

Keio University Syllabus and Timetable

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JAPANESE BUDDHISM AND SOCIAL SUFFERING

Subtitle	Priests and Temples Reviving Human Relationship and Civil Society
Lecturer(s)	WATTS, JONATHAN S.
Credit(s)	2
Academic Year/Semester	2023 Fall
Day/Period	Tue.2
Campus	Mita
Classroom	513
Class Format	Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
Registration Number	87260
Faculty/Graduate School	INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Year Level	2, 3, 4
Course Description	A course to aim to study Buddhism in Japan in a very different way through the actions of Buddhist priests and followers to confront the real life problems and suffering of people in Japan today.
K-Number	CIN-CO-00143-212-08

[▼ Detail](#)

Course Administrator	Faculty/Graduate School	CIN INTERNATIONAL CENTER
	Department/Major	CO
Main Course Number	Level	0 Faculty-wide
	Major Classification	0 Other Course
	Minor Classification	14 International Center Course (Humanities) - Religion and Thought
	Subject Type	3 Elective subject
Supplemental Course Information	Class Classification	2 Lecture
	Class Format	1 Face-to-face classes (conducted mainly in-person)
	Language of Instruction	2 English
Academic Discipline	08	Sociology and related fields

Course Contents/Objectives/Teaching Method/Intended Learning Outcome

This course is offered as a companion course to Buddhism and Social Change in Contemporary Asia 仏教と現代アジアの社会変化 by the same instructor in the first half of the semester. You do not have to take both courses, but it is recommended to do so for a fuller understanding. This course will look at Buddhism in Japan in a very different way – through the actions of Buddhist priests and followers to confront the real life problems and suffering of people in Japan today. We will look at such issues as:

- 1) human relationships in terms of: a) dying and grieving, and b) alienation and suicide;
- 2) economic development in terms of: a) social and economic gaps, aging society, community breakdown and depopulation of the countryside, b) alternatives to globalization and Buddhist economics, and c) alternative energy and the environment;
- 3) politics in terms of: a) nuclear power and peace, and b) Buddhist complicity with war and work for peace.

The creative solutions some individual Buddhists are developing in response to these problems mark an attempt to revive Japanese Buddhism, which has been primarily associated with funerals and tourism. These efforts are trying to remake the temple as a center of community in an increasingly alienated society.

There will be a variety of teaching methods from homework, readings, group processes, in-class videos, and guest speakers. This course will attempt to be as interactive as possible, so students should be ready to reflect on the issues personally as they experience them as residents of Japan, and to express these reflections not only intellectually but emotionally as well. Regular field trips for this course were cancelled due to COVID from 2020-21, but were resumed for the most part in 2022. As such, THIS COURSE IS LIMITED TO 30 STUDENTS. PLEASE SEE DETAILS BELOW.

Course Plan

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Method of Evaluation

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Textbooks

None; all readings, homework assignments, and other class details will be available on the class homepage: <https://ogigaya.wordpress.com/>

Reference Books

Nakamura, Hajime. *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* (University of Hawaii Press, 1964)

Watts. *Lotus in the Nuclear Sea: Fukushima and the Promise of Buddhism in the Nuclear Age* (Yokohama: International Buddhist Exchange Center, 2013).

Watts. *This Precious Life: Buddhist Tsunami Relief and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Post 3/11 Japan* (Yokohama: International Buddhist Exchange Center, 2012).

Watts & Tomatsu, *Buddhist Care for the Dying and Bereaved: Global Perspectives* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012)

Lecturer's Comments to Students

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Question/Comments

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