

REL 3310 PHILOSOPHIES OF THE EAST
Dr. Mountcastle

Course Description:

Indian philosophy including concept of Brahman in Vedanta and Yoga meditation, Buddhism in India, China and Japan, Confucian humanism and Taoist mysticism in China.

Texts:

Koller: *Asian Philosophies*

Fung: *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*

Sessions

Topics

1. Introduction to the course.
2. The Indus Valley Civilization: The Dravidian Contribution: Samsara, Karma, Yoga, Nirvana (Non-theistic Analysis)
3. The Aryan Contribution: Mantras, Brahmanas, Upanishads and Epics (Monism and Theism)
4. Each student will select a topic from one the three areas of course discussion (India, China, and Japan). On the basis of these choices topics will then be assigned. Each student will be responsible for writing a research paper of 8 to 10 pages, double-spaced, typewritten. A copy of this paper shall be put on reserve in the library so that all class members can read it. Every student will be responsible for leading a class discussion about his special area of research. This exercise will take the place of a final exam. Other examinations may be given at the discretion of the professor.

INDIA – MOTHERLAND OF RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

5. Pantanjali and Yoga: the origin of introspection and psychology. The physical, ethical and mystical dimensions of Yoga.
6. The ancient Jains develop the theory of the “Cosmic Person” – a di-polar (matter/spirit) universe. Personality is but a mask and the goal of life is to follow the Tirthankaras into unconscious bliss.
7. Aryan polytheism becomes monotheism: the Vedic gods – Agni, Rudra, Varuna, etc. – the personified forces of Nature become subsumed under Prajapati.
8. Aryan idealism: the Upanishads teach that Brahman – the Cosmic Principle – is identical with Atman – the soul of every person. Aham brahm asmi
9. Shankara develops Advaita Vedanta: Brahman – the soul of the Cosmos – is beyond the empirical realm and Nature is illusion – Maya. (Absolute Idealism)
10. Ramanuja and Visisadvaita Vedanta: A modified idealism in which persons (including God) retain a separate individuality and identity.
11. Theistic Hinduism in the Bagavad Gita: Krishna is Lord of Salvation and member of the Hindu Trinity.
12. Gautama Buddha rejects metaphysics: teaches moderation and compassion. Quench the fires of egoistic striving and find Nirvana (passionless peace).
13. Theravada Buddhism is realistic and atheistic. Reality is a constant flux of events in space – time. “All things are as quick as a wink!”.
14. Mahayana Buddhism is idealistic. The cosmic Buddha Mind (Dharmakaya) grounds reality and permeates every individual person.
15. Vajrayana Buddhism: Tibetan “Thunderbolt” vehicle. Idealistic, with a sexual metaphysics (Yun-Yab, Tantra Yoga).
16. Contemporary Indian Thought: The cyclic philosophy of history of Aurobindo and Radhakrishnan. The expanding/collapsing universe.

17. Gandhi develops satyagraha – a nonviolent way of resolving conflict. The liberation of India at the dawn of the Atomic Age.

CHINA – NATURALISTIC RELIGION FOR HUMANITY

18. The language of intuition. Pictographs reflect life concretely. Rational analysis subordinated to intuition. Calligraphy, as art form.
19. Kung Futzu develops a humanistic moral philosophy based upon love, justice, wisdom and propriety. “Jen” (humanity) is the key virtue.
20. Meng Tzu expands Confucianism. The “four beginnings” of man ground the “four constant virtues”. His optimism: the origin of man is good.
21. Mo Tzu and his “knights errant” (yu hsieh) develop the concept of “all embracing love” as the Will of God. All men should love one another.
22. Yang Chu and the yin che introduce the first phase of Taoism. The world is hopelessly evil. Flee from responsibility and save yourself.
23. Lao Tzu identifies cyclic movement of Nature with Tao. Harmony with Nature and simplicity of living are characteristics of the Sage.
24. Chuang Tzu develops Chinese mysticism. Tao is the Cosmic Source - the “Un-carved Block” of infinite potential “beyond shapes and features”.
25. Yin-Yang chia: a proto-science and dualistic cosmology based upon magic and astrology. Trigrams and hexagrams of the I Ching.
26. Tao Hsueh, (neo Confucianism), synthesizes Taoist metaphysics, Yin-Yang cosmology and the ethics of Ju Chia. Chung Yung is the key ethic.

JAPAN – RELIGION AS PSYCHOTHERAPY AND AESTHETICS

27. Chinese legacy: Hui nang develops Ch’an Buddhism. Rejects idealistic metaphysics of Chinese Buddhism for pragmatic atheism of the Founder.
28. Zen’s religion of psychology that goes beyond logic. Koan – nonsense puzzles lead us to Satori and Nirvana in our daily chores.
29. Zen inspires haiku poetry and sumiye painting. The moods of simplicity and solitude are caught in audiovisual snapshots of life.
30. Oriental philosophy and Western culture. Parallels between the psychology of Fromm, Jung, and Eastern thought. Influence of Oriental aesthetics upon Western artists and philosophers.