**Asian Philosophies & Belief Systems**

**SHINTO**

* History
  + Originated in Japan – 500bc
    - Official Japanese state religion 1930s & 40s (Temples under govt. control)
    - 1945 – state Shinto abolished (Control of shrines given back to the people)
  + No sacred text
    - Emphasis on moral commandments, ritual purity and cleanliness
    - One of the reasons mainly practiced in only Japan
  + “way of the gods”
* Major Beliefs
  + Kami – spirits within objects (Japanese deities/sacred beings)
    - Appear in all aspects of natural world
    - 3 kinds – Nature / clan – guardian ancestor spirits / ta no – rice paddy guardians
    - No “wrath of god” – Kami are all good
    - All humanity is kami’s child so all are sacred
  + Belief in good of humanity
  + All part of single/unified creation
  + No moral absolutes
  + Emphasis on this world rather than the next
* Descriptors
  + Indigenous to Japan
  + Animistic – nature focused
  + Spiritualistic – reverence for ancestors
* 4 affirmation – positive declarations to live by
  + Tradition and family, Love of nature, Physical cleanliness (no Shinto funerals), Matsuri – festival for Kami

**BUDDHISM**

* History
  + India – 5th century BC, China – 1st c. AD, Japan – 6th c. AD
  + 84% Japanese claim to be both Shinto and Buddhist
* Major Beliefs
  + Goal of Buddhists – achieve Enlightenment/reach Nirvana (spiritual enlightenment)
    - Shun earthly desires to come closer to enlightenment
  + Reincarnation
  + Karma
  + Change is always possible
  + Experiential Wisdom – deemphasizes theoretical knowledge / you must “act to learn”
* 4 Truths
  + Suffering exists
  + Suffering arises from attachment to desires
  + Suffering ceases when attachment to desires ceases
  + Freedom from suffering is possible

**TAOISM**

* History
  + Originated in China – 2000 yrs. ago
  + Often thought of as traditional “Chinese” religion
* Major Beliefs
  + Tao = “the path” or “the way”
    - Unifying element that runs through everything
    - Stay on this path or way of life/thought to achieve oneness with Tao
  + Core beliefs (not unified religion – just combo of beliefs)
    - Naturalness, receptiveness, peace, reverence for nature, moderation
    - No rituals – very individual belief system
  + Wu-wei – “non-action”
    - “he who acts upon the world destroys it”
    - Strive to be in harmony with your surroundings
  + Focus on imp. Of unity & opposites (yin & yang)

**CONFUCIANISM**

* History
  + Orig. in China – written by disciples of Confucius (collections = Analects)
    - Analects – goal = to improve society – idea was that society is debased & needs moral guidance
      * All war & ills are a result of forgetting your place & rulers losing virtue
  + State teachings 200BC – 1911AD
* Major Beliefs
  + Ethical and philosophical system
  + Focus on human morality & right action
    - “Guide them by edicts, keep them in line with punishments & common people will stay out of trouble but have no sense of shame. Guide them by virtue, keep them in line with rites, and they will, besides having a sense of shame, reform themselves.”
  + Veneration of ancestors
* Descriptors
  + Morality, rule over the self, ethics