

Buddhist and Hindu Pilgrimages and Sacred Spaces in Asia



Course Content

This course will introduce students to Buddhism and Hinduism, with a focus on their manifestations in Korea. The history and broad development of these two major religions of Asia are approached through the lens of pilgrimage and sacred spaces. Pilgrimage is a powerful phenomenon that appears in virtually every religion and it has had global historical consequences. However, pilgrimage studies are a fairly new subfield of history that combines religious studies and anthropology and they have historically played an important part of understanding space and time and life in Asian cultures. Pilgrimages have shaped the physical and spiritual landscapes of Asia, and by focusing on pilgrimage, as a sacred journey to a sacred space, students can combine primary source research with investigations into the rich sensory environments that inspired and influenced past pilgrims and devotees. As such, we can see the powerful relationship between experience, space, and society come to life.

In this course, particular attention will be paid to the manifestation of sacred spaces and temples present in the Seoul area for student field trips. By approaching the history of Buddhism and Hinduism through sacred spaces and the act of pilgrimage, the students can experientially explore, capture with exciting new digital tools, and connect with history in a meaningful manner. And as the next generation of digital historians, students will develop new or refine existing skills to critically and analytically engage with old questions in new ways.

Some of the digital tools that will be integrated into the course extend to the suite of Google tools, such as Google Earth Pro and Google Lens. These open-source digital resources will permit for student-lead cartographic research and the use augmented reality for experiential learning.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will learn the historical fundamentals of Buddhism and Hinduism in Asia.

Students will learn the multi-disciplinary theoretical foundations of sacred place research and pilgrimage studies.

Additionally, students will learn how to explore and capture the different experiences and spaces discussed in class and that will visit over the course of the program that demonstrate key concepts and execution of digital humanities skills.

Required Readings:

A reading packet will be available online.

Expectations:

Student participation in class and attendance is required.

Experiential learning journals will be kept throughout the duration of the course, to be submitted for grading.

Course Grading:

Attendance and Participation: 35%

Personal Journal: 30%

Weekly Digital Historical Assignments: 35%

Course Schedule:**Week One**

Introduction to the geography of Asia, the development of Buddhism and Hinduism in South Asia; the journey of Buddhism and Hinduism into East Asia.

Week Two

Sacred Spaces: religious landscapes, temples, monasteries, plus natural and mythological spaces.

Digital tools to be used: Space Syntax software, Google Lens

Field Trip:

Excursion to Hindu and Buddhist temples

Week Three

Introduction to pilgrimage and monastic life including meditation, mindful eating, chanting, and yoga.

Digital Tools:

Google Earth Pro will be used for its range of built-in analytical tools to investigate large pilgrimage routes and landscapes, particularly the landscape of the monastery that the students will visit in Week 4.

Field Trips and Activities:

Practice meditation and yoga techniques.

Week Four

Introduction to the theory of religious experiences. This discussion will be combined with exploring digital tools that can be used to capture and investigate past and present religious experiences.

Digital Tools:

Google Lens: the students will annotate Augmented Reality imagery of the Buddhist monastery that will be visited.

Field Trips:

Monastery stay at a Buddhist monastery.