

Introducing World Religions

Student Essay Questions

Chapter 13 Shintō tradition

1. Discuss similarities and differences between the indigenous Japanese understanding of the divine and two or three others studied in this book. For example compare and contrast the notion of kami with Brahman, Allāh, Eternal Beings of the Dreaming, and so forth. What aspects of the Japanese concept of the divine pertain specifically to the Japanese people and culture? In what cultures do you see the concept of the divine closely related to a specific people and culture?
2. Identify Shintō values and practices that are found in these Japanese traditions that mixed with other religions or ideologies: (1) *samurai*; (2) *yamabushi*; (3) Japanese New Religions; and (4) State Shintō.
3. Discuss the history of Japan's relations with outside cultural-religious influences in terms of periods of intensive borrowing and periods of intensive isolation. Note the effects of borrowing and isolation on the development of Japan's religious culture in specific cases.

Chapter 14 The challenge of religion

1. Discuss the impact of European colonialism on world religions today. Think about this both in terms of (1) religio-political struggles; and (2) attitudes of orientalism, ethnocentrism, fundamentalism, and so forth.
2. Compare and contrast Thomas Jefferson's and Elizabeth Cady Stanton's interests in studying the Bible. Based on your own views, evaluate the contribution to society made by each approach. Explain your position.