**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