

Medieval Religious Contexts

Fall 2024

HUMN 2023/4023

TR 9:30-10:50, PY 205

Professor Kirsten Lodge

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Office: 217 Bea Wood Hall, 940-397-4363

Office Hours: MWF 10-11, TR 11-12, and by appointment

This interdisciplinary course will introduce students to the medieval cultures of the Islamic world, India, Asia, Africa, Mesoamerica and South America, and Europe. During the medieval period (c. 400-1400 CE), these cultures were highly religious; we will therefore emphasize religious beliefs and practices, and we will also go back in time to study the origins of the major world religions. We will also look at other aspects of culture, including history, art, literature, philosophy, and music. Students will thus acquire an understanding of major world cultures during this time period, encounter different ways of viewing the world, analyze, interpret, and think critically about diverse works of art, literature, and music, and learn to take an interdisciplinary approach to the humanities by contextualizing major works. Through class participation and written reflections, students will improve their communication skills. As they come to understand the complexity of these parts of the world, students will develop increased respect for other cultures and peoples. Hopefully, they will be inspired to learn more about cultures other than our own.

Aug. 27 Introduction

Chapter 6: Islamic Civilization

29 Islamic Civilization; Religion; Islam, the Ottoman Empire, and Europe; The Quran

Reading: 216-20; 232-33 (*The Quran*)

Sept. 3 Islamic Art and Architecture; Philosophy; Math, Science, and Scholarship; Scholarly Cross Fertilization

Reading: 220-27; 233-35 (*The Thousand and One Nights*)

4023 Presentation Proposal Due

5 Literature

Reading: 235-38 (Rumi)

10 Literature; Music

Reading: 227-30; 238-39 (Remaining Readings)

Chapter 7: Indian Civilization

12 Vedic Period; Hinduism; Literature: The Hindu Classics

Reading: 242-46; 258-61 (*The Bhagavad Gita*)

17 Maurya Period; Buddhism; Maurya Art; Mauryan to Bactrian to Kushan; Gupta Era; Gupta Art

Reading: 246-51; 255; 261-63; 265-66 (Buddhist Sermons and Hindu Lyric Poetry)

19 Hindu Dynasties; Hindu Temples; Sculpture; Music

Reading: 251-55; 263-65 (*The Ramayana* and *The Pancatantra*)

24 Indian Drama; Music

Reading: 255-57; 266-71 (Kalidasa)

Chapter 8: Early Chinese Civilization

26 Shang and Zhou Dynasties; Empire: Qin and Han Dynasties; The Six Dynasties

Reading: 274-75; 278-80; 288-89 (*The Book of Songs* and *Midnight Songs*)

Oct. 1 Confucianism

Reading: 275-77; 289-90 (Confucius, including additional excerpts posted on D2L)

3 Taoism

Reading: 277-78; 290-92 (*The Tao Te Ching*, *The Book of Liezi*, and Zhuangzi)

8 The Tang Dynasty; The Song Dynasty; Chinese Literature

Reading: 280-86; 292-95 (Remaining Readings)

Chapter 9: Early Japanese Civilization

10 Prehistoric Japan; Religion; Courtly Japan: Asuka and Nara Periods; Courtly Japan: Heian Period; Literature

Reading: 298-303; 310-11 (Japanese Poetry)

15 Warrior Japan; Later Warrior Japan; Landscape Painting; Temple of the Golden Pavilion; Japanese Gardens; Literature

Reading: 303-9; 311-17 (Remaining Readings)

Chapter 10: Early Civilizations of the Americas and Africa

17 Mesoamerica; Olmecs; Teotihuacán; Mayan Culture

Reading: 320-25

22 Toltecs and Aztecs

Reading: 325-28; 344-45 (Mesoamerican Poems)

24 Cultures of Peru; The Moche; The Inca

Reading: 328-33; 346-50 (The Popol Vuh and Neruda)

29 Africa; African Epics

Reading: 336-42; 350-53 (The Epic of Son-Jara (Sundiata): these are two variants of the same epic)

Chapter 11: Early Middle Ages and the Romanesque

31 Early Medieval Culture; Merging of Christian and Celto-Germanic Traditions; Charlemagne and the Carolingian Era; Monasticism

Reading: 356-62

Nov. 5 Midterm (Chapters 6-10)
4013 Paper Proposal Due

7 Literature

Reading: 374-76 (*Beowulf*)

12 Literature; Romanesque Culture; The Feudal Monarchs; Romanesque Architecture

Reading: 362-66; 376-78 (*The Song of Roland*)

14 Sculpture; Painting; Decorative Arts; The Chivalric Tradition; Music

Reading: 366-72; 378-81 (Poetry)

Chapter 12: Gothic and Late Middle Ages

19 Paris in the Later Middle Ages; Gothic Architecture; Gothic Architecture Outside France; Sculpture

Reading: 384-96

21 Literature: Dante's *Inferno*; Painting and Decorative Arts; Toward the Renaissance; Naturalism in Art

Reading: 396-404; 406-8; 415-21 (*Inferno*)

25 Last Day for 'W'

27 Thanksgiving Break

Dec. 3 Literature: Boccaccio

Reading: 409-10; 421-23 (*Decameron*)
4023 Paper Draft Due

5 Literature; Music; Medieval Calamities; Secular Song; The Medieval Bestiary
Reading: 404-6; 410-12; 423-29 (Chaucer and Christine de Pizan)

10 Final Exam, 8-10 a.m.
4023 Final Paper Due, 8 a.m.

Course Requirements

- 1. Participation (2013, 10%; 4013, 5%).** It is essential that you participate in class discussion and activities to help you understand and master all of the material we cover. Please note that participation is different from attendance. Participation means talking in class.
- 2. In-Class Writing (2013, 35%; 4013, 25%):** At the beginning of most classes, I will give you a brief question or a quotation from the text to respond to. You do not have to write complete sentences—bullet points are fine, as long as I can understand what you mean. Spelling and grammar will not count. Your grade for these reflections will be check plus, check, check minus, or X, which will be entered in D2L as A+, B,+ C+, or zero. If you have an excused absence for the day, you may make up the in-class writing in my office.
- 3. Midterm (2013, 25%; 4013, 20%).** The midterm will be on chapters 6-10.
- 4. Final Exam (2013, 30%; 4013, 25%).** The final exam will be on chapters 11-12.
- 5. Research-Based Presentation (4013, 10%).** Upper-level students must choose a topic for a 10-15 minute presentation. The topic should complement the textbook, not repeat what it says. You will be expected to consult at least three scholarly sources, and give me an outline of the presentation and a bibliography in MLA or APA style on the day of your presentation. See the presentation rubric on D2L for guidance. You should look through the textbook and submit a topic proposal to me by **Sept. 3**, and we will set a date for your presentation.
- 6. Research Paper (4013, 15%).** Upper-level students will write a 5-6 page research paper on a topic of their choice, but not on the same topic as their presentation. The paper must be in MLA or APA format, including in-text citations. If you use a cover sheet, it will not count as an additional page. You should watch the video on D2L on writing a research paper. Please submit a brief paper proposal by **Nov. 5** and a draft with a bibliography of at least three scholarly sources by **Dec. 3**. You must come to see me in my office before you start the draft. The paper is due on **Dec. 10**. If it is late, your grade will be reduced by one-third of a letter grade (e.g., A > A-) per day.

7. Attendance. You must attend class to help you master and contextualize the material. You are permitted three unexcused absences. Absences will be excused on the basis of a note from a doctor, dean, military official, or coach. However, if you believe you have a good reason for missing class but are unable to get a written excuse, please let me know, and if your excuse is valid, I will excuse you.

Your final grade will be lowered by one point for each unexcused absence in excess of the two permitted unexcused absences. In addition, three “lates” will add up to one unexcused absence unless you provide me with a valid reason for lateness.

Any student with more than seven absences for any reason may be dropped from the course.

Course Policies

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you plagiarize on any assignments or papers, or engage in any other form of academic dishonesty as defined by the MSU Student Handbook, you will get a zero on the assignment. Other forms of academic dishonesty include, for instance, forging doctor’s notes, and lying to the professor.

AI Use: I understand that AI can be a useful tool, and I am not against AI as such; however, the goal of the assignments in this course is to teach you critical thinking skills, and therefore the use of AI in this course will be considered plagiarism.

Note that there is no uniform policy on AI use at MSU. Make sure that you understand the policy for each course you are taking.

Midterm Progress Report: I will submit a Midterm Progress Report to your WebWorld account. Midterm grades will not be reported on your transcript; nor will they be calculated in the cumulative GPA. Students earning below a C at the midway point will receive an email from Tutoring and Academic Support.

Cellphones: You may not use your cellphone in class except to consult the texts we are discussing, or to google a question we cannot answer.

Food: In accordance with the building policy, you may bring only bottled water to class.

Computers: You may not use a computer in class except to consult the text, or for another justifiable reason. If this is the case, please inform me beforehand.

Attention: Please be alert and do not lay your head down on your desk during class, or I may mark you late or absent without warning.

Class Dismissal: Please do not start to pack up your things or leave until I have dismissed the class. If you believe I have gone over the allotted time, please raise your hand and let me know.

Email Communication: The only way I can communicate with you outside of class is through D2L email. You should set up D2L so that D2L emails are delivered to your email account. You are responsible for checking your email or D2L daily for any reminders, clarifications, or other communications from me.

Safe Zone Statement: This classroom is a “safe zone” in which all students will be treated and will treat one another equally, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Diversity of thought is encouraged.

Other Important Information

Office Hours: My office hours are given above, and I am always happy to help you with any questions you may have, whether they are about the texts we are reading, assignments, exams, absences, or anything else—or you may just come by to talk. If you can’t make my office hours, we can make an appointment.

Tutoring Support: Tutoring and Academic Support Programs (TASP) provides free drop-in tutoring for MSU students. Located on the first floor of Moffett Library, TASP's Learning center provides tutoring support in a number of core courses and subject areas. Please see their schedule for more information about times and offerings.

Academic Accommodations: If you require special accommodations, please contact Disability Support Service, 168 Clark Student Center, 397-4140, at the beginning of the semester so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Arrangements cannot be applied retroactively.

Research and Creative Activity Opportunities at MSU: Enhancing Undergraduate Research Endeavors and Creative Activities (EURECA) is a program that provides opportunities for undergraduates to engage in high-quality research and creative activities with faculty. EURECA provides incentives and funding through a system that supports faculty and students in a cooperative research process. Information and resources are available from [The Office of Undergraduate Research](#).