

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

CURE1110 Religion and Contemporary Life 宗教與當代生活

1st Term 2025-2026

Lecture Time: Mon 11:30 - 13:15

Tutorial Time: Mon 13:30 -14:15

Venue: Lecture ARC G01 Tutorial: ARC G01 & YIA 501/506/509

Teachers: Dr. Lee Chi Shing (chishinglee002@cuhk.edu.hk)

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. Course Content and Schedule

Week	Date	Lecture Topic	Tutorial
1	1/9	<i>No Class-- Inauguration Ceremony</i>	
2	8/9	Course Introduction	
3	15/9	What is Religion?	Grouping
4	22/9	Religion and State	Topic submission
5	29/9	Secularization	
6	6/10	Religion and Violence	
7	13/10	Religion and Gender	Presentation
8	20/10	New Religious Movement	Presentation
9	27/10	Religion and New Age Movement	Presentation
10	3/11	Religion and Science	Presentation
11	10/11	Religion and Food	Presentation
12	17/11	Religion, Health, and Healing	Presentation
13	24/11	Religion and Popular Culture	
14	1/12	Course Summary	

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 and Participation	10%
Tutorial Presentation	30%
- Individual performance	- 15%
- Group performance	- 15%
Reflective Journal	20%
Term Paper	40%

5.1. Tutorial Attendance and Participation (10%)

- Regular attendance for 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 (30%)

- 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." **The presentation topic should be submitted on or before 2:15pm, September 22(Monday), 2025.**
- 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
- **Presentation time limit is 30 minutes**
- **Q&A: Include a 15-minute Q&A and discussion segment.**
- **Assessment:**
 - Individual Performance: 15%
 - Group Performance: 15%

5.3. Reflective Journal (20%)

- Students are required to write an 800-1,000 words reflective journal (either in Chinese or English) regarding their understanding and reflection on what they have learned, experienced, and revealed during the course.
- **Assessment:** The paper would be assessed on:
 - Demonstration of understanding of relevant topics and knowledges.
 - Offering a critical analysis of the phenomenon, connecting with self-analysis of personal experience or observation.
 - Clarity in writing and organization, language proficiency.
 - Compliance with the style of academic writing.
- **Due Date & Submission: 11:59 pm, December 1(Monday), 2025 and should be handed in via the VeriGuide and Blackboard.** The receipt of VeriGuide should also be submitted with the reflective journal via Blackboard.
- **Late Submission Penalty:** 10% marks deducted per day late. Submissions received more than 10 days after the deadline will receive a zero.

5.4. Term Paper (40%)

- **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: 11:59 pm, December 13(Saturday), 2025 and should be handed in via the VeriGuide and Blackboard.** The receipt of VeriGuide should also be submitted with the term paper via Blackboard.
- **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 on recommended readings. Additional suggested readings, if any, will be provided in class and through *Blackboard*.

7. Feedback for evaluation

Students are welcome to give comments and feedback on the course through *Blackboard* 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*. All course-related questions can be posted on the discussion forum or emailed within the *Blackboard*.

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 submit with the assignment on Blackboard.**

10. Recommended Readings

Lecture 2: What is Religion? <ul style="list-style-type: none">Fisher, M. P. (1997). "The Religious Response." In <i>Living Religions</i> (pp. 12-37). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
Lecture 3: Religion and State <ul style="list-style-type: none">Robbins, T., & Robertson, R. (1987). <i>Church-state relations: tensions and transitions</i>. Transaction Books.
Lecture 4: Secularization <ul style="list-style-type: none">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 postsecular urbanism</i> (pp. 1-11). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
Lecture 5: Religion and Violence <ul style="list-style-type: none">John L Esposito, "Islam and Political Violence." <i>Religions</i> 2015. 6(3). 1067-1081.
Lecture 6: Religion and Gender <ul style="list-style-type: none">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.
Lecture 7: New Religious Movement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Hammer, Olav, and Mikael Rothstein. "Introduction to New Religious Movements." Introduction. In <i>The Cambridge Companion to New Religious Movements</i>. edited by Olav Hammer and Mikael Rothstein. pp. 1–10. Cambridge Companions to Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.John A. Saliba, (2018). "Counseling and the new religious movements." <i>Perspectives on new religious movements</i>. pp. 198–234.
Lecture 8: Religion and New Age Movement <ul style="list-style-type: none">Løøv, Margrethe. <i>The New Age Movement</i>. Cambridge, United Kingdom; Cambridge University Press, 2024.
Lecture 9: Religion and Science <ul style="list-style-type: none">Jonathan R. Topham, (2010) "Natural Theology and the Science." <i>The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion</i>. pp.59-79Ronald L. Numbers, (2003), "Science without God: Natural Laws and Christian Beliefs." <i>When Science & Christianity Meet</i>. pp.265-285.
Lecture 10: Religion and Food <ul style="list-style-type: none">Mary Douglas, (2003). "Introduction." "Ritual Uncleaness." <i>Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo</i>. Routledge. pp. 1-29

Lecture 11: Religion, Health, and Healing

- Caroline Young, Cyndie Koopsen (2011). "Spirituality, Religion, and Health." *Spirituality, Health, and Healing: An Integrative Approach* (2nd ed.). Jones and Bartlett. pp. 89-110.
- Dein, Simon (2020). "Religious Healing and Mental Health." *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*. 23. no. 8. 657–65.

Lecture 12: Religion and Popular Culture

- Conrad Ostwalt (2012). "A Cinematic Secular Apocalyptic Imagination." *Secular Steeples Popular Culture and the Religious Imagination*. Continuum International Publishing Group.