

Asian Philosophy Study Questions -- Lectures 0, 1, 2, 3 (for Midterm 1)

Studying Asian Philosophies

What is a gestalt? What are some examples? How do gestalts work?
What are some factors that affect preference for one gestalt over another?
What are we doing when we shift gestalts?
What is the gestalt model for understanding how cultures function?
What guidance does the gestalt model provide for how to study philosophies from cultures radically different than one's own?

Overview of Indian Culture and the Origin of Indian Philosophy

Who are the Dravidians?
Who are the Aryans? What did the Aryans introduce into Dravidian civilization?
What philosophical themes are present in the *Rig Veda's* Hymn of Origins?
What are some important similarities and differences between the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*?
What are the general characteristics of Indian philosophy?

Introduction to the Philosophy of the Upanishads

What is the *Katha Upanishad*?
What is a henotheistic religion, and why is ancient Indian culture henotheistic?
Why does Naciketas travel to the abode of Yama? Who is Yama? Why does Yama grant Naciketas three boons? What are those boons?
What is kama? What is the path of pleasure? Why is there an inherent drawback in the pursuit of pleasure? Why can pleasure not be the ultimate goal of life?
How does joy differ from pleasure? How does one attain joy?
What is the atman and how can it be known? Why should this knowledge be the goal of life?
What is Brahman? How can Brahman be known?
What is samsara? What is moksha? Why is moksha preferable to samsara?
What is the role of yoga?

According to the *Mandukya Upanishad*, what are the four different kinds of consciousness? Give examples of each. How does each kind relate to the sounds and symbol for "OM"?
According to the *Mandukya Upanishad*, what evidence is there for the existence of atman?
Why does the *Mandukya Upanishad* identify atman with the Sanskrit word "OM"?
What do the sounds of "OM" represent? What does the written character of "OM" symbolize?

Philosophical Themes in the Upanishads

According to the *Upanishads*, who are you *really*? What is the evidence for this claim?
According to the *Upanishads*, what is reality *really*?
According to the *Upanishads*, why is atman identical to Brahman?
How are both "*neti, neti*" (not this, not that) and "*tat tvam asi*" (that it you) correct characterizations of Brahman? Why are these characterizations not contradictory?
Why does knowledge of Brahman produce moksha?
What is maya?

Asian Philosophy Study Questions -- Lectures 4, 5 (for Midterm 1)

Lecture 4: The Orthodox Schools of Indian Philosophy

What are purusha and prakriti? What are the three gunas of prakriti?

How does the Samkhya-Yoga school interpret the *Upanishads*?

Why does Samkhya-Yoga hold that prakriti is a continuous substance?

Why, according to Samkhya-Yoga, is prakriti distinct and independent from purusha?

How, according to Samkhya-Yoga, are prakriti and purusha related? What is the role of buddhi?

According to Samkhya-Yoga, what is the goal of yogic practice? What are some examples of yogic practice, and how do they attain the aforementioned goal?

What is the Vaisheshika argument for the claim that the world is a plurality of atoms?

What is the Nyaya argument for the claim that the Self is not pure consciousness?

What is the main focus of the Mimamsa school?

What is the main focus of the Vedanta school?

How does Advaita Vedanta differ from Samkhya-Yoga and Nyaya-Vaisheshika?

Who is Shankara? How does he argue against Nyaya-Vaisheshika and Samkhya-Yoga metaphysics? Why is his Advaita Vedanta a "monistic" school whereas Samkhya-Yoga is "dualistic" and Nyaya-Vaisheshika is "pluralistic"?

How does Shankara understand the relation between Brahman and Maya? Explain his analogies.

According to Shankara, how does one attain joy within Maya and how does this lead to lila?

What makes the Samkhya-Yoga, Nyaya-Vaisheshika, and Advaita Vedanta schools of Indian philosophy *orthodox* schools? How does each school differ from the others?

In what way is Indian philosophy confrontational?

Lecture 5: The *Bhagavad Gita*

What is the *Bhagavad Gita*? Who are the main characters?

What circumstances is Arjuna facing? What is his dilemma?

What are the two basic themes of the *Bhagavad Gita*?

Explain the four different kinds of yoga. Explain how each can lead to moksha.

What is Krishna's argument for why Arjuna should not renounce action, but instead have resignation in action? How does Krishna explain this resignation in terms of jñana, karma, and bhakti yoga?

According to the *BG*, why is bhakti yoga superior to the other forms of yoga? Why is virtuous behavior a side effect of bhakti yoga? How does bhakti yoga allow for resignation in action?

Why does Arjuna's deep love for Krishna allow him to see Krishna as Brahman?