

CURE1110 Religion and Contemporary Life 宗教與當代生活

1st Term 2024-2025

Teachers	Dr. CHOW Wai Yin (email: wychow@cuhk.edu.hk)	Lecture Class	Time: Wed 11:30 – 13:15 Room: YIA 503
	Dr. TONG SAU Lin (email: saulintong@cuhk.edu.hk , tongsaulin@hotmail.com)	Tutorial Class	Time: Wed 13:30 – 14:15 Room: YIA 503, 508, 511

1. Course Description

This course examines the role and influence of religion in contemporary society. Students will explore how religious beliefs, practices, and institutions intersect with various aspects of contemporary life, including culture, mental health, ethics, politics, social issues, and technology. Through lectures, discussions, and written assignments, students will develop a deeper understanding of the diverse ways that religion shapes and is shaped by the contemporary world. This course is an introductory-level class and does not require any prior knowledge or prerequisites.

2. Content

Week	Lecture Date	Lecture Topic	Key Concepts/ Tutorial Class Arrangement
1	4/9	Introduction to Religion and Contemporary Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview of the course and its key themes Defining religion and its various dimensions Historical and cultural contexts shaping contemporary religious landscapes
2	11/9	<p><u>Religion and Health 1: Religion, Spirituality and Holistic Health</u></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <p>Meredith B. McGuire, <i>Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life</i>, chapter 6.</p> <p>Samuel, G. (2015). The contemporary mindfulness movement and the question of nonself. <i>Transcultural Psychiatry</i>, 52(4), 485–500.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining the shifting landscape of religious affiliation and spiritual practices in contemporary society Discussing how secularization, pluralism, and new religious movements are reshaping the social landscape <<u>Tutorial Class 1: Issue Analysis Demonstration 1</u>>

3	18/9	Public holiday – The day following the Chinese Mid-Autumn Festival	
4	25/9	<p><u>Religion and Health 2: Religion and Therapy: Psychotherapy in Religion; Qigong Fever</u></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <p>David A. Palmer, “Chinese religious innovation in the Qigong movement: The case of Zhonggong,” Adam Yuet Chau ed., <i>Religion in Contemporary China: Revitalization and innovation</i>. NY: Routledge (2011): 182-202.</p> <p>陳玉璽：〈西方佛教修行與身心靈療癒〉，《新世紀宗教研究》第十七卷第二期(2018年12月)：1-32。</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychotherapy and therapeutic culture in contemporary religion. • <Tutorial Class 2: Issue Analysis Demonstration 2>
5	2/10	<p><u>Religion and Culture: Religion and Food</u></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <p>Salonen, A. S. (2018). Living and dealing with food in an affluent society—A case for the study of lived (non) religion. <i>Religions</i>, 9(10), 306.</p> <p>Tivadar, Blanka, and Breda Luthar. “Food, Ethics and Aesthetics.” <i>Appetite</i> 44.2 (2005): 215–233.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining the Intersection of Religion and Food • Dietary Restrictions and the Negotiation of Religious Identity • Food, Health, and the Reclamation of Spiritual Wellbeing • <Tutorial Class 3: Presentation Groupings, Planning and Consultation>
6	9/10	<p><u>Religion and Gender: Gender issues in Buddhism</u></p> <p><i>Readings:</i></p> <p>Karma Lekshe Tsomo, “Is the Bhiksuni Vinaya Sexist?” <i>Buddhist Women and Social Justice: Ideals, Challenges, and Achieve</i>. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press (2004), pp.45-72.</p> <p>Leonard Zwilling, “Homosexuality As Seen in Indian Buddhist Texts,” <i>Buddhism, Sexuality, and Gender</i>, edited by José Ignacio Cabezón, Chapter 9. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press (1992).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhist attitude toward gender roles and homosexuality • <Tutorial Class 4: Presentation Planning and Consultation>
7	16/10	<p><u>Religion and Environment: Spiritual Environmentalism and the Rise of Eco-Activism</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious perspectives on environmental sustainability

		<p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>張維安 (1996) 〈佛教慈濟與資源回收：生活世界觀點的社會學分析〉，《佛教與社會關懷學術研討會：生命、生態、環境關懷論文集》，65-97.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies of religious communities engaged in environmental activism • <Tutorial Class 5: Presentation 1A and 1B>
8	23/10	<p><u>Religion and Social Issue 1: Caste System and Hinduism</u></p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Harold Coward, "Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Untouchability". Harold Coward ed., <i>Indian Critiques of Gandhi</i>. Albany: State University of New York Press (2003): 41-66.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caste system, hierarchy of sacredness in Hinduism • <Tutorial Class 6: Presentation 2A and 2 B>
9	30/10	<p><u>Religion and Social Issue 2: Shintoism and Religious Consciousness in Contemporary Japan</u></p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>Shinjiro Kitasawa, "Shintoism and the Japanese Nation," <i>Source: The Sewanee Review</i>, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Oct., 1915): 479-483.</p> <p>Daniel A. Metraux, "The Soka Gakkai: Buddhism and the Creation of a Harmonious and Peaceful Society," in Christopher S. Queen and Saille B. King ed. <i>Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia</i>. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996): 365-400.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shintoism, Characteristics of Japanese religion, Contemporary Japanese religions • <Tutorial Class 7: Presentation 3A and 3B >
10	6/11	<p><u>Religion in a Globalized World 1: New Religions and New Age Movements</u></p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Serena Brink, "The New Age: A Modern Synthesis of Mysticism," <i>Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity</i>, 1992, No. 15, <i>Women and Health</i> (1992): 7-11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Age movement, New religious movements in Japan • <Tutorial Class 8: Presentation 4A and 4B>
11	13/11	<p><u>Religion in a Globalized World 2: The Rise of Religious Fundamentalism</u></p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Stephen Hunt, <i>Religion and Everyday Life</i>,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine the rise of "spiritual consumerism" and the growing commodification of religious and spiritual

		Chapter 7.	<p>practices in the modern marketplace</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss how the commercialization of religion has transformed the ways in which people engage with faith, spirituality, and the sacred <<u>Tutorial Class 9:</u> Presentation 5A and 5B >
12	20/11	<p>Religion and Technology: Religion, Transhumanism and Cyberspace</p> <p><u>Readings:</u></p> <p>James J. Hughes, "Buddhism and Our Posthuman Future," <i>Sophia</i> (2019) 58: 653-662.</p> <p>Slavomir Gálik & Sabin Gáliková Tolnaiová, "Possibilities and Limits of Religion in the Cyberspace of Digital Media," <i>Spirituality Studies</i> 3-1 (Spring 2017): 2-9.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cyborg, Religion in the age of transhumanism, Religion in cyberspace <<u>Tutorial Class 10:</u> Presentation 6A and 6B & 7A and 7B>
13	27/11	Take-Home Quiz and Issue Analysis Writing	

3. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- examine the urban environment as a unique context for religious faith, and explore the key issues and challenges that this raises.
- analyze the complex relationship between religion and contemporary social, political, and cultural issues.
- critically evaluate the influence of religious teachings, values, and institutions on individual and collective decision-making.
- apply theoretical frameworks and concepts to real-world examples and case studies.
- communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, about the role of religion in contemporary life.
- demonstrate an empathic understanding of the diverse ways that people engage with religion in the contemporary world.

4. Learning Activities

Lecture (hr) in /out class		Tutorial (hr) in /out class		Reading response (hr) in /out class		Final Paper (hr) in /out class	
2	3	1	2		2		2
M	M	M	M	NA	M	NA	M

M: Mandatory activity

O: Optional activity

NA: Not applicable

5. Assessment Scheme

Task	Percentage
Tutorial Attendance	10%
Tutorial Presentation	30%
Individual performance	15%
Group performance	15%
Take Home Quiz	30%
Issue Analysis Exercise	30%

5.1. Tutorial Attendance (10%)

- Regular, active attendance in class is expected for lecture and tutorials. Students are encouraged to actively participate in discussions both in lectures and tutorials.
- Students are expected to attend all tutorial sessions. Mild late arrivals to tutorials will receive 70% of the attendance points, but extreme lateness will be counted as an absence.

5.2. Tutorial Presentation (30%)

- You will work in a group of 4 to 5 students for a tutorial presentation.
- From week 7 onward (starting 16/10), each week a group will give a presentation on any one of the topics related to “Religion and Contemporary Society”.
- The presentation should use a real-life case study from the 20th or 21st century to clarify, illustrate, and further explore the concepts and issues raised in the lectures or readings.
- Each presentation will also include a 10-minute session for Q&A and discussion.
- Assessment of this part will be based on:
 - Group performance: 15%
 - Individual performance: 15%

5.3. Take Home Quiz on 27 Nov (30%)

- This take-home quiz consists of approximately 40 multiple-choice questions, covering the lecture topics (week 2-week 12) addressed in the course.

5.4. Issue analysis exercise (30%)

- This assignment requires you to analyze an issue that occurred between the 20th and 21st centuries, and examine the role of religion in the issue. You will need to gather diverse perspectives from various stakeholders, identify the underlying causes and consequences, and propose solutions that balance the interests of different parties while upholding the principles of religious freedom and social justice.
- Submission Guidelines
 - Word count: 1,200-1,500 words
 - Soft copy and Veriuide submission: **Due by 11:59 pm on 4 Dec 2024 (Wednesday)** to Blackboard Learn. 10 marks deducted for one day of **late submission for soft copy**, submissions after 10 days will receive a zero mark

- Hard copy submission: **Due by 6 Dec 2024 (Friday)**, details on the submission arrangement to be announced later
- Writing Guidelines
 - Step 1: Choose an Issue - Select an issue that occurred between the 20th and 21st centuries and examine the role of religion in the issue. This could be a social, political, or cultural issue that has been influenced by religious beliefs, practices, or institutions.
 - Step 2: Gather Diverse Perspectives - Collect information from academic articles, news reports, and other reliable sources to present 2-3 different perspectives from various religious and non-religious stakeholders, such as: religious leaders, scholars, activists, and or community members.
 - Step 3: Analyze the Issue - Identify the underlying causes, power dynamics, and potential consequences of the issue. Consider how the role of religion has shaped or influenced the issue, and how it has interacted with other social, political, or cultural factors.
 - Step 4: Propose Solutions - recommend approaches that balance the interests and concerns of different stakeholders, while upholding the principles of religious freedom and social justice. Your proposed solutions should be feasible and address the root causes of the issue, and should consider the diverse perspectives you have gathered.

6. Grade Descriptors

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| A | Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes. |
| A- | Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes. |
| B | Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance. |
| C | Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weakness |
| D | Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes. |
| F | Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specific requirements. |

7. Learning resources for students

The basic readings for the course are stated above. Other suggested readings, if any, will be given in class and through *Blackboard Learn*.

8. Feedback for evaluation

Students are welcome to give comments and feedback on the course through *Blackboard Learn* or personal exchanges with instructor and/or tutors. An end-of-term university wide course evaluation will be conducted in class.

9. A facility for posting course announcements

Course announcements, assignment, and feedback will be given through *Blackboard Learn*. All questions regarding the course could be posted on the discussion forum or via e-mails within the *Blackboard Learn*.

10. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Each student must upload a soft copy of the completed final paper to the plagiarism detection engine *VeriGuide*, at the URL: https://academic.veriguide.org/academic/login_CUHK.jspx. **The system will issue a receipt that also contains a declaration of honesty. You must sign and attach the receipt to the paper you hand in.**

11. Further Readings:

- Aldridge, A. (2007). *Religion in the contemporary world: a sociological introduction*. Cambridge, Polity.
- Bauman, Z.(1998). *Globalization. The Human Consequences*. Cambridge. Polity Press.
- Berger, Peter. "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in Peter L. Berger (ed.) *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. William B. Eerdmans, 1999.
- Beyer, B. (1994). *Religion and Globalisation*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Day, A. (2011). *Believing in belonging: Belief and social identity in the modern world*. Oxford University Press.
- Casanova, Jose. (1994). *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Ward, K. (2019). *Religion in the Modern World*. Cambridge University Press.
- Swidler, L and P. Mojzes. (2000). *The Study of Religion in an Age of Global Dialogue*. Temple University.