

## **Religious Studies 353 W2019 Dark Self East & West: Comparative Conceptions CRN 26053**

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MW 12:00 - 1:50 p.m. Esslinger 116; Office Hours: M: 11:00-11:45 a.m.; W 2:00-2:50 p.m. Susan Campbell Hall 334

This course on comparative religious and philosophical thought examines selected Asian and Western thinkers and conceptions of the self, with a special focus on the dark side of the self. Although comparisons are often made between ultimates - God, Buddha, Dao, and the like - it is often overlooked that they are responses to what are regarded as the fundamental problems or dark sides of the inner life. Through comparing views of the dark side including sin in Christianity, karmic evil and delusion in Buddhism, disharmony in Taoism, and suffering in psychology, it will become evident that there are both significant similarities and deep differences among diverse religious and philosophical views.

In the latter part of the course, films together with readings will be used to explore the dark side through various cultural themes including racism, gender discrimination, and war. In turn, possible responses to these issues from various thinkers in the first half of the course will be considered. This is an intermediate-level course with a lecture/discussion format. Some meetings will be entirely in lecture format. Others will involve a combination of lecture and discussion.

### **Requirements**

1. Attendance: Required. Students can have one unexcused absence without penalty. Each class missed thereafter without prior permission will result in 1/2 grade penalty for the course grade.
2. Short exams: There will be two short, in-class exams, based on materials from the readings, lectures, and course web site. The first exam will also contain questions on writing papers.
3. Short papers: Students will write three short papers based on topics that will be provided by the instructor.
4. Final paper: Each student will hand in a medium length final paper of 5-7 pages double-spaced. Suggested topics will be provided. Students may choose to create their own topics with the consent of their section leader. In the case of the latter, a one-paragraph description of the topic must be submitted by email to the instructor one week prior to the due date.
5. Late policy on written assignments: Three grace days total will be allotted excluding the medium-length final paper for which no extensions will be given. For all other assignments, a cumulative total of three late days will be allowed without penalty. Thereafter, each late day will result in a two-point deduction from the course grade. Weekends are not counted against the grace days.

### **Learning Outcomes** In this course students will:

- A. Develop their paper writing skills through regular feedback on papers and an exam containing questions regarding the process and elements of writing university essays.
- B. Develop a sophisticated understanding of how diverse religions and philosophies define the dark or problematic dimensions of human existence.
- C. Acquire tools for the study of comparative religion through the examination of the philosophical anthropology (views of human nature) as characterized by diverse strands of religious and philosophical thinking, using primary sources and secondary scholarly literature.
- D. Learn to identify and analyze thematic presentations of the dark or problematic dimensions of human existence concerning diverse factors of human culture such as gender, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, and class.
- E. have their work assessed through exams, papers, and class discussion.

### **Grades\***

Short Paper I - 10%;      Short Paper II - 15%;      Short Paper III - 15%  
Short Exam A - 10%;      Short Exam B - 10%;      Final Paper - 30%      Attendance and Participation - 10%

\*Note: You must complete all assignments in order to receive course credit. Even if you are too late for an assignment to receive a passing grade, you must hand it in.

### **Required Texts**

Shinmon Aoki, *Coffinman: The Journal of a Buddhist Mortician* (Anaheim, CA: Buddhist Education Ctr, 2002).  
Rubin Carter, *Eye of the Hurricane, My Path from Darkness to Freedom* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2011).  
Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (NY: Washington Square Press, 1997).  
Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (NY: Mariner Books, 2003).  
Burton Watson, trans., *Zhuangzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).  
Mark Unno, ed., *REL 353 Course Reader*, UO Duckstore

## **Weekly Schedule REL353 Dark Self East & West**

(Reading assignments are to be completed by the date under which they are listed.)

CR = Course Reader; RT = Required Text

### Week 1 INTRODUCTION; KIERKEGAARD AND SIN

1/7 Introduction: The Dark Side of Human Existence: Contrasts and Comparisons

Reading: Suzy Hansen, "Ordinary People, Extraordinary Evil" (CR1);

1/9 Reading: Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 5-23; 34-53 (CR4); *The Sickness Unto Death*, 13-21, 29-47 (CR5).

**Paper I due in class.**

### Week 2 JUNG'S PSYCHOLOGY & THE SHADOW; INDIAN PHILOSOPHY: KARMA AND NEITHER/NOR

1/14 Reading: Robert Aziz, *Jung's Psychology of Religion and Synchronicity* (CR8).

1/16 Reading: "Hymn on Creation from the Rig Vedas," 206, 633-4 (CR2); The Bhagavad Gita, 29-44 (CR3).

### Week 3 EXISTENCE : MEANING & MEANINGLESSNESS

1/21 (No class: MLK Jr Day)

1/23 Reading: Viktor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (RT).

Reading: Peter Schneider, "Saving Konrad Latte," 52-57, 72-73, 90, 95 (CR6).

### Week 4 BLINDNESS, LIGHT, & INSIGHT

1/28 Reading: Rubin Carter, *Eye of the Hurricane*, 1-196 (RT).

1/30 Reading: Rubin Carter, *Eye of the Hurricane*, 197-320 (RT).

Second half of class: Special Guest Lecture: STEVE WEHRMEIER

Reading: "The Bill Wilson - Carl Jung Letters," 1-5 (CR7).

Reading: [Roger Ebert, "My Name is Roger..."](#) (online).

### Week 5 DAOISM: ZHUANGZI WANDERING THE DAO

2/04 Reading: *Zhuangzi*, 1-30, 31-88 (focus pages: 31-49, 62-63, 78-81) (RT). **Paper II due in class.**

Reading: P.J. Ivanhoe, "Zhuangzi on Skepticism," 639-654 (CR9).

2/06 Reading: *Zhuangzi*, 89-140 (focus pages: 94-95, 126-140) (RT). **Exam A in class.**

### Week 6 PURE LAND BUDDHISM: SHINRAN & COFFINMAN

2/11 Reading: Mark Unno, Key Terms: "Pure Land Buddhism of Hōnen & Shinran" (CR11).

Reading: Tannisho: A Shin Buddhist Classic, 5-11, 16-17, 35 (CR13).

Reading: Mark Unno, "The Borderline between Buddhism and Psychotherapy," 139-158 (CR12).

2/13 Reading: *Coffinman*, xiii-xvi, 3-111 (RT).

### Week 7 MYSTICISM & THE QUESTIONING OF REALITY

2/18 Film: Jacob's Ladder.

2/20 Reading: Sandy Gunther, "An Alternate View of Reality:

Understanding Mystical Experience in Jacob's Ladder," 1-10 (CR16). **Paper III due in class.**

### Week 8 SEXUALITY, EROS & SPIRIT: A WOMANIST ACCOUNT

2/25 Film: *Antonia's Line*

Reading: Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (RT).

2/27 Reading: Audre Lorde, "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," 53-59 (CR15). **Exam B in class.**

### Week 9 BUDDHIST KARMA, EXISTENTIAL ABSURDITY

3/04 Film: *Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, . . . and Spring Again*

3/06 Reading: Albert Camus, "The Myth of Sisyphus," 88-91 (CR17); Robert Akeret, *Tales from a Travelling Couch*, 19-57 (CR18).

### Week 10 MANY SELVES, ONE SELF, NO SELF; CONCLUDING BEGINNINGS

3/11 Readings: "The Ten Oxherding Pictures," 26-45 (CR10).

3/13 Concluding lecture and Discussion. **Final papers due in class**