



Religious Studies 2203f/g (570)
Introduction to Eastern Religions
Fall/ Winter 2026-2027

Instructor: JK. Kato

Email: jkato@uwo.ca

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 (July-August 2026 Version)**

Instructor: Dr. Julius-Kei Kato, S.S.L., Ph.D.

E-mail: jkato@uwo.ca

Office Hours: by appointment. Email me at 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, among other "Eastern" areas of the world.

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 ones
- 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 single 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 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>

Confucianism: <https://www.patheos.com/library/confucianism>

Taoism/Daoism: <https://www.patheos.com/library/taoism>

From Oprah's Network (short introductions)

Hinduism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EICcU9oN-s&list=PLV7Diz4DTv4nVg15sBwwkwfnzvULKPKid&index=5&t=12s>

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

Jainism: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_VA7mWWn58&t=9s

Sufism : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yD4vvlPMQrw>

From Prof. Dale Tuggy, World Religions (Main Resource)

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

From Prof. Andrew Henry -Religion for Breakfast (Various Episodes) (Supporting the main resource)

<https://www.youtube.com/@ReligionForBreakfast>

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLHsXddZFR9AMEFx_uYGN-ZMMed37WAJvh

Crash Course Religions (John Green)

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8dPuuaLjXtNDV8GjzfScxgEe4OgIlh3c>

Cogito (videos that pertain to religion)

https://www.youtube.com/@CogitoEdu/videos?view=0&sort=p&shelf_id=5

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

(if necessary) *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 <<https://www.biblegateway.com/> >

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*. Details on how this will be conducted will be explained as soon as the school year starts.
- **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 and/or during in-person classes**. 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 will be taught during the semester. At this point, I am thinking of the following: Do a presentation about an Eastern spiritual-religious tradition (or about an aspect of an Eastern religion) that would be interesting for a high-level senior high school class. The work must be based on what you learned in this course using materials and content from our readings and lectures.

IMPORTANT! The most important thing I’ll look for in your answers is: HOW YOU ARE ENGAGING with the course materials—expressing them IN YOUR OWN WORDS and adding your own CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES and ANALYSES.

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] The most important points from the course material assigned for that particular week; [3] Other noteworthy points that struck you: questions, associations that you made, etc.

What I am particularly trying to observe in this exercise is the student’s critical reaction to material encountered through the course materials (videos or readings) or in the class lectures. It is **not enough** just to list down things. To do better, please add short critical reflections. 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 will be asked to submit a critical reaction note **by the end of the Tuesday class (before 11:30 am)**. After that time, the form will close and you will no longer be allowed to submit for that week. 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). **TAKE NOTE: Only those who are physically present or those who have a legitimate excuse (made known to the instructor) can take this weekly quiz!**

Midterm and Final Examinations

The midterm and final examinations, will include multiple choice, short answer, objective-type and essay questions. As a general rule, the questions in examinations (midterm and final exams) will not require memorization or rote learning unless they are questions of very important data regarding the Eastern religious traditions (to be pointed out before the exams). ***The students will be required to express in their own words the most important concepts emphasized in the course lectures and readings.***

NOTE WELL: IT WILL BE AN OPEN BOOKS/OPEN NOTES EXAM but conducted in-person with a fixed time limit (for those without special accommodation). A computer will be necessary during the final exam period. You will be asked open-ended questions that would require you stating IN YOUR OWN WORDS what we studied and learned during the semester. Engagement with course materials IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR in your answers. ***If I see that you are not engaging with WHAT WE STUDIED in this course, I will just assume that you have used AI (or other sources) and this negative assessment will be reflected in a low evaluation or non-acceptance of your answer.***

IMPORTANT - MANDATORY REQUIREMENT: For your answers in the final examination, I WILL NOW REQUIRE YOU TO MENTION EXPLICITLY the main sources where you are getting your answers from. This will take the form of CITING THE WEEK NUMBERS of the class resources that you are basing your answers on.

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 appropriate Western website:

THE BASIC PRINCIPLE: 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

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

Schedule of Topics – Readings

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 (Transcriptions of the online videos will be put in OWL-BRIGHTSPACE)
1	Sept 15	Preliminaries - Overview of the Course Material - Basic Issues to be covered in this course: “Western” and “Eastern” religions / “Monotheistic” “Polytheistic” “Non-theistic” religions	World Religions Dr. Dale Tuggy (WR-DT) 1a – Why Study Religion? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CmEWtEl0oPo&list=PLMCt15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH&index=1&t=19s - WR-DT 1b: What is a “religion”? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JsFSApix9O4&list=PLMCt15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH&index=2&t=11s
2	Sept 22	Worldviews and Religion - Worldviews of Different Religious Traditions Western/Monotheistic Religions	- Religion for Breakfast-Dr. Andrew Henry (RB-AH) [another take]: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c5KHDR8jdbA&t=48s - Watch the following short overview of five great world religions from TED Education. COMPARE ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ traditions: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m6dCxo7t_aE&list=PLV7Diz4DTv4nVg15sBwwkwfnzvULKPKid&index=4&t=326s
3	Sept 29	Hinduism, Part 1	WR-DT. Watch the following: 2a, 2b, 2c https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMCt15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH
4	Oct 6	Hinduism, Part 2	WR-DT. Watch the following: 3a, 3b, 3c https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMCt15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH --
5	Oct 20	Hinduism, Part 3	WR-DT. Watch the following: 4a, 4b, 5c https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMCt15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH ---
	Oct 27	In-class/In-person Midterm Exam	
6	Nov 3	Buddhism, Part 1	WR-DT. Watch the following: 6a, 6b, 6c, 8a https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMCt15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH ---
7	Nov 10	Buddhism, Part 2	WR-DT. Watch the following: 7a, 7b, 7c, 7d https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMCt15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH ---
8	Nov 17	Buddhism, Part 3	WR-DT. Watch the following: 8b, 8c, 9a, 9c, 9d (more than the usual)

			· https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMct15e8gG-j3nRRZlmhltadY8XDn4KAH ---
9	Nov 24	· Chinese Religions, Part 1	· Daosim · Religion for Breakfast-Dr. Andrew Henry (RB-AH): What is Daoism?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ug0rIG6ZctY&t=720s
10	Dec 1	· Chinese Religions, Part 2	· Confucianism · Religion for Breakfast-Dr. Andrew Henry (RB-AH): What is Confucianism?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PG-XUE0CyQk
11	Dec 8	· Other Eastern Religions	· What is Sikhism? (Dr. Andrew Henry): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWsCIPXLApA&t=13s · Jainism (Oprah Network): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_VA7mWWn58&t=21s · Shinto (Dr. Andrew Henry): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlKeVY_FsVg&t=2s
12		· Back to the West: What Have We Learned?	· READING to be provided on OWL-Brightspace
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**KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
GENERAL COURSE POLICIES
2026-27**

1. Academic Accommodations (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 at [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

2. Academic Consideration for Student Absences

Students must be approved to write a makeup exam or for an extension of the assignment deadline. If you need to miss an exam or the deadline for the assignment, please follow these instructions.

There are two ways to seek academic consideration:

(i) Academic consideration based on medical or compassionate grounds

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate grounds), they should contact the Academic Advising Office. As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration.

For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate (SMC) is the appropriate documentation. The SMC is available at <https://registrar.uwo.ca/academics/pdfs/student-medical-certificate.pdf>

- King's students: The Academic Advising Office website is located in DLH 104. The Academic Advising website is <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising>.
- If your home faculty is Huron or at Western, please submit your documentation to your faculty's academic counselling office.
- Requests must be made as soon as possible, and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

You may submit requests for academic consideration through the **Student Absence Portal**, linked on this website: <https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/academics/academic-advising/academic-consideration-requests-and-student-absence-portal>.

(ii) Academic consideration through an undocumented absence

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per half-course (0.5) weight.

- Note that instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline to confirm this which assessment has been designated as requiring documentation for consideration (that is, exempt from undocumented absences).
- Undocumented absences can not be used as the basis for academic consideration for December or April exams.

If an instructor has built flexibility into their assessments (e.g., “complete 8 of 10 quizzes”), this flexibility will already address consideration needs and thus academic consideration may be denied.

For further information on the academic consideration policy, please see

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

c) Absences from Final Exams

If you miss the Final Exam, **contact your Academic Advising Office** 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 (i.e., you are scheduled to write 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](#)).

d) Religious Accommodations

Students should consult the University’s list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and their 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.

3. Support Services

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

<https://mykings.ca/intranet/app/#/student-supports-and-services/accessibility-services>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/campus-life/student-supports/>

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

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

<https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental-health/index.html>

Academic Support Services at King's University College: <https://kings.uwo.ca/academics/academic-supports/>

4. Statement on Gender-Based Sexual Violence

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

You can reach supports at King's by emailing 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 (health@uwo.ca) or by calling 519-661-3568. Additional support services can be found <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/support/index.html>

5. 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://kings.uwo.ca/sites/2025/assets/files/campus/Kings_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf

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.

6. 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 https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_offences.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 you instructor to check which tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in each course.** Note that although some courses may permit the use of such tools, it does not mean use of such tools 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.

7. 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.

8. 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.

9. 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.