

2025-26 Second Term

RELS5331 Special Topic in Religious Studies I: Women and Religion

宗教研究專題(一)：婦女與宗教

Lecturer: WONG Wai Ching ([waiching@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:waiching@cuhk.edu.hk))

Class time: Tuesdays 19.00 - 21.30

## **I. Course Description:**

This course aims to provide a general study of the teachings and practices of women in various religious traditions, including Daoism, Buddhism, Islam, Chinese popular religions, and Christianity. Particular attention will be given to how various religious traditions and practices shape and reflect the various ways of constructing gender politics in different societies and cultures.

## **II. Expected Learning Outcomes**

Students are expected to acquire:

- a) a general grasp of theories of gender construction and their relevance to the study of religion as a social and cultural phenomenon;
- b) basic methodological understanding of the various feminist approaches to the study of religion;
- c) a general knowledge of the various religious teachings and practices concerning women; and
- d) the critical ability to analyze religious texts, teachings, and practices from a feminist perspective.

## **III. Course Outline:**

### **A. Methodology:**

#### **1. 6/1 Engendering Religion: Sexual Oppression or Liberation?**

#### **2. 13/1 Gender Politics and Religious Classics**

*Primary reference:*

黃慧貞：「宗教經典詮釋與傳統重塑：性別研究的進路」，收《性別覺醒—兩岸三地社會性別研究》，頁 106-130。

### **3. 20/1 Historical Discourse on Women in Religions**

*Primary reference:*

李貞德：〈最近中國宗教史研究中的女性問題〉。《近代中國婦女史研究》，第二期（1994年6月）：251-270。

Lee, Lily Xiao Hong. *The Virtue of Yin: Studies on Chinese Women*. Hawaii: Wild Peony, 1994.

### **4. 27/1 Religious Languages, Symbols, and Gender Consciousness**

*Primary reference:*

Carol P. Christ, “Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections,” in *Womanspirit Rising*, ed. Carol P. Christ and Judith Plaskow; 273-287.

## **B. The Religious Woman Subject**

### **5. 3/2 Women in Christianity**

*Group discussion:* 「忍人所不能忍—鄧李少萍」，載《華人婦女與香港基督教：口述歷史》（香港：牛津大學出版社，2010）。

*Primary reference:*

Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987). Chapters 6: “Food as Control of Self” and 7: “Food as Control of Circumstance.”

### **6. 10/2 Women in Islam**

*Group Discussion:* Homa Hoodfar, “The Veil in Their Minds and on Our Heads: Veiling Practices and Muslim Women,” In *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*, ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 420-446.

*Primary reference:*

Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Veils, Virgins, and the Tongues of Men and Angels: Women’s Heads in Early Christianity,” In *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader*, ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli (New York: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 389-419.

### **17/2 Lunar New Year Holiday: No Class**

### **7. 28/2 am Special Activity: A field trip to the Hong Kong Islamic Union**

(24/2: No class)

**8. 3/3 Women in Daoism**

*Special activity 2: A conversation with an invited speaker: "The Woman Immortal"*

*Primary reference:*

Daniel Overmyer, "Women in Chinese Religions: Submission, Struggle, Transcendence," in *From Benares to Beijing: Essays on Buddhism and Chinese Religion: In Honor of Prof. Jan Yun-hua*, ed. Koichi Shinohara and Gregory Schopen, pp. 91-119 (New York: Mosaic Press, 1991).

**C. Women in Religious Space**

**9. 10/3 Mid-term exercise: A Short Oral History of a Woman Believer**

*(any religion); length: about 2,500 characters in Chinese, 1,750 words in English*

*No class on 10/3. Students are welcome to consult the teacher before submission of the reports, due at 24:00 on March 16, 2026.*

**10. 17/3 Women Mystics and Their Churches**

*Group discussion: Lois McNay, "Ethics of the Self," in *Foucault and Feminism*, pp. 83-93, 97-105.*

*Primary reference:*

Grace M. Jantzen, "The Visions of Virgins: Spirituality and Sexual Control," in *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, 193-241 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

**11. 24/3 Women Buddhists and Their Nunneries**

*Group discussion: Lois McNay, "Body, Position, Power," in *Gender and Agency*, pp. 36-47.*

*Primary Reference:*

Lily Xiao Hong Lee, "The Emergence of Buddhist Nuns in China and its Social Ramifications." In *The Virtue of Yin: Studies on Chinese Women*, pp. 47-64; and 盧蕙馨：「現代佛教女性的身體語言與性別重建：以慈濟功德會為例」。載李玉珍、林美玫合編：《婦女與宗教：跨領域的視野》。台北：里仁，2003。頁281-332。

## **D. The Religious Body**

### **12. 31/3 Blessed Menopause**

*Group discussion: Lois McNay, "Body, Position, Power," in Gender and Agency, pp. 36-47.*

*Primary reference:*

Carlitz, Katherine. "Desire, Danger, and the Body: Stories of Women's Virtue in Late Ming China." In *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State*, ed. Christina K. Gilmartin, et al., pp. 101-124. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Ahern, Emily M. "The Power and Pollution of Chinese Women." In *Women in Chinese Society*, ed. Margery Wolf and Roxane Witke, pp. 193-214.

**7/4 No Class**

### **13. 14/4 The Divine Masculinity: The Christian Men's Movement & Conclusion**

Primary reference: Mark Jordan, "Thomas Aquinas: The Sin Against Nature," in *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 136-158.

## **IV. Course Components:**

<b>Teaching Modes</b>	100% <i>Lectures on-site face-to-face (hybrid no)</i>
<b>Learning activities</b>	<b>Percentage of time</b> 125 total hours
<i>Lecture on-site face-to-face</i>	42 hours = 34%
<i>Field Trip</i>	Included in lecture time
<i>In-class discussion</i>	Included in lecture time
<i>Assigned recommended reading</i>	3 hours x 12 = 29%
<i>Oral History Interview and Report Writing</i>	3 + 8 hours = 8%
<i>Term Paper Writing</i>	36 hours = 29%

## **V. Course Requirements:**

1. Group discussion & class participation: 30%  
Including 20% for peer assessment for group discussion
2. Mid-term exercise: 30%

A short oral history report, approximately 2,500 characters in Chinese or 1,750 words in English, is due at 24:00 on March 16, 2026.

Theme of the interview: How has a religion shaped a woman believer's life?

Students should identify a woman who is a believer in a particular religion and conduct an interview with her for at least two hours. The interview will focus on the woman's religious experience, including her history of conversion, witness stories, how she incorporates her religion into her life, and how she evaluates herself as a woman and a believer. The interviewee's years of conversion in the religion should be considered.

3. Final Paper: 40%

Length: about 3,500 Chinese characters or 2,500 English words, on a topic related to the course. 24:00 on April 24, 2026.

Late submission: 1.5 marks will be deducted for every 24 hours of delayed submission of either the report or the term paper. Papers with no proper documentation will be returned and treated as late submissions if resubmitted after the deadline.

All reports and papers shall be submitted to VeriGuide before submitting to [waiching@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:waiching@cuhk.edu.hk)

## **VI. Assessment Rubrics**

Excellent/poor understanding of the key concepts  
Excellent/poor background research and understanding  
Excellent/poor organization of materials involved  
Excellent/poor analysis of the multiple perspectives involved  
Excellent/poor grasp of the issues involved

## **VII. Feedback for Evaluation**

An end-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted online. Student comments and feedback to the instructor are always welcomed, whether through emails or personal meetings.

## **VIII. Academic Honesty and Plagiarism**

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>.

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed [declaration](#) that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures.

- In the case of group projects, all members of the group should be asked to sign the declaration, each of whom is responsible and liable to disciplinary actions, irrespective of whether he/she has signed the declaration and whether he/she has contributed, directly or indirectly, to the problematic contents.
- For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment.
- Students are fully aware that their work may be investigated by AI content detection software to determine originality.
- Students are fully aware of the AI approach(es) adopted in the course. In the case where some AI tools are allowed, students have made proper acknowledgment and citations as suggested by the course teacher.

Assignments without a properly signed declaration will not be graded by teachers.

Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

The submission of a piece of work, or a part of a piece of work, for more than one purpose (e.g. to satisfy the requirements in two different courses) without declaration to this effect shall be regarded as having committed undeclared multiple submissions. It is common and acceptable to reuse a turn of phrase or a sentence or two from one's own work; but wholesale reuse is problematic. In any case, agreement from the course teacher(s) concerned should be obtained prior to the submission of the piece of work.

The copyright of the teaching materials, including lecture notes, assignments and examination questions, etc., produced by staff members/ teachers of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) belongs to CUHK. Students may download the teaching materials produced by the staff members/ teachers from the Learning Management Systems, e.g. Blackboard, adopted by CUHK for their own educational

use, but shall not distribute/ share/ copy the materials to a third-party without seeking prior permission from the staff members/ teachers concerned.

#### **IX. Use of Generative AI tools**

**Approach 3 - Use of AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation** (Please refer to the appendix – Approach 3)

#### **X. Guidelines 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).

### Approach 3 - Use only with explicit acknowledgement

In courses where students are allowed or expected to collaborate with or use AI tools for in-class learning activities or assignments, students should be reminded to make explicit acknowledgement of the use of these tools. Teachers may show students examples regarding how to acknowledge and make citations. Students should also be informed of the limitations and appropriate use of these tools.

#### **Use of AI tools is allowed with explicit acknowledgement and proper citation**

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.

- i. 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.).*

- ii. An example of citation

OpenAI. (2023). *ChatGPT* (Mar 20 version). <https://chat.openai.com/chat>

(Students are reminded that due to the rapid developments of generative AI tools, some citation formats may be updated regularly.)

- iii. An example of including texts generated by an AI tool in their work

"The following text was generated by an AI tool / language model (ChatGPT):"  
[Insert the text generated by ChatGPT here.]

- iv. 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.