

## Study Guide for introductory unit: Culture, Religious Studies, & Asia

(corresponding to on-line readings linked to the syllabus, including "Dimensions of Religious Culture" & EB listings; IAR, chapter 1 recommended)

Topics, Readings & Terms	Important Details	Related Primary Sources
<p>1. Cultural History &amp; Religious Studies            (“<u>Dimensions of Culture</u>” in the on-line syllabus;            EB: "Study of Religion" &amp; IAR, ix-x, 2-3)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(look for:  <b>culture</b>  <b>unseen powers/forces</b>  <b>practice</b>  <b>community</b>  <b>god(s)</b>  <b>study of religion</b></p>	<p>(a) <b>culture</b> analyzes as composed of three “dimensions”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reflection about/awareness of/trust in <b>unseen powers &amp; forces</b></li> <li>• engagement and trust in <b>practices</b></li> <li>• involvement in family and ethnic <b>communities</b></li> </ul> <p>(b) <b>religious studies</b> as both interdisciplinary &amp; a distinct discipline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• scholars draw on theory &amp; methods of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, history, literary &amp; linguistic analysis</li> <li>• history especially central</li> </ul> <p>(c) diverse applications of the terms “<b>God</b>” &amp; “<b>gods</b>”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ultimate reality &amp; judge vs. angels, dead saints &amp; ancestors</li> <li>• use of icons and myths</li> <li>• scholars of religion typically use more neutral terminology</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Required:</b>            “The Creatures, Objects, &amp; Mysteries of Xg57H4y”            (on-line PPT)</p>
<p>2. “The Strange Culture of Xg57H4y”            [a fictitious counterexample of how NOT to study foreign cultures]</p>	<p>(a) evidence from the remote planet Xg57H4y</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visual data samples &amp; fragmentary documents encoded in printed symbols retrieved from the long dead-civilization on Xg57H4y.</li> <li>• documents reflect ideas and practices important to at least some of the creatures living on Xg57H4y, though connection to images unclear.</li> </ul> <p>(b) creatures, objects, &amp; landscapes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hairy creatures outnumbered but of superior intelligence &amp; character; manic smooth-skinned creatures plagued by deformities &amp; disease.</li> <li>• landscapes of extraordinary beauty largely ignored by smooth-skinned creatures, though instruments of often placed in such landscapes.</li> <li>• smooth-skinner creatures primarily isolated in structures of their own making, whose diversity of form suggests differences in social status.</li> </ul> <p>[(c) underlying intention: consciously <i>misrepresenting</i> human culture.]</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Optional:            “Xg57H4y Investigation Packet”            (6 MB download from link in syllabus)</p>

<p>3. Geographical &amp; Historical Diversity of Asia (see EB: "Asia," "Human Geography" &amp; IAR, 4-6)</p> <p>(look for:) <b>human geography Asia</b></p>	<p>(a) diversity of both physical &amp; <b>human geography</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inner Asia: endless forests &amp; plains, with some rivers &amp; mountains; extreme winters &amp; summers make agriculture nearly impossible.</li> <li>• SW Asia: primarily considered in relation to Semitic cultures</li> <li>• South Asia: high mountains &amp; several deserts in the north restrict access, semitropical forests in peninsula made travel difficult; agricultural cycles linked to cyclical monsoon rains.</li> <li>• SE Asia: also mountains in north but otherwise mainly coastline &amp; numerous islands linked by sea, also subject to cycles of monsoon.</li> <li>• East Asia: large expanse with internal mountain ranges, large rivers, seacoasts &amp; islands lead to sharp regional &amp; cultural divisions.</li> </ul> <p>(b) diverse cultures &amp; uneven access to historical evidence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China: inward looking culture with detailed records since 1500 BCE.</li> <li>• SE Asia: evidence primarily from archeology &amp; inscriptions</li> <li>• South Asia: dating of events much less systematic</li> </ul>	<p>Optional: “map of Asia” (<a href="http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/asia_ref02.jpg">www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/asia_ref02.jpg</a>)</p> <p>(or simply use the link from top of “Course Overview” page in the on-line syllabus)</p>
<p>4. Shamanism &amp; Other Indigenous Asian Traditions (see EB: "Shamanism" &amp; IAR, 7-11)</p> <p>(look for:) <b>shaman</b></p>	<p>(a) NE Asian term used in broader context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• actual term “<b>shaman</b>” derived from culture of Tungusic herders</li> <li>• used broadly to refer to religious ideas and practices persisting all over Asia, often in conflict with specialists of more formal religions</li> </ul> <p>(b) the <b>shamanic</b> worldview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all things are imbued with life to to some extent consciousness; &amp; a multitude of invisible spirits affect the visible world.</li> <li>• <b>shaman’s</b> abilities</li> <li>• <b>shaman’s</b> training</li> <li>• <b>shaman’s</b> public duties</li> </ul>	<p><b>Required:</b></p> <p>"Possession by Changun" (@ <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRIUy2dyBQA">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SRIUy2dyBQA</a>)</p> <p>“Festivals: the Tsam Ceremony” (@ <a href="http://www.asiasociety.org/arts/mongolia/tsam.html">http://www.asiasociety.org/arts/mongolia/tsam.html</a>)</p>