

RELS 5322 Research Paper in Religious Studies 宗教研究學術論文

Second Term 2025-2026

Lecture Room: HYS_G04
Lecture Time: Fri 7.00 pm – 9.30 pm
Lecture: Dr. Chow Wai Yin 周惠賢博士
Phone: 3943 1425 (by appointment)
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1. Course Description

The course is designed to facilitate students to develop academic writing skills in Religious Studies with support from other class members and the instructor. Students are encouraged to pursue their own academic interests, informed by the themes or topics they have encountered in taught components of the Religious Studies Program, and to develop appropriate research strategies to explore the study questions, develop a sustained argument, as well as effective academic writing and presentation skills. Students will be asked to present their papers orally in a seminar setting, where the participants will have an opportunity to respond to the presentations.

***Prerequisite for the Research Paper in Religious Studies**

Students wishing to enroll in this course must submit a brief proposal to Dr. Chow Wai Yin by 11:55 pm on December 31, 2025. **A Google Form will be sent out by Crystal in early December.**

The preliminary proposal should include the following items, which will be included in the Google Form:

- The religion you wish to study (e.g., Christianity or Chinese Religions).
- The topic area you want to explore (e.g., Religion and Society).
- A description of your study interests in 100 words or fewer.

2. Learning outcomes

Upon completing the course, students should be able to:

- Identify a research topic;
- Collect and synthesize evidence from a wide range of primary and secondary sources applicable to the study of religion;
- Express ideas and arguments clearly;
- Organize the arguments into an organic and coherent essay;
- Do oral presentation in precise ways.

3. Course Schedule

Class/ week	Topic
1 9/1	Lecture 1: Course Introduction
2 16/1	Lecture 2: Methodologies in Religious Studies: Approaches and Applications
3 23/1	Lecture 3: Understanding Research Questions: Crafting Effective Questions
4 30/1	Lecture 4: Developing a Literature Review: Building a Foundation
5 6/2	Lecture 5: Integrating Evidence: Supporting Your Arguments
6 13/2	Lecture 6: Structuring Your Research Paper: From Introduction to Conclusion
8 20/2	No Class – Public Holiday (Lunar New Year Vacation)
7 27/2	Homework 1: Literature Review + Research Question
9 6/3	Homework 2: Building Your Arguments (3 Major Arguments)
10 13/3	Homework 3: Creating Your Research Proposal and Outline: Organizing Your Ideas
11 20/3	Meeting 1: Meeting with your assigned Supervisors
12 27/3	Meeting 2: Meeting with your assigned Supervisors (if needed) – Finalize Research Proposal
13 3/4	No Class – Public Holiday (Good Friday)
14-15 10 – 17/4	Independent Project: Thesis Writing

Required Readings:

Scott G. Brown, *A Guide to Writing Academic Essays in Religious Studies*. London: Continuum, 2008.

Northey, Margot. *Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing: Religious Studies*. Toronto: Oxford University Press 2015.

Michael Stausberg & Steven Engler, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. New York: Routledge 2011.

4. Learning activities

Lecture		Class Discussion		Web-based teaching		Workshop/ Presentation		Course Readings		Final Project	
In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out	In	Out

class	class	class	class	class	class	class	class	class	class	class	class
3		0.5				1 hr			3 hrs/w		20 hrs
M		M				M			M		M

M: Mandatory activity in the course

5. Assessment scheme

Task	Percentage
Participation and Class Discussions	10%
Presentation	25%
Final Paper	65%

Participation and Class Discussions (10%)

- You are strongly encouraged to participate in the various discussions in the class.

Thesis Proposal (25%)

- All students must submit a thesis proposal by **March 13**, before your first meeting with your thesis supervisor. Your proposal should include the following (a template will be provided on Blackboard):
 - Give an ***introduction*** and ***background information*** on your topic. What relevant research has been performed previously?
 - State the problem(s) that remain unanswered.
 - Describe ***the methodology*** you will use to study the topic. Be sure you fully understand your chosen methods. Give reasons why you chose these methods over other approaches.
 - Present any ***information/evidence*** you have collected thus far.
 - Describe what you ***expect to find (conclusion)***.
 - Explain the significance of your findings (or potential future findings), and etc.

Final written submission of research thesis (65%)

- The thesis should be about ~8,000-10,000 words (8,000 in English, 10,000 in Chinese), dealing with a defined scholarly question.
- The thesis should demonstrate appropriate research skills, including the abilities to collect information, to exercise critical judgment, and to present the arguments in a clear and organized manner.
- A soft copy of thesis should be handed in both hard and soft copy via VeriGuide between **21/4 – 11.00pm 25/4 (Friday), 2026**. Late submission will be penalized: 10 marks will be deduced for one day of late submission. *Submission after 10 days will be given a zero mark.*

6. Grade Descriptors

- 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. Use of AI tools: allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation (Approach 3)

- Students may use some AI tools in some class activities and assignments on the condition that they **make explicit acknowledgement** and **proper citations** of the input from AI tools.
- Acknowledging support from AI tools: Students are required to acknowledge all functional uses of a generative AI tool and **cite it when they paraphrase, quote, or incorporate into their own work any content** (whether it is text, image, data, or other format) that was created by it.
- **An example of acknowledgement**
'I acknowledge the use of (name of AI tool – e.g. ChatGPT (<https://chat.openai.com/>) to (specify the support, e.g. plan my essay, generate some ideas for the content, ask for examples of data collection instruments, get the dates of historical events, etc.).
- **An example of citation**
 OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT (Mar 20 version)*. <https://chat.openai.com/chat>
- **An example of including texts generated by an AI tool in work**
 "The following text was generated by an AI tool / language model (ChatGPT):"
 [Insert the text generated by ChatGPT here.]
- **An example of including texts generated by an AI tool and the prompts that were used to elicit the text from the AI tool**
 "[The prompt], as generated by an AI language model (ChatGPT):"
 [Insert the text generated by ChatGPT in response to the prompt.]
- Students are reminded to learn and use the AI tools responsibly and ethically and be aware of the limitations
- Students are reminded to clarify with the course teacher and obtain permission if necessary when in doubt.

8. Suggested Readings

Michael Stausberg, Steven Engler, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Scott G. Brown, *A Guide to Writing Academic Essays in Religious Studies*. London: Continuum, 2008.

9. Feedback for evaluation

End-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted in class. Students' comments and feedback on the course through e-mails or personal meeting with the instructor are always welcomed.

10. A Facility for Posting Course Announcements

Related course materials are delivered via the platform "BLACKBOARD"
(<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/eLearning/>)

11. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Students must submit their papers via VeriGuide. Relevant information on academic honesty and plagiarism can be allocated at: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty>

12. Guideline on sharing lecture recordings

- The copyright of any lecture recordings shared in the course, whether they are produced by teachers, students, or peer note-takers, belongs to the University.
- Students should not share these recordings with others without obtaining prior written consent from the teacher(s).