

Winter 2000

HSTAS 456/SISEA 456
Topics in Social History
Topic: Historical Study of Chinese Popular Religion

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This year this course will concentrate on religious practice and belief as a topic for historical study. We will begin with an examination of the new research on early (pre-Buddhist) Chinese religious ideas and practices, then move on to later developments, including the social and political dimensions of Buddhism, the role of temples in local social and cultural life, and the involvement of both the state and various elites with religious activities. We first build a foundation by reading together three recent books and one review article. These books were selected to give students an appreciation of the issues that currently engage scholars and the sorts of strategies they are using to pursue them. To make our time together as productive as possible, in advance of each of the four sessions devoted to recent publications, designated students will email to everyone else a paragraph that restates the thesis or theses of the book and brings up an issue or two that would be worth discussing.

Each student will write a short and a long paper. The short paper (4-6 pages) will critique a recent scholarly book on an aspect of Chinese religion (see list of recommended books). The long paper (ca. 12-20 pages) is a research paper on an approved topic. The readings concentrate on premodern China (up through the Ming), but students may do their paper on a later period if they choose. Both papers will be presented in class.

Grades will be based on the research paper (50%), the book critique (25%), and class participation (25%).

Books ordered in bookstore:

- Mu-chou Poo, *In Search of Personal Welfare: A View of Ancient Chinese Religion* (1998)
Jacques Gernet, *Buddhism in Chinese Society: An Economic History from the Fifth to the Tenth Centuries* (1995)
Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* (1993).

The article will be placed on electronic reserve.

Course schedule:

Week 1 (Jan. 8) Introduction to the issues: Religion as a topic of social history.

Week 2 (Jan 15). Holiday Martin Luther King day. (We need to find an alternative time to meet.) Religious beliefs and practices in early China: discuss Poo book.

Week 3 (Jan 22) The impact of Buddhism on Chinese life: discuss Gernet book.

Week 4 (Jan 19) Social history of institutional religion: discuss Brook book.

Week 5 (Feb. 5) Other trends in research: discuss Daniel Overmyer, et al. "Chinese Religions: The State of the Field," part 1 and 2. JAS 54.1:124-60, 54.2:314-95.

Week 6 (Feb 12) Presentation of book reviews

Week 7 (Feb. 19) Holiday Presidents' Day. Work on papers. (Drafts due by Friday 2/23 for those presenting the following Monday 2/26).

Week 8 (Feb. 26) Student Presentations (Drafts due on Friday 3/2 for those presenting on Monday 3/5.)

Week 9 (Mar 5) Student Presentations

Exam week (March 12) Papers due in Ebrey's mailbox in Thomson by 4 PM.

Useful reference tools:

Laurence G. Thompson, *Chinese Religion in Western Languages: A comprehensive and classified bibliography of publications in English, French, and German*. (Three vol.: To 1980, 1981-90, 1991-95)

Bibliography of Asian Studies. Online bibliography, available from database page of UW library page.

Journal of Chinese Religions. Interesting articles every issue.

Recommended books for book report:

These are all books published since 1990. Other books may be chosen, but you should first get approval. These books below do not require a great deal of prior knowledge. For those with more background in Buddhism or Daoism, there are many other good books.

Sarah Allan, *The Shape of the Turtle: Myth, Art, and Cosmos in Early China* (1991)

Cynthia Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China*. (1991).

Suzanne Cahill, *Transcendence and Divine Passion: The Queen Mother of the West in Medieval China* (1993)

Patricia Ebrey and Peter Gregory, eds. *Religion and Society in T'ang and Sung China* (1993).

B. J. ter Haar, *The White Lotus Teachings in Chinese Religious History*. (1992)

Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276*. (1990)

Paul Katz, *Images of the Immortal: The Cult of Lu Dongbin at the Palace of Eternal Joy*. (1999)

John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography*. (1997)

Steven Little with Shawn Eichman, *Taoism and the Arts of China* (2000)

Michael Loewe, *Divination, Mythology, and Monarchy in Han China* (1994)

Susan Naquin and Chun-fang Yu, eds. *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China*. (1992)

Isabelle Robinet, *Taoism: The Growth of a Religion*. (1997)

Richard Smith, *Fortune Tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* (1991)

Stephen Teiser, *The Ghost Festival in Medieval China* (1988)

_____. *The Scripture of the Ten Kings* (1994)

Marsha Weidner, ed. *Latter Days of the Law: Images of Chinese Buddhism, 850-1850*. (1994).

