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BASIC INFORMATION

Instructor: Ken Derry
Email: ken.derry@utoronto.ca
Class location: HKU Library Extension LE7
Class times: Monday to Thursday, 9:15am to 12:15pm
Note: mandatory field trips will take place on some days outside of regular class times, which includes afternoons, evenings, and weekends

RESOURCES

1. RLG101H Website (Blackboard)
The course website is a key resource that you should refer to at least twice a week. It will contain:
   - All important announcements;
   - Lecture slides, as pdf files;
   - All course handouts, as pdf files. No handouts will be printed and given out in class, except under exceptional circumstances.
In addition to the above, the course website will be used by students to email the instructor, and the instructor will similarly use it to email students.

**IMPORTANT:** Blackboard emails and announcements will be sent to your utoronto email address, so you are responsible for checking your utoronto address regularly (again: at least twice a week). Failure to check your email is NOT an acceptable excuse for missing important information. You are also strongly advised not to forward your utoronto email to another account (e.g., Google, Hotmail, etc.) as these providers sometimes view utoronto email as junk, which means you may not get all (or perhaps any) of your RLG290Y messages.

2. Summer Abroad and HKU Staff
Staff from both the UofT Summer Abroad office (in Woodsworth College) and Hong Kong University can assist you with a variety of concerns, issues, and questions, including clarifications on university policies and procedures, or information on resources for academic or personal assistance. Contact information for these offices is available in the When in Hong Kong! handbook provided at the program orientation.

3. Other Students in this Course
I strongly encourage you to get to know other students in RLG290Y, if you don’t already. You can be a great resource for one another, provide mutual encouragement, and work together to understand the course material. It is amazing sometimes how much more we can accomplish when we combine our talents and resources.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

It is virtually impossible to walk more than ten metres in Hong Kong without running into something connected to religion, whether it's a temple, restaurant shrine, night market, or Dragon Boat Festival. This interdisciplinary course will consider general concepts of religion (e.g., ritual, sacred text, art, community) in relation to the specific yet very diverse religious life of the city, focusing on the traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Taoism. Students will explore these religious practices through visits to many sites throughout Hong Kong, including the New Territories, Kowloon, Hong Kong Island, Lantau, and Cheung Chau.

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1 These slides will only be posted after each class. This is because I am always changing the slides just before class, and also because I believe that it is good training for you to learn to take notes based only on what you see and hear during the lecture.
PHILOSOPHY AND OBJECTIVES

In order to best facilitate learning about religion in Hong Kong, this course has been constructed with the following ideas in mind:

• Reading: Your engagement with the course readings is crucial to help all of us gain better insight into this material. As such, you are expected to have completed, and reflected on, the readings before we discuss them in class.

• Writing: Academic expertise involves the ability to express oneself in writing clearly and succinctly, in a variety of formats. In my experience practice helps a lot, even if it does not necessarily “make perfect.”

• Speaking: Academic endeavours also involve oral expression – in the classroom, in conferences, over drinks, etc. – and so all students are strongly encouraged to participate as frequently as they are able.

• Awareness of perspectives: Understanding academic material related to religion is a complex act that usually involves the wearing of more than one interpretive “hat” (e.g., sociological, feminist, historical-critical). Learning to recognize which hat we (and others) are wearing at different moments is a key goal of academic work, and is also a valuable skill in other areas of life.

• Joint ownership of the course: By this I mean that each of us will prepare for every session, listen closely to other points of view, and share our own ideas and impressions in order to make the course as intellectually and personally rewarding as possible.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

• Clearly explain general details of several “world religions” (including key aspects of history, practice, and belief);

• Demonstrate how the particular circumstances of each tradition’s history in Hong Kong has impacted elements of belief and practice;

• Apply a number of theoretical concepts to understanding the practice of different religions in Hong Kong, including concepts of syncretism, gender, and power;

• Gather, understand, and interpret data from field excursions;

• Express information, arguments, and analyses accurately and with clarity in writing;

• Formulate coherent lines of argument;

• Explain various historic, methodological, and theoretical reasons for uncertainty, ambiguity and limits to knowledge within the study of religion, and how such limits influence analyses and interpretations.

REQUIRED READINGS

The principal text required 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 readings may be provided by the instructor throughout the term; this will be posted on the course Blackboard site.

GRADING

The grading requirements for this course are as follows:

1. Class participation ........................................................................................................... 10%
2. Critical reflection (due July 2; optional 2nd attempt due July 12) ........................................ 10%
3. Test 1 (June 23) .................................................................................................................... 15%
4. Test 2 (July 7) ...................................................................................................................... 15%
5. Group presentation .......................................................................................................... 20%
6. Final project (due July 16) ................................................................................................ 30%

Note: More detailed instructions for the critical reflection, group presentations and final project will be posted on Blackboard.

Adapted from the Guidelines for University of Toronto Mississauga Undergraduate Degree Level Expectations.
1. Class Participation (10%)
   Class participation is based on discussions that demonstrate informed, engaged, and thoughtful interactions with the course material, the field trips, and the views of other students in the class. If you are more than 15 minutes late for a class, leave before the class is over, or do not show up for a field trip, your participation grade will be reduced by one mark (out of ten).

2. Critical Reflection (10%)
   For this assignment, you will be required to identify and reflect on at least one thing you observed during any of the course field trips, or your own visit to a religious site, that you found surprising/unexpected. You may choose to submit a second reflection, due July 12. The final mark you receive on this assignment will be the higher of the two reflection grades.

3. Test 1 (15%)
   This test will cover the readings, lectures, discussions, and field trips from the first half of the course.

4. Test 2 (15%)
   This test will cover the readings, lectures, discussions, and field trips from the second half of the course.

5. Group Presentation (20%)
   The class will be divided into several groups, each assigned to a different religious tradition (e.g., Buddhism, Islam, etc.). Your task is to observe whatever you can at two or more religious sites in Hong Kong for the tradition you have been assigned, and then report on and interpret your observations.

6. Final Project (30%)
   This assignment may be done individually or as a group. Essentially, you will be required to submit an overview (in both writing and images) of the religious tradition you presented to the class, as this religion is practiced within the context of Hong Kong. Your overview must take into account the instructor’s feedback on your group presentation. Once again your work should be comprised of both information (supported by documentation) and analysis (supported by data and reasoned argument).

WRITING

IMPORTANT! The writing assignments for this course must be submitted through Blackboard. Also, students agree that by taking this course all required papers are to be submitted for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site.

ALSO IMPORTANT! It is each student’s responsibility to ensure that their assignment is submitted on time to both turnitin.com and Blackboard. Allowances will NOT be made for students who upload the wrong files, or who run into technological difficulties (e.g., your Internet service goes down for any reason).

File Format: The writing assignments must be submitted as Microsoft Word files (.doc or .docx).

Deadlines: All assignments must be submitted by 11:59pm on the due date indicated.

Late penalty: The late penalty for each assignment will be included with the detailed instructions. No extensions will be given, although reasonable allowances will be provided for acceptable circumstances (e.g., documented illness). For further information please see “Absences and Academic Consideration” below (under “Protocols and Etiquette”). NOTE: If you do not appear for your group presentation, and you do not have an acceptable documented reason for your absence, you will receive a grade of zero for that assignment.

Writing issues: All writing assignments must conform to standard academic expectations, which include the use of: unbiased/gender inclusive language; correct grammar and spelling; and an accepted method of citing sources (e.g., Chicago Manual of Style). Resources and tips on these and other writing issues are available here:

•  http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university, and to ensuring that a degree from the University of Toronto is a strong signal of each student’s individual academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. The University of Toronto’s Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the processes for addressing academic offences.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following procedures outlined in the Code. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from your instructor or from other institutional resources (see http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html).

Copyright in Instructional Settings: If you wish to tape-record, video-record or otherwise reproduce lecture presentations, course notes, or other similar materials provided by the course instructor, you must obtain written consent beforehand. Otherwise all such reproduction is an infringement of copyright and is absolutely prohibited. In the case of private use by students with disabilities, consent will not be unreasonably withheld.

PROTOCOLS AND ETIQUETTE

1. Communicating with Course Instructor

Aside from speaking in class, the primary way in which I will communicate important course information to you will be through emails sent via the course Blackboard site. All students are therefore responsible for checking their UofT (utoronto) email address on a regular and frequent basis.

When you send an email to me, please do so ONLY through the course Blackboard site. Adhering to this requirement will: help protect your messages; clearly identify the message as course-related; and also clearly identify you as the sender (e.g., not as “stinkypants233@hotmail.com”).

Emails to me should be reserved for relatively quick questions. Also, do NOT email questions whose answers can easily be found by reading the syllabus (“When is the reflection due?” Etc.). Generally speaking, you can expect a reply from me to your email within a day (two at most).

If you want to discuss any of the course materials with me in detail, please do so in person. You may speak to me after class, on field trips, during lunch in the HKU cafeteria, etc. If none of those options work, please make an appointment with me (in person or by email through Blackboard).

2. Latops, Phones, etc.

The use of laptops, cell phones, and other mobile devices is NOT permitted in class. If you require any such equipment to take notes in class, please speak with the instructor in person about your situation.

3. Absences and Academic Consideration

The policy of the University of Toronto Summer Abroad program is that no absences are allowed, other than for medical reasons or other crises for which you must provide clear documentation. The penalties for any unapproved absence from class (or a field trip) are outlined in the When in Hong Kong handbook.

As noted above, written assignments are subject to a late penalty. This penalty may be waived in the event of unforeseen emergencies such as illness or crisis. If your assignment is late and you believe that you should not be penalized, within a week of submitting it please send a written explanation to the instructor, along with appropriate supporting documentation. Based on your explanation and documentation the late penalty may be reduced, in whole or in part, as seems justified. Please note that this policy regarding late penalties means that no extensions for assignments will be given in advance.
4. Course and Classroom Expectations

I believe that everyone involved in a course has the right to certain expectations in a university classroom. Usually the most successful classes are those in which we respect each other, and understand our mutual responsibilities. With that in mind, please consider the following “manifesto” for all of us in this course (including students and instructor):

- We have the responsibility for sharing in and contributing to the learning process;
- We have the right to voice an opinion that is based on a self-chosen value system;
- We have the right to dissent or differ from the instructor and from others in class;
- We have the right to our personal dignity not being infringed upon by the instructor or other students;
- We have a right to a curriculum that is inclusive of race, class, gender, and sexual identity.

Assumptions I make about you:
- You have made a conscious, informed choice to be a member of this class. This means that you have read the syllabus thoroughly, and know the workload required.
- You will give the basic respect that is due to all members of this class.
- You will observe basic classroom decorum. In this class that means (but is not limited to) the following: 1) You will turn off (or silence) any noise-making devices such as mobile phones; 2) You will attend every class, arriving on time and staying until the end of the session; 3) You will not interrupt or cause a disruption when someone else is speaking.
- You will do all of the required reading on time. This means that you will most likely have to read something more than once in order to understand it, or at least figure out why you don’t understand it.
- You will be responsible for all of the material that we cover in this course, including readings, lectures, field trips, and presentations.
- You will read all announcements and email messages sent to you by the instructor.
- If you have a question, any question, you will ask it. And if you are having difficulty with any aspect of the course, it is important that you mention this promptly; don’t wait until it is too late!
- If you disagree with a grade received on an assignment and wish to request a grade change, you will explain in writing why you think the work was not assessed correctly. To do this you must focus on the qualities of the work itself; “I tried very hard” is not a valid reason to request a grade change.
- You will share your personality, knowledge, skills, sense of humour, and expertise with the rest of us.

Assumptions you can make about me:
- I will give you the respect that I ask you to give me and the other members of this class.
- As much as possible, I will begin and end each class on time.
- I will be available within reason to help you if you need, and ask for, assistance.
- If you do not turn in an assignment, I will assume that you are content with a grade of zero for that assignment unless you tell me otherwise.
- I will grade fairly and responsibly, returning your assignments to you in a timely manner. I do not grade on a curve, and will assess each assignment on its own merit.
- I will follow and enforce the university policy on academic integrity.
- I will be receptive to and encourage constructive comments about my teaching and grading.
- In all respects, I will do my best to help you learn the course material. That said, please remember that the final responsibility to learn this material is yours.

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3 The material in this section was borrowed and adapted from Amir Hussain, “Responsibilities and Respect,” 31 Aug 2010 <http://myweb.lmu.edu/ahussain/assumptions.html>.
UNDERSTANDING GRADES

These are the official grade definitions of the University of Toronto:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Evidence of grasp of subject matter, some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>Student who is profiting from his/her university experience; understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63-66</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-62</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>Adequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57-59</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53-56</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-52</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is some further clarification of the above definitions, as applied to formal written assignments in this course.

A – Excellent
An “Excellent” paper is one that does the following:
1. Responds fully to the assignment
2. Expresses its purpose clearly and persuasively
3. Begins and ends effectively
4. Provides adequate supporting arguments, evidence, and examples
5. Is well-organized, coherent, and unified
6. Uses appropriate, direct, and inclusive language
7. Correctly acknowledges and documents sources
8. Is free from errors in grammar, punctuation, word choice, spelling, and format
9. Maintains a level of excellence throughout, and shows originality and creativity in realizing 1) through 5)

B – Good
A “Good” paper is generally one that realizes 1) through 8) well, but not fully and completely. Demonstrates overall ability but typically shows only a small degree of originality or creativity.

C – Adequate
An “Adequate” paper realizes 1) through 8) competently, but also contains noticeable errors or flaws. May show great creativity and originality, but those qualities don’t make up for poor or careless writing.

D – Marginal
A “Marginal” paper fails to realize a few elements of 1) through 8). Contains several serious errors or flaws, or many minor ones. A “D” assignment often looks and reads like a first draft.

F – Inadequate
An “Inadequate” paper fails to realize several elements of 1) through 8). Contains many serious errors or flaws, and many minor ones as well.
SCHEDULE

Note: additional readings may be assigned throughout the course. Also, some field trip dates and sites may change if circumstances require; I will inform you of these changes as early as possible. Also also: no lectures will take place on days when field trips are held.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Required Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June 13</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 14</td>
<td>Lecture: Course Overview + The Study of Religion</td>
<td>Smith, Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>Lecture: The Study of Religion, Hong Kong</td>
<td>Carroll, Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 16</td>
<td>Lecture: Hong Kong, Buddhism</td>
<td>Carroll, Chapter 1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Smith, Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 17</td>
<td><strong>Field Trip: Lantau Island (Po Lin Monastery and Big Buddha)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 20</td>
<td>Lecture: Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam</td>
<td>Smith, Chapters 2 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21</td>
<td><strong>Field Trip: Kowloon (ISKCON Hindu Temple; Kowloon Mosque and Islamic Centre)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 22</td>
<td>Lecture: Taoism</td>
<td>Smith, Chapters 5 and 7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecture: Judaism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 23</td>
<td>Lecture: Christianity</td>
<td>Smith, Chapter 8</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Test 1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 26</td>
<td><strong>Field Trip: Catholic church</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 27</td>
<td><strong>Field Trip: New Territories (sites TBA; will include Taoist temple and Protestant church)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 28</td>
<td>Presentation: Hinduism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation: Islam</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>June 29</td>
<td>Presentation: Buddhism</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation: Taoism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td><strong>Field Trip: Mid-levels (Ohel Leah Synagogue)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 4</td>
<td>Presentation: Judaism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation: Christianity</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 5</td>
<td><strong>Field Trip: Cheung Chau Island (Pak Tai Taoist temple; other sites TBA)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 6</td>
<td>Lecture: Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>July 7</td>
<td>Test 2 (and sad farewells)</td>
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