



**Religious Studies 2203F/G (570)**  
**Introduction to Eastern Religions**  
**Fall/ Winter 2025-2026**

**Instructor:** Kato,Julius-Kei

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## **Course Information**

### **Calendar Description:**

What did the Buddha teach? How does Confucius say we should live our lives? Is there such a thing as 'oriental' wisdom? These and many other questions are explored in this introduction to the great religions of India, China and Japan.

**Antirequisite(s):** [Religious Studies 1023E](#), [Religious Studies 2130](#).

**Extra Information:** 3 hours, 0.5 course. Note: This course may not be used to fulfill requirements for World Religions modules.

**Course Weight:** 0.50

**Breadth:** Category B

**Subject Code:** RELSTUD

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.



Department of Religious Studies

## **Religious Studies 2203F – Introduction to Eastern Religions** *Course Outline (2025 v1 August Version)*

Class Time: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:00~11:30 am  
Instructor: Dr. Julius-Kei Kato, S.S.L., Ph.D.  
E-mail: [jkato@uwo.ca](mailto:jkato@uwo.ca)  
Office Hours: by appointment. Email me at [jkato@uwo.ca](mailto:jkato@uwo.ca) / **Better still, send me a DM on MS Teams**

Facebook: I also encourage students to like my public FB page 'JK Kato-Studying the Human Quest for Depth and Transcendence' where I occasionally post things relevant to the study of religion and spirituality. If there is any post directly relevant to this course, it will be labeled #kingsrs2203

### **Course Description**

This course will introduce the students to the main characteristics of religious-spiritual traditions that are commonly classified under the label of "Eastern Religions." We will ask and attempt to answer the following questions: What did the Buddha and other teachers of the Indian subcontinent teach? How does Confucius say we should live our lives? Is there such a thing as "Eastern" wisdom? These and many other questions are explored in this introduction to the great religions and spiritualities of India, China and Japan.

### **Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, the students should:

- Be familiar with the general contours of the different worldviews that make up the so-called "Eastern" religious-spiritual traditions, particularly, their truth claims and spiritual practices.
- Be able to critically compare the worldviews of monotheistic (Western) religious-spiritual traditions and Eastern one
- Be able to give a brief introduction to each Eastern religious tradition to one's peers or to a high-school class.

### **Reference Materials (Print & Online)**

\*There will be no textbook for this course. All resources will be posted on OWL-Brightspace

Laughlin, Paul Alan. 2005. *Getting Oriented: What Every Christian Should Know about Eastern Religions, But Probably Doesn't*. Polebridge Press.

Young, William. *The World's Religions: Worldviews and Contemporary Issues*. Third Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2010.

**Good Introductions to the Some Eastern Religions from Various Instructor-Vetted Online Sources**

*From Patheos.com*

Hinduism: <https://www.patheos.com/library/hinduism.html>

Buddhism: <https://www.patheos.com/library/buddhism.html>

*From Oprah's Network (short introductions)*

Buddhism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lxq-RiLb-6M&t=51s>

Jainism: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h\\_VA7mWWn58&t=9s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_VA7mWWn58&t=9s)

Sufism : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yD4vvIPMQrw>

*From Prof. Dale Tuggy, World Religions*

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMCt15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH>

*Religion for Breakfast (Various Episodes)*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5KHDR8jdbA&list=PLV7Diz4DTv4lNi\\_yFf6mqj-AWJL6cdmw1&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5KHDR8jdbA&list=PLV7Diz4DTv4lNi_yFf6mqj-AWJL6cdmw1&index=1)

[https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHsXddZFR9AMEFx\\_uyGN-ZMMeD37WAJvh](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHsXddZFR9AMEFx_uyGN-ZMMeD37WAJvh)

Additional required readings will be made available either on OWL-Brightspace or placed on Reserve in the Cardinal Carter Library.

*The Bible.* The **New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with Apocrypha** (or the Catholic edition) is the preferred translation for this course. If you wish to use a different translation, please consult the instructor. NRSV is available online <<http://bible.oremus.org/>>

There will be various books for reference. Check the 'on reserve' section for this course on the library website.

## Course Requirements, Evaluation & Readings

Here is how I will decide on your final grades:

- **Weekly Quizzes (15%)** | There will be an open-book but timed multiple choice quiz on the assigned readings and lecture every week. Although it is "open-book," *you have to do* the readings and review the lecture notes IN ADVANCE in order to do well on this *timed quiz*. More detailed instructions will be given at the beginning of the course.
- **Class Attendance / Active and Critical Participation (15%)** | I will give you several opportunities to show class participation such as *questions, comments, etc. in or outside the classroom or on online forums*. But the major way by which I will gauge this category will be through your **Course Journal entries and your participation in the class whiteboard or in-person class**. See the more detailed explanations below. *I highly encourage people to put great weight on participation because I will give EXTRA CREDIT if I see that people TRY their best to participate actively.*

- **Midterm Exam (15%)** | Open-notes/open-books. Computer necessary. It will cover all lectures and readings to date. To be held In-person.
- **Final Exam (35%)** | Open-notes/open-books. It will cover all lectures and readings from midterm to the end of the semester. In-person.
- **'Research Project' (20%)** | The methodology on how to write this paper (based on the "three worlds") will be taught during the semester.

### **RS2203 Intro. to Eastern Religions - Course Journal Entries**

Students are encouraged to submit at least 5 course journal entries in the course of the semester. *This is the minimum. Please submit more than 5 journal entries for a better grade.* A journal entry will be about any topic that was covered either in the readings or the lectures. It will have the following components: [1] 'Points that stood out to you and why' *accompanied by your critical reflections, comments, and even questions* (remember, if a particular point "strikes you," it is because you need to hear that at this point in your life; [2] Regardless of whether they "stood out" to you or not, write down—what you think—are the most important objective points in the topic covered, accompanied by some critical reflections.

What I am particularly trying to observe in this exercise is the student's critical reaction to material encountered in their reading or in the class lectures. It is not enough just to list down things without a short critical reflection. This critical reaction may take several possible forms (or a combination of the following): a question, further elaboration on a topic, statement of concurrence or disagreement with one's reasons for doing so, sharing of a topic which came to mind occasioned by the reading, a personal reflection, etc. The model for this journal entry is the opinion section (editorials) of newspapers, serious journals or blog sites.

*This category makes up 15% of your final grade. However, if you go beyond the minimum and do this project well (that means: more entries, more depth and elaboration in the individual entries), I will give you extra credit that will go toward your final grade.*

**[Length of Each Journal Entry]** An entry does not have to be long. The expected length of a single journal entry is normally the amount equivalent to a full page (double-space, letter-size page / somewhere between 200-300 words). *But you're always free to write more.*

**IMPORTANT:** You have to submit a critical reaction note within a week *after* a topic is covered in class. When a new topic is introduced in the next class, I will no longer accept journal entries of previous older topics. The rationale for this rule is that I would like you to work regularly on this reflective and introspective exercise and NOT CRAM at the end.

#### **Form of Submission of Course Journal Entries**

I will provide a weekly Microsoft form at our MS Teams form to submit your journal entries

### **Class Attendance & Participation**

Class attendance will be taken at every meeting in the form of a weekly quiz. If there is a valid reason for an absence, please inform the instructor through a DM (direct message) on our Teams chat and the absence will not be counted against you (on a case to case basis, the instructor may request documentation).

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### **Academic Honesty & Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

*Nevertheless, as per departmental policy, all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between the University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com*

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Good luck and if you have any other concerns, know that I'm always available to discuss them personally with you.

## (Tentative) Schedule of Topics – Readings

### Version 1-Summer 2025

A more detailed schedule of readings and topics will be posted on OWL-Brightspace at the beginning of the semester.

Week	Date	Topics to be covered in lectures and readings	Readings (the list of readings will be given shortly before the semester begins)
1	Sept 4/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Preliminaries 1</b></li> <li>· Overview of the Course Material</li> <li>· Basic Issues to be covered in this course, such as “Western” and “Eastern” religions / “Monotheistic” “Polytheistic” “Non-theistic” religions</li> </ul>	·
2	Sept 11/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Worldviews and Religion</b></li> <li>· <b>The Worldviews of Different Religious Traditions</b></li> <li>· <b>Western/Monotheistic Religion</b></li> </ul>	·
3	Sept 18/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Hinduism, Part 1</b></li> <li>·</li> </ul>	·
4	Sept 25/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Hinduism, Part 2 / Sept 30 is a non-instructional day</b></li> </ul>	·
5	Oct 2/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Hinduism, Part 3</b></li> </ul>	·
6	Oct 9/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>In-class/In-person Midterm Exam</b></li> </ul>	·
7	Oct 16/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Buddhism, Part 1</b></li> </ul>	·
8	Oct 23/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Buddhism, Part 2</b></li> </ul>	·
9	Oct 30 /Nov 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Buddhism, Part 3</b></li> </ul>	·
10	Nov 13/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Chinese Religions, Part 1</b></li> </ul>	·
11	Nov 20/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Chinese Religions, Part 2</b></li> </ul>	·
12	Nov 27/ Dec 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Other Eastern Religions</b></li> </ul>	·
13	Dec 4/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· <b>Back to the West: What Have We Learned?</b></li> </ul>	·
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>·</li> </ul>	·

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# KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

## GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

### 2025-2026

#### **1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences**

##### **Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)**

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

##### **Academic Consideration for Student Absence**

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at [https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses\\_enrollment/exams\\_and\\_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf](https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf).

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

[https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/academic\\_consideration\\_Sep24.pdf](https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf)

##### **Absences from Final Examinations**

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

## **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

## **2. Support Services**

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

[https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/)

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

### **GBSV Support:**

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing [Care@kings.uwo.ca](mailto:Care@kings.uwo.ca) or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also [https://www.uwo.ca/health/student\\_support/survivor\\_support/get-help.html](https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html)

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

### 3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

**Use of Electronic Devices:** Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

**Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom:** King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

### 4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

### **5. Copyright of Course Material**

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

### **6. Use of Recordings**

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

### **7. Policy on Attendance**

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.