

Great Spiritual Teachings of Asia in the Modern World

Instructor's Name **Professor Alexander Dolin**

Course description

The course is designed to familiarize students with the major trends in Comparative Cultural Studies, giving a broad panoramic view of the great spiritual teachings of Asia as projected on contemporary social and political reality. Problems of cultural anthropology, sociology, religion, politics, ethics and aesthetics are incorporated into the course, which allows students to develop a deeper understanding of history and culture as well as of the crucial issues of ideological struggle in the globalizing world. Special accent is placed on intercultural communication, clash of civilizations and major ideological conflicts of our time.

Course objectives

1. Introduce students to the major achievements of comparative cultural studies.
2. Expand students' worldview by giving an outline of vital problems of various cultures in the context of modernity.
3. Trace the patterns of intercultural communication, especially referring to the great teachings of Asia as projected on Japan and on the West.
4. Analyze ideological roots of political and social conflicts in the modern world.
5. Develop students' analytical thinking and critical approach to the problems of intercultural conflicts and globalization.

Study Materials

(Special CD-ROM textbook / reference disk with Internet links.)

A. Dolin - PowerPoint Lectures

A. Dolin - "Comparative Culture in a Nutshell"

Reference Books and materials.

Special video materials Online resources (in the links).

Assessment

Percentage of each grading item

Accumulated grade 0,6

Final examination 0,4

Expected academic background

Sufficient English proficiency

Proficiency in world history and sociology

Policies

Attendance is required.

Interest in the subject is encouraged.

Presentation skills are appreciated.

Plagiarism is despised.

Format and Activities

Lecture/seminar with regular presentations and discussions.

The students are expected to write papers using their reference materials and fully participate in the discussions.

Class Schedule

The order of lectures and video materials may be a subject to change

1. Definitions and Concepts of Culture in the Works by Western scholars. - Cultural Relativism – Human Evolution and Adaptation - Genetics, Races and Nations - Diffusion of Culture.
Excerpt from a film on Human Evolution
2. Major concepts of Culture – Urban and Non-urban Culture - Transmission and Evolution of Culture – Evaluative Grading of Cultures – Culture and Civilization.
Excerpt from a film on Australian Aborigines
3. Language and Society – Foreign Languages and Translation – Nationalist Trends in Politics and Languages – Languages of Culture – Creative Mind in the Arts.
4. Formation of Communities – Emergence of Social Structures and Regulations – Formations of Classes, Casts and other Social Groups – Emergence of Social Reorganizations, Ideology and Law.
Excerpt from a film on a tribe in New Guinea
5. Polytheistic religions – Veneration of Elements, Forces of Nature, Stars and Planets. – Animism and Totemism – Ancestor Worship - Polytheism and Monotheism - Occultism and Magic – Japanese Shinto as a Polytheistic Cult.
Excerpt from a film “Gods and Mankind”
6. Divers Forms of Ritual - Dietary Laws – Marriage Regulations – Taboos – Sacred Rites and Ceremonies – Religious Transformation – Social Transformation – Rites of Passage – Life-cycle Ceremonies and Festivals.
Excerpt from the film on Sacred Rituals
7. Myth and Culture – Basic Concepts of the Mythology Studies – Various Approaches to the Structure of Myth – Myth and Religious Archetype in Primitive Societies – Myth and Cultural Archetype in Modern Societies - Myth and Art – The Nazi Aryan Myth – The Japanese @Divine Race Myth@ - the Communist myth The Future of Myth.
Excerpt from the film “Greek Mythology”
8. Major Monotheistic Religions – The Legacy of Judaism – The Tora and Biblical Mythology – The Concept of the Chosen Nation – The Destiny Of the Hebrew Civilization.
The Legacy of Christianity – Historical Background - Major Dogmas – Christianity and the World today.
Excerpt from the film “The Holy Land”
9. e Legacy of Islam – Historical Background – The Pillars of Faith – The Muslim Fundamentalism and the Concept of Jihad – Muslim Culture and its

Contribution to the World Civilization – Radical Islam versus the West -The Clash of Civilizations in the XXI c.

Excerpt from the film “*The Legacy of Koran*”

10. . Religions in Indian Society – Hinduist Traditions in Indian Culture – General Nature of Hindu Beliefs – Hindu Mythology and Pantheon- Veda and Brahmanism – Vedic Heritage and Upanishada Philosophy – Major Literary and Philosophic Monuments (Mahabharata and Ramayana) -. Sacred Places – Festivals and Rites. – Indian Mind Today.

Excerpt from the film “Cultural Legacy of India”

11.. Indian Philosophy and Life - Ahimsa (no harm) Concept – Transmigration, Rebirth and Karma Concepts – The Ashrama (four stages of life) Concept – Major Cults and Religious Orders – Bhakti Mysticism – Hinduism and Art. – Early Indian Missionaries in the West - Krishnaism and Western Culture – Hinduism and Islam.-Tantric Traditions and Esoteric Texts – Tantric Rituals – Emergence of Yoga- Yoga in the West – Totalitarian Cults and Modern World.

Excerpt from the film “Yoga and Miracles”

12. Advent of Buddhism – The Meaning of Buddhist Doctrine – The Four Noble Truths – The Eightfold Path – Concept of Karma in Buddhism – Suffering, Impermanence and No-self – Concept of Enlightenment - Concept of Nirvana. – Buddhism and Spiritual Life – Ways of Self-perfection - Buddhism and the Arts.

Excerpt from a film on Buddhist Art

13.. Mahayana Buddhism – The Bodhisattva Ideal – The Three Buddha Bodies - Basic Teachings and Sacred Texts – Hinayana Buddhism – The Arhat Ideal - Basic Teachings and Sacred Texts - Major Trends in Esoteric Buddhism – Buddhism in India, South-East Asia,, China, Tibet and Japan – Buddhism and Indigenous Polytheist Religions - Buddhism and Modern Society.

14. Chinese Culture in the World History – Imperial Centre and the Countries of East Asia – Religious Syncretism – Concepts of Stability and Flexibility – Ethic and Aesthetic Ideals – The Silk Road and Transmission of Culture - China and the West: Past and Present.

Excerpt from a film “Cultural Legacy of China”

15. Basic Concepts of Taoism – Heaven -Man-Earth - The *Wu wei* (non-interference) Principle - Identity of Life and Death – Following the Way - Forces of Nature and The Five Elements – The Book of Changes - Taoism and Science – Taoism and Medicine in the Modern World- -Taoist Yoga, Chi-gong and Martial Arts – Taoism and Buddhism- Tradition and Progress – Learning and Creativity – Masters and their Schools.

Excerpt from a film on Chinese Art

16. Confucianism as a Philosophy and the Ethical Guidelines – Humanism (jen) as the Basic Principle –The Role of Cultural Heritage – Compilation of Five Classics and their Functions in the Teaching – Concepts of Loyalty and Filial Piety – Concept of a Noble-minded Man (junzi) – Concept of a Righteous Ruler.

17. Concept of Social Harmony and Peaceful Administration in Confucianism-
Analects (Lun-yui) by Confucius – Confucianism in China as a Pillar
of Social Life – Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism in Japan – Ideals
of Bushido – Confucian Labor Ethics Today.

18. Zen Aesthetics and its Role in Japanese Culture – Perception of Zen
in the West – Suzuki Daisetsu and his Works in Europe and America –
Proliferation of Zen in Western Literature, Music and Painting. –
The Triumph of Oriental Martial Arts in the West.

. Japan and the West - Periods of Cultural Interaction – Christian Age and
Orandagaku in the Edo Period – Meiji Restoration and influences from
Western Culture – Confrontation with the West – Postwar Japan and
American Impact on the Mass Culture – Tradition and Innovation – Prospects of
Globalization and Alienation. n.

19. Final Examination.