

RELS-299- Religion in Asian Popular Culture (TR 6:30-7:45 PM)

Unlike most religion courses that focus on elite culture and canonical texts, this seminar will shift attention to mass media, sampling comic books, graphic novels, and movies to understand popular religious beliefs and practices in South Asia (Hinduism), China (Buddhism, New Religions), and Japan (Zen, Shinto). After surveying theoretical analyses of popular culture in the history of religions, the course will focus on Indian films (“Jai Santoshi Mai” and “Kantara”) centered on village religious life and read comic books in the Amar Citra Katha series that retell the great epics, *Ramāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. Popular East Asian religions will be considered in graphic novels on the life of the Buddha (Osamu Tezuka’s, “The Buddha”) and the Ming novel “Journey to the West.” Chinese movies will highlight popular afterlife traditions (“A Chinese Ghost Story”) and “New Religions” (“The Pig, the Snake, and the Pigeon”); Japanese movies on Shinto (“Princess Mononoke”) and Zen Buddhism (“Zatoichi: The Blind Samurai”) will examine these ancient religious traditions reimagined in modern media.

Enrollment: 20

Requirements: RELS, Cross-Cultural