations or other helpful services. All information will be kept confidential. Special considerations cannot be made retroactively, so please visit AES at your earliest opportunity to ensure that your documentation is in order.

The Eckerd College Honor Code: Students will adhere strictly to the Eckerd College Honor Code and will pledge their honesty by writing the following statement on all examinations and papers: "On my honor, as an Eckerd College Student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to tolerate these behaviors in others" or simply "Pledged" and your signature. Violations of the Honor Code will be referred to the EC Academic Honor Council (AHC). Typically, a first offense violation of the Honor Code will result in failure in the course and a letter documenting academic dishonesty in the student's file. In this course, violations of the Honor Code may include, but are not limited to: 1) failure to cite all sources used in the preparation of written work according to MLA, Harvard, or Chicago style guidelines; 2) use of another's written work unless specifically authorized by me; 3) lying about your reasons for being absent to class or delinquent with an assignment, or providing fraudulent written excuses.

Title IX Reporting Policy: Eckerd College is committed to fostering a campus community based on respect and nonviolence. To this end, we recognize that all Eckerd community members are responsible for ensuring that our community is free from discrimination, gender bias, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. In accordance with Title IX, Eckerd is legally obligated to investigate incidents of sexual harassment and sexual assault that occur on our campus. Faculty who become aware of an incident of sexual violence, including harassment, rape, sexual assault, relationship violence, or stalking, are required by law to notify Eckerd's Title IX Coordinator. The purpose of this disclosure is to ensure that students are made aware of their reporting options and resources for support. For more information about your rights and reporting options at Eckerd, including confidential and anonymous reporting options, please visit <http://www.eckerd.edu/titleix/>.

Grading Scale:

Letter Grades*	
A	93% - 100%
A-	90% - 92%
B+	87% - 89%
B	83% - 86%
B-	80% - 82%
C+	77% - 79%
C	73% - 76%
C-	70% - 72%
D+	67% - 69%
D	60% - 66%
F	0% - 59%

