

Department of Cultural and Religious Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

CURE1110 Religion and Contemporary Life 宗教與當代生活

2nd Term 2024-2025

Lecture Time: Thu 10:30 - 12:15

Tutorial Time: Thu 12:30 -13:15

Location: YIA_503

Teachers: Prof. YEUNG Kwok Keung (kkyeunghk@gmail.com)

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Tutor: TBC

1. Course Description

This course explores the role of religion in contemporary life. We begin with basic definitions and concepts, then examine how religion interacts with modern and postmodern contexts. We will investigate how religious teachings, practices, and institutions both influence and are influenced by aspects of the modern world, such as culture, health, ethics, politics, and technology. This introductory course welcomes students from all backgrounds, with no prior knowledge of religious studies necessary.

2. Content

Week	Lecture Date	Lecture Topic	Key Concepts
1	9/1	Course Introduction	
2	16/1	What is Religion? <i>Reading:</i> Fisher, M. P. (1997). The Religious Response. In <i>Living Religions</i> (pp. 12-37). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall. <Tutorial grouping>	Definitions of religion, reasons for joining religion, insider-outsider challenge; sympathetic and critical attitudes
3	23/1	Religion in Postsecular Cities <i>Reading:</i> Berking, H., Schwenk, J., & Steets, S. (2019). Introduction: Filling the void? – Religious pluralism and the city. In H. Berking, S. Steets, & J. Schwenk (Eds.), <i>Religious pluralism and the city: Inquiries into</i>	Modernity/Modernization, Secularization Theory, Post-secular Society, Religious Pluralism

		<i>postsecular urbanism</i> (pp. 1-11). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan. <Meeting with tutors>	
4	30/1	<i>No Class--Lunar New Year Holiday</i>	
5	6/2	Christian Framing of Homosexuality <u>Readings:</u> Dawne Moon (2014) Beyond the Dichotomy: Six Religious Views of Homosexuality, <i>Journal of Homosexuality</i> , 61:9, 1215-1241. <Meeting with tutors>	Christian views of homosexuality, procreative sex, sodomy, natural law theory
6	13/2	Islamic Veiling of Women <u>Readings:</u> Paul Eid (2015), "Balancing agency, gender and race: how do Muslim female teenagers in Quebec negotiate the social meanings embedded in the hijab?" <i>Ethnic and Racial Studies</i> , 38: 11, 1902-1917.	Banning hijab in Europe, women's agency in veil-wearing, changing meanings of women's veil-wearing in Muslim countries
7	20/2	Jihad: Muslims' Justification of Violence? <u>Reading:</u> John L Esposito, "Islam and Political Violence", <i>Religions</i> 2015, 6(3), 1067-1081. <Tutorial #1>	Two kinds of jihad, religious radicalization and violence
8	27/2	New Religious Movement <u>Reading:</u> John A. Saliba, (2018). "Counseling and the new religious movements," <i>Perspectives on new religious movements</i> . pp. 198-234 <Tutorial #2>	Understanding the concepts of New Religious Movement and Cult. Exploring New Religious Movement from sociological and psychological perspective with case studies.
9	6/3	Reading Week	
10	13/3	Religion and Science <u>Readings:</u> Jonathan R. Topham, (2010) "Natural Theology and the Science," <i>The Cambridge</i>	Exploring the relationships between religion and science from historical, philosophical, and ethical perspectives with case

		<p><i>Companion to Science and Religion</i>, pp.59-79</p> <p>Ronald L. Numbers, (2003), “Science without God: Natural Laws and Christian Beliefs,” <i>When Science & Christianity Meet</i>, pp.265-285.</p> <p><Tutorial #3></p>	studies.
11	20/3	<i>No- Class Field Trip</i>	Field Trip on 15/3 Venue: TBC
12	27/3	<p>Religion and Food</p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Mary Douglas, (2003). “Introduction”, “Ritual Uncleaness,” <i>Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo</i>. Routledge. pp. 1-29</p> <p><Tutorial #4></p>	Exploring the worldviews behind dietary rules in different religions and introduce the functions of food/drinks in religious rituals
13	3/4	<p>Religion, Health, and Healing</p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Caroline Young, Cyndie Koopsen (2011). “Spirituality, Religion, and Health,” <i>Spirituality, Health, and Healing: An Integrative Approach</i> (2nd ed.). Jones and Bartlett. pp. 89-110</p> <p><Tutorial #5></p>	Exploring various idea on health and healing methods through a wide range of religions and religious practices, including New Age.
14	10/4	<p>Religion and Popular Culture</p> <p><u>Reading:</u></p> <p>Conrad Ostwalt (2012). “A Cinematic Secular Apocalyptic Imagination,” <i>Secular Steeples Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination</i>. Continuum International Publishing Group.</p> <p><Tutorial #6></p>	Exploring the relationships between religion and pop culture as entertainment. Religious representations in different genre of pop culture (hero, myth, horror, etc.)
15	17/4	<p>Open-Book Quiz</p> <p>Term Paper Consultation/</p>	

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 it presents.
- 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 empathetic understanding of the diverse ways people engage with religion today.

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	25%
- Individual performance	- 15%
- Group performance	- 10%
Field Trip Reflection Report	10%
Open-book Quiz	30%
Term Paper	25%

5.1. Tutorial Attendance (10%)

- Regular attendance for both lectures and tutorials is expected. Active participation in discussions is encouraged.
- Attendance at all tutorial sessions is required. Minor late arrivals will receive 70% of attendance points; significant lateness will be marked as an absence. Exact guidelines will be announced later.

5.2. Tutorial Presentation (25%)

- Group: Form groups of 4-5 students.
- Schedule: Presentations will begin in Week 7.
- Topic: Each group analyze a real-life case related to "Religion and Contemporary Life."
- Presentation Content: Your presentation should explore one or more the following areas:
 - The impact of religion on individual or collective lives
 - Social and cultural causes and implications

- Controversies or conflicts
- Potential future developments or solutions
- Evidence and supporting references
- Q&A: Include a 10-minute Q&A and discussion segment.
- Assessment:
 - Individual Performance: 15%
 - Group Performance: 10%

5.3. Field Trip Reflection Report (10%)

- A mandatory field trip to a religious site will be held on **15 March 2025 (Sat)**
- Submit a 500-word (English) or 800-word (Chinese) reflection report based on guidelines provided later. Submit a soft copy to Veriguide and Blackboard Learn by **11:59 pm on 31 March 2025 (Monday)**.

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5.4. Open-book Quiz (30%)

- Format: Open-book quiz with approximately 30 multiple-choice questions.
- Coverage: Lecture topics from Weeks 2-14.
- Preparation: Thoroughly review all relevant lecture and reading materials.

5.5. Term Paper (25%)

- Topic: Analyze a real-life case study related to "Religion and Contemporary Life." You may choose the same case study used for your tutorial presentation or select a new one.
- Length: 1,200 words (English) or 1,500 words (Chinese), excluding citations and bibliography.
- Content: Explore the religious impact, social/cultural causes and implications, controversies or conflicts, and potential developments or solutions related to your chosen case study. Support your analysis with evidence and credible sources.
- Due Date & Submission: Submit a soft copy to Veriguide and Blackboard Learn by **11:59 pm on 24 April 2025 (Thursday)**.
- Late Submission Penalty: 10 marks deducted per day late. Submissions received more than 10 days after the deadline will receive a zero.

6. Learning resources for students

The basic readings for the course are listed above. Additional suggested readings, if any, will be provided in class and through *Blackboard Learn*.

7. Feedback for evaluation

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

8. A facility for posting course announcements

Course announcements, assignments, and feedback will be provided through *Blackboard Learn*. All course-related questions can be posted on the discussion forum or emailed within the *Blackboard Learn*.

9. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Each student must upload a soft copy of the completed term 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 contains a declaration of honesty. You must sign and attach the receipt to the paper you submit.