

HUM 150 **COMPARATIVE CULTURAL STUDIES**     *3 credits*  
(Great Spiritual Teachings of Asia and Japanese Culture)

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Semesters             spring 2009 1 semester  
Day and Time

**Course description**

The course is designed to familiarize the students with the major trends in Comparative Cultural Studies, giving a broad panoramic view of the great spiritual teachings of Asia from ancient times to the XX1 c. with focus on East Asia. Problems of anthropology, sociology, religion, ethics and aesthetics are incorporated into the course which allows students to develop a deeper understanding of history and various cultural phenomena. Special accent is placed on intercultural communication, conflicts of cultures, religious clashes and major globalization trends, which in turn facilitates rational comprehension of the changing world.

**Course objectives**

1. Introduce students to the major achievements of comparative cultural studies.
2. Expand students' worldviews by giving an outline of vital problems of various cultures in the context of world history.
3. Trace the patterns of intercultural communication, especially referring to the great teachings of Asia as projected on Japan.
4. Develop students' analytical thinking and critical approach to the problems of intercultural conflicts and globalization.

**Study Materials**

(Special CD-ROM textbook / reference disk with Internet links.)

*A. Dolin* AIMS - PowerPoint Lectures

*A. Dolin* "Comparative Culture in a Nutshell"

Special videotapes and DVD

Reference Books and materials.

Online resources (in the links).

## Assessment

### *Percentage of each grading item*

Homework assignments	100 points	25 %
Participation in discussions	100 points	25 %
Final examination	200 points	50 %
Total number of points	400	

## Expected academic background

### Sufficient English proficiency

(advanced EAP – level 3 and above)

## Policies

- Attendance is required.
- Interest in the subject is encouraged.
- Presentation skills are appreciated.
- Plagiarism is despised.

## Format and Activities

Lecture/seminar with regular presentations and discussions.  
The students are expected to write papers using their reference materials provided on the CD-ROM and fully participate in the discussions.

## Class Schedule

### *The order of lectures and video materials may be a subject to change*

1. Definitions and Concepts of Culture in Works by Western scholars. - Cultural Relativism – Human Evolution and Adaptation - Genetics, Races and Nations - Diffusion of Culture.  
*Excerpt from a film on Human Evolution*
2. Major concepts of Culture – Urban and Non-urban Culture - Transmission and Evolution of Culture– Evaluative Grading of Cultures – Culture and Civilization.  
*Excerpt from a film on Australian Aborigines*
3. Language and Society – Foreign Languages and Translation – Nationalist Trends in Politics and Languages – Languages of Culture – Creative Mind in the Arts.
4. Family, Kinship and Formation of Communities – Emergence of Social Structures and Regulations – Formations of Classes, Casts and other Social Groups – Emergence of Ideology and Law.

*Excerpt from a film on a tribe in New Guinea*

5. Presentations and Discussion.
6. Polytheistic religions – Veneration of Elements, Forces of Nature, Stars and Planets. – Animism and Totemism – Ancestor Worship - Polytheism and Monotheism - Occultism and Magic – Japanese Shinto as a Polytheistic Cult –

*Excerpt from a film “Gods and Mankind”*

7. Forms of Ritual - Dietary Laws – Marriage Regulations – Taboos – Sacred Rites and Ceremonies – Religious Transformation – Social Transformation – Rites of Passage – Life-cycle Ceremonies and Festivals.

*Excerpt from a film on Rites of Passage (Sumatra)*

8. Myth and Culture – Basic Concepts of the Mythology Studies – Various Approaches to the Structure of Myth – Myth and Religious Archetype in Primitive Societies – Myth and Cultural Archetype in Modern Societies - Myth and Art – The Future of Myth.

*Excerpt from a film “Greek Mythology”*

9. Major Monotheistic Religions – The Legacy of Judaism – The Tora and Biblical Mythology – The Concept of the Chosen Nation – The Destiny Of the Hebrew Civilization.  
The Legacy of Christianity – Historical Background - Major Dogmas – Christianity and the World.

*Excerpt from a film “The Holy Land”*

10. The Legacy of Islam – Historical Background – The Pillars of Faith – The Muslim Fundamentalism and the Concept of Jihad – Muslim Culture and its Contribution to the World Civilization – The Clash of Civilizations

*Excerpt from a film “The Legacy of Koran”*

11. Religions in Indian Society - Hinduism and Indian Culture – General Nature of Hindu Beliefs – Hindu Mythology and Pantheon- Veda and Brahmanism – Vedic Heritage and Upanishada Philosophy – Major Literary and Philosophic Monuments (Mahabharata and Ramayana) -. Sacred Places – Festivals and Rites.

*Excerpt from a film “Cultural Legacy of India”*

12. Indian Philosophy and Life - Ahimsa (no harm) Concept – Transmigration, Rebirth and Karma Concepts – The Ashrama (four stages of life) Concept – Major Cults and Religious Orders – Bhakti Mysticism – Hinduism and Art. – Krishnaism and Western Culture – Hinduism and Islam. - Tantric Traditions and Esoteric Texts – Tantric Rituals – Emergence of Yoga– Yoga in the West – Totalitarian Cults and Modern World.

*Excerpt from a film “Yoga and Miracles”*

13. Presentations and Discussion

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13. Advent of Buddhism – The Meaning of Buddhist Doctrine – The Four Noble Truths – The Eightfold Path – Concept of Karma in Buddhism – Suffering, Impermanence and No-self – Concept of Enlightenment - Concept of Nirvana. – Buddhism and Spiritual Life – Ways of Self-perfection - Buddhism and the Arts.

*Excerpt from a film on Buddhist Art*

14. Mahayana Buddhism – The Bodhisattva Ideal – The Three Buddha Bodies - Basic Teachings and Sacred Texts – Hinayana Buddhism – The Arhat Ideal - Basic Teachings and Sacred Texts - Major Trends in Esoteric Buddhism – Buddhism in India, South-East Asia,, China, Tibet and Japan – Buddhism and Indigenous Polytheist Religions - Buddhism and Modern Society.

15. Presentations and Discussions

16. Chinese Culture in the World History – Imperial Centre and the Countries of East Asia – Religious Syncretism – Concepts of Stability and Flexibility – Ethic and Aesthetic Ideals – The Silk Road and Transmission of Culture - China and the West: Past and Present.

*Excerpt from a film “Cultural Legacy of China”*

17. Basic Concepts of Taoism – Heaven -Man-Earth - The *Wu wei* (non-interference) Principle - Identity of Life and Death – Following the Way - Forces of Nature and The Five Elements – The Book of Changes - Taoism and Science – Taoism and Medicine – Taoist Yoga, Chi-gong and Martial Arts – Taoism and Buddhism.

*Excerpt from a film on ancient Kung-fu Traditions*

18. Taoist and Buddhist Concepts in Chinese Arts – Transmittance and Accumulation of Culture – Tradition and Progress – Learning and Creativity – Masters and their Schools.

*Excerpt from a film on Chinese Art*

19. Confucianism as a System of Life – Humanism (jen) as the Basic Principle – The Role of Cultural Heritage – Compilation of Five Classics and their Functions in the Teaching – Concepts of Loyalty and Filial Piety – Concept of a Noble-minded Man (junzi) – Concept of a Righteous Ruler – Concept of Social Harmony and Peaceful Administration - Analects (Lun-yui) by Confucius – Confucianism in China as a Pillar of Social Life – Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism in Japan – Ideals of Bushido – Confucian Ethics Today.

20. Discussion on Chinese Culture

21. Zen Aesthetics and its Role in Japanese Culture – Perception of Zen in the West – Suzuki Daisetsu and his Works in Europe and America – Proliferation of Zen in Western Literature, Music and Painting. – The Triumph of Oriental Martial Arts in the West.

*Excerpt from a film on Zen Karesansui Gardens*

22. Japan and the West - Periods of Cultural Interaction – Christian Age and Orandagaku in the Edo Period – Meiji Restoration and influences from Western Culture – Confrontation with the West – Postwar Japan and American Impact on the Mass Culture – Tradition and Innovation – Prospects of Globalization.

23 . Final Exam.