

RELIGION IN MODERN SOCIETY
SOCI4209
CUHK Department of Sociology
Spring 2024

Instructor: Andrew Junker, PhD

Dr. Junker is Hong Kong Director for the Yale-China Association located at New Asia College and is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology

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Office: New Asia College, Cheng Ming Building G07 (Yale-China Association)

Office hours by appointment

Language of instruction: English

Meeting Details: WMY303 (Wu Ho Man Yuan 伍何曼原樓) on Wednesday PM 2:30 to 4:15

Tutorial location and Time: TBA First tutorial meeting in week 2.

Tutors:

Xiao Wenxin, Wendy. Email: wendyxiao@cuhk.edu.hk

Wei Houyuan, Kris. Email: Kristheway@link.cuhk.edu.hk

Course Description:

Modernity has long been imagined as a kind of a secular space and time, empty of religion. Yet, religion is found in modern societies everywhere, often thriving and influencing politics, culture, and civil society. In this course, students will study how sociologists have theorized and investigated religion and modernity together. We will not focus on any particular faith, doctrine, or systems of beliefs and ritual. Instead, we will emphasize the different historical pathways of religion in modern societies and what common factors led to the different outcomes. We will also examine the relationship of “religion” – broadly defined – to other social formations, such as cultural solidarity, gender, capitalism, democracy and authoritarianism. Students will be asked to think, discuss, and produce arguments about theories and empirical cases.

Note: Weekly readings are selected from classical and contemporary scholarship, not from textbooks. The readings require time and effort to understand. Students who elect this course should plan their schedules accordingly.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of this course, you will be able to...

1. Critically appreciate and apply theoretical debates about religion and its significance for contemporary sociology.
2. Understand differences in the European, American (US), and Chinese historical trajectories for religion in modernity.
3. Be able to describe sociological characteristics of religion in Chinese societies, especially in contrast to the European classical models based on Christianity.
4. Use concepts from the course to examine contemporary issues in China, Hong Kong, and elsewhere.
5. Conduct independent research, analysis, and argumentation with an improved degree of fluency and intellectual complexity.
6. Better use social science reasoning to consider and discuss fundamental questions about religion in society.

Assessment:

Your grade for this course will be based on the following:

One tutorial presentation	10%
Take-home assessment 1	20%
Take-home assessment 2	20%
Final project proposal	5%
Final paper or film	35%
Participation	10%

Tutorial Presentation

You must make one presentation in tutorial section on the additional discussion reading. You may do this with a partner by permission of instructor.

Take-Home Assessments

There will be two take-home assessments designed to demonstrate your comprehension of material from the readings and lectures. Submission to VeriGuide required.

Final Paper or Film due on April 29

Theme: Field research report based on firsthand study of a religious site in Hong Kong

Format: essay or film

You can do this individually or in a group, with maximum group size of 4 persons. Individuals may only write papers. Paper length: 5 pages per participant. Film length: maximum 10 minutes. Papers must be submitted to VeriGuide.

Participation:

Regular, active attendance in class is expected for lecture and tutorials. All reading must be completed prior to the tutorial sessions in which those readings will be discussed. Unexcused absences to tutorials will result in loss of points, and students with more than 2 unexcused absences will receive no points for class participation (10% of your final grade). Mild late arrival will be given 70% points for attendance, but extreme lateness will be counted as absence.

Late submissions of assignments lose a full letter grade for every 24 hours late (every 8 hour increment is a single step down, as in B+ to B) until F (60%). After that, I accept the assignments until the final class (50% credit is better than a zero, and learning from the assignment is best of all); I will accept late final papers up until midnight on December 12. In exceptional circumstances, extensions will be granted if arranged in advance of the due date.

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 outcomes which 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 weaknesses.
- D Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes.
- F Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.

Generative AI: “use AI to think with you, but not for you” (CUHK Guidelines, March 2023)

Generative AI use is discouraged but permitted as an assistant to learning. Do not use the AI tools to avoid independently understanding difficult reading. It is through independently reading and writing that you develop your skills, knowledge, and intellectual capacity. Assignments must be the product of your own writing and thinking. Any content quoted or paraphrased from generative AI must be cited like published sources. Consult an appropriate guide for how to cite a generative AI tool. Here is one example:

OpenAI. (2023). ChatGPT (Aug 10 GPT-3.5 version) [Large language model]. <https://chat.openai.com>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you are entitled to an accommodation or suspect you may need one, please contact Support Services for Students with Disabilities (<https://www2.osa.cuhk.edu.hk/disability/>) and discuss with me as needed.

Schedule and Readings

All readings are posted to Blackboard or can be read online through the library website. Readings labelled “Lecture” are required for all students. Readings labeled “Discussion” are strongly recommended for all and required for the assigned presenters in tutorial that week. Readings should be completed before tutorial sessions in which readings will be discussed.

Week 1: Introduction

January 10

Course goals and expectations. Introduction to themes.

Sign up for your tutorial group

CLASSIC THEORIES

Week 2: What is Religion?

January 17

Lecture: Beyer, Peter. 2001. “Contemporary Social Theory as it Applies to the Understanding of Religion in Cross-cultural Perspective”

Discussion: Spiro, Melford. 1966. “Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation”

Week 3: Emile Durkheim

January 24

Lecture: Pages **1-8, 207-225** in Durkheim, Emile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. Karen Fields. New York: Free Press.
https://monoskop.org/images/a/a2/Durkheim_Emile_The_Elementary_Forms_of_Religious_life_1995.pdf

Discussion: Bellah, Robert. 1970. "Civil Religion in America." Pp. 168-92 in *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*. New York: Harper & Row.

Week 4: Max Weber - Capitalism

January 31

Lecture: Chapter 2, "The Spirit of Capitalism," (pp. **13-38**) in Weber, Max. 2005 [1930]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by T. Parsons.

Discussion: Chapter 5, "Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism," (pp. **102-125**) in Weber, Max. 2005 [1930]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by T. Parsons.

Week 5: Max Weber – Charismatic Authority

February 7

Lecture: Joosse, P. 2017. "Max Weber's Disciples: Theorizing the Charismatic Aristocracy." *Sociological Theory*, 35(4), 334-358. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275117740402>

Discussion: Junker, Andrew. 2014. "Follower Agency and Charismatic Mobilization in Falun Gong." *Sociology of Religion* 75(3):418-41.

*FEBRUARY 19, (MONDAY) 5PM: TAKE-HOME ASSESSMENT 1 DUE

WESTERN RELIGION IN MODERNITY

Week 6: Religion, the Modern, and the Post-modern

February 21

Lecture: Davie, Grace. 2013. "Modernity: a Single or Plural Construct?" from *The Sociology of Religion: a Critical Agenda*. 2nd ed.

Discussion: Eisenstadt, S. N. 2000. "Multiple Modernities." *Daedalus* 129(1):1-29.

Week 7: European Experience and Secularization

February 28

Lecture: Chapter 1 (pp. **11-39**) in Casanova, José. 1994. *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1994.

Discussion: Bruce. 2003. "The Social Processes of Secularization," *The Blackwell Companion to Sociology of Religion*

MARCH 11 (MONDAY), 5PM: FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

Week 8: American (USA) Experience: Denominationalism and Activism

March 13

Lecture: Mead, Sydney. 1954. "Denominationalism: The Shape of Protestantism in America"

Discussion: Wuthnow, Robert. 1988. "Special Purpose Groups," *The Restructuring of American Religion*

Week 9: Global Christian Evangelicalism

March 20

Lecture: Woodhead, Linda. 2009. Pp. 210-229 of "Christianity" from *Religions in the Modern World*

Discussion: Yang, Fenggang. 2005. "Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's: Conversion to Christianity in Urban China." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44(4):423-41.

*MARCH 25, (MONDAY) 5PM: TAKE-HOME ASSESSMENT 2 DUE *

CHINESE RELIGION IN MODERNITY

Week 10: Religious Economies, Rational Choice, and Reform Era China

March 27

Lecture: Yang, Fenggang. 2006. "The Red, Black, and Gray Markets of Religion in China." *The Sociological Quarterly* 47:93-122.

Discussion: Howlett, Zachary. 2022. "Performative Secularism: school-sponsored prayer in China's National College Entrance Exam." *Critical Asian Studies*.

Week 11: Secularization as State Building Project

April 3

Lecture: (1) Goossaert, V. 2005. "The concept of religion in China and the West." *Diogenes*, 52(1), 13-20.

(2) Laliberte 2011 "Contemporary Issues in State-Religion Relations" from *Chinese religious life*. Edited by Palmer, D. A., Shive, G., & Wickeri, P. L. Oxford University Press, Inc.

Discussion: Valussi, E. 2020. "Men Built Religion, and Women Made It Superstitious: Gender and Superstition in Republican China." *Journal of Chinese Religions* 48(1), 87-125. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jcr.2020.0006>.

Week 12: Gender, Patriarchy, and Religion in Confucian East Asia

April 10

Reading: Chong, Kelly. 2008. *Deliverance and Submission: Evangelical Women and the Negotiation of Patriarchy in South Korea*. Pp: 1-5, 135-170 (chapter 5).

Discussion: Pomfret, John. 2016. "Bible Wives" from *Beautiful Country and the Middle Kingdom*

Week 13: Final Discussion

April 17

Format to be announced.

APRIL 29, 5PM: RESEARCH PAPER DUE