

# Religions in Hong Kong

RLG290Y (Summer 2025)

University of Toronto Summer Abroad Program

Professor Ken Derry

## Course Description:

It's impossible to go anywhere in Hong Kong without running into something connected to religion, whether it's a temple, shrine, market, festival, feast, or the villain-hitters of Causeway Bay. This course will consider general concepts of religion (e.g., ritual, sacred text, art, gender, power, space, community) in relation to the very diverse religious life of the city, focusing on the traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and Taoism. Students will explore how these traditions are shaped by the life and history of Hong Kong through visits to many religious sites throughout the city, including the New Territories, Kowloon, and three of the main islands. We will ask: How is being Buddhist (or Hindu, Muslim, etc.) different in Hong Kong, compared to being Buddhist (or Hindu, Muslim, etc.) in other parts of the world?



Kowloon Mosque



Evaluation:

The requirements for this course are as follows:

Participation.....	10%
Critical reflection.....	10%
Group presentation .....	20%
Two in-class tests (15% each) .....	30%
Final project.....	30%

Course Readings:

Readings will consist of a combination of texts that provide information on specific religious traditions, as well as on the historical and political context of religious life in Hong Kong. The principal required reading for this course is Huston Smith's *The World's Religions* (any edition). We will also make use of excerpts from John Carroll's *A Concise History of Hong Kong*. Additional smaller readings will be provided by the instructor throughout the term.



Taoist statue in Tai O



Big Buddha on Lantau Island

Instructor:

Dr. Ken Derry is Associate Professor (Teaching Stream) in the Department of Historical Studies, University of Toronto Mississauga, focusing on comparative religion and modern culture. He has been teaching at UofT since 1996 in the areas of religion and literature/film, religion and violence, and world religions. His research includes publications on Indigenous traditions, religion and North American literature, Hong Kong religion and film, early Christianity, superheroes, and *Star Wars*. Ken has received numerous awards for teaching and student service, including the 2013 UTM Faculty Teaching Excellence Award, the 2022 UofT President's Teaching Award, and the 2023 3M National Teaching Fellowship.



Tsz Shan Monastery



St. John's Cathedral