

# Introduction to World Religions

## **Final Exam**

### **Part I: Multiple Choice (15x1=15 points)**

Mark the box with the most appropriate answer. Questions are based on the material from the course web pages that were covered in class.

### **Part II: Key Terms & Definitions (10x1=10 points)**

Match terms in one column with the appropriate definitions in a second column. The terms and their definitions are drawn from the “Key Terms” sections at the end of each chapter of the course textbook.

### **Part III: Identify and State the Significance (5x3=15 points)**

Identify and state the significance of 5 of the following 7 topics. Responses should be a full paragraph (approximately five sentences).

1. Zen Koan
2. The Vedas
3. The Caste System
4. Ancestor Worship
5. Shinto Purification
6. The Four Noble Truths
7. Inner and Outer Alchemy

### **Part IV: Essay Questions on Judaism, Christianity and Islam (3x15=45 points)**

Write essay-style responses to 3 of the following 4 questions.

#### **1. Daoism & Confucianism**

In the *Zhuangzi*, Cook Ting describes his technique of cutting up oxen as follows:

When I first began cutting up oxen, all I could see was the ox itself. After three years I no longer saw the whole ox. And now—now I go at it by spirit and don't look with my eyes. Perception and understanding have come to a stop and spirit moves where it wants. I go along with the natural makeup, strike in the big hollows, guide the knife through the big openings, and follow things as they are. So I never touch the smallest ligament or tendon, much less a main joint. (*The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, 50-51)

On the other hand, when one of Confucius' students asked about humaneness, he responded:

Through mastering oneself and returning to ritual one becomes humane. If for a single day one can master oneself and return to ritual, the whole world will return to humaneness. ... Yan Yuan said, “May I ask about the specifics of this?” The Master said, “Look at nothing contrary to ritual; listen to nothing contrary to ritual; say nothing contrary to ritual; do nothing contrary to ritual.” (*Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 55 [*Analects* 12:1])

How does Cook Ting's technique of cutting up oxen illustrate the technique of self-cultivation advocated by early Daoist texts such as the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*? How does this differ from the Confucian approach to self-cultivation, which focuses on adhering to the moral principles that are embodied in ritual propriety? How do these two approaches to self-cultivation complement each other despite the significant differences in their respective worldviews?

#### **2. Shinto**

The Spirit of Great Nature may be a flower, may be the beauty of the mountains, the pure snow, the soft rains or the gentle breeze. *Kannagara* means being in communion with these forms of beauty and so with the highest level of experiences of life. When people respond to the silent and provocative beauty of the natural order, they are aware of *kannagara*. When they respond in life in a similar way, by following ways “according to the kami,” they are expressing *kannagara* in their lives. They are living according to the natural flow of the universe and will benefit and develop by so doing. (Yukitaka Yamamoto in *Living Religions*, 226)

Define the term *kami* and explain how—and why—they are worshipped in the Shinto tradition. What are the ultimate goals of Shinto practice? How are these goals similar to and/or different from those of at least one other tradition that we've studied in this course?

### **3. Hinduism**

Of all the deities worshiped by Hindus, there are three major groupings: Shaktas who worship a Mother Goddess, Shaivites who worship the god Shiva, and Vaishnavites who worship the god Vishnu. Each devotee has his or her own “chosen deity,” but will honor others as well. (*Living Religions*, 84)

Briefly describe each of the three major Hindu sects and explain how these three distinct traditions can harmoniously coexist despite the fact that each worships its own deity as the ultimate manifestation of God.

### **4. Buddhism**

In contrast to the Japanese tradition, the Chinese Pure Land tradition merged with Chan Buddhism during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) resulting in a combination of “self power” and “other power” in most forms of Chinese Buddhism. In other words, one conscientiously works towards awakening through meditation and study, while also engaging in faith-based practices, such as reciting the name of Amitabha, chanting Buddhist sutras, and worshiping images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Although these two approaches may appear contradictory, both lead to the dissolution of the ego — the key to attaining nirvana — by either realizing the “egoless” principle of interconnectedness through one's own efforts or opening oneself up to the transforming power of buddhas and bodhisattvas by *relinquishing* the power to determine one's *own* destiny through one's *own* actions. ([Professor Hoffert](#))

Explain the concepts of “self-power” and “other-power” and then use these terms to describe the distinct approaches of at least two different Buddhist traditions. Are these two approaches fundamentally inconsistent or can they be regarded as two paths that lead to the same goal?

### **Part V: Religion in the Twenty-First Century (15 points)**

**Write an essay-style response to the following question.**

Diana Eck speaks of three responses that may be adopted when one comes into contact with religious traditions other than one's own: *exclusivism*, *inclusivism*, and *pluralism*. Describe these three responses, noting what you regard as the strengths and weaknesses of each approach. Identify the response that most closely approximates your own perspective on the question of religious diversity, justifying your answer in terms of the strengths and weaknesses referred to above. How does your perspective on religious diversity affect your ability to study and learn from religious traditions other than your own? Provide at least one example from the material covered in this course to illustrate your answer. Conclude your essay with a paragraph on what you have learned about the study of religion in this course.