Religion 385
Religion in Chinese Society

Fall 2010
TTh 11:00-12:20
Hall of Languages 105

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Office: Hall of Languages 513, 443-5914
Office Hours: M-Th 9-10 a.m. or by appointment

Course Overview

This course will survey the diversity of religious practice in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan both historically and in contemporary times. It will emphasize the culture of everyday Chinese religious life and the relationship between the practice of religion and larger social, political, and economic questions throughout Chinese history. The latter part of the course will turn to an in-depth analysis of religion in contemporary China focusing on the role of religion in the mediation of social change.

Course Texts

The following texts are required for the course:


In addition, a number of readings are available on the course blackboard page [BB].

Course Assignments and Requirements

1. Active Class Participation (20%).
At the end of each class period, you will be expected to contribute your analytical insights on the course readings, lectures, and films presented for the day. While active participation is encouraged, the quality of student participation will count for more than the quantity. Attendance will be taken for each class. Students missing four or more classes will receive a failing grade in class participation.
2. Reading Questions (10%)
In order to facilitate class discussion, you are required to submit one reading question for each starred (*) class period covering the readings for that day. Questions are due via e-mail no later than 8 a.m. on the day of the class. **Late questions will be accepted for half-credit only up to one week following the original due date.** A list of sample reading questions will be made available on the first day of class.

3. A midterm (October 19) (15%) and final (December 16) (20%) take-home examination relating course readings, films, and class discussions.

4. One research paper (10-20 pages) on a topic of your choice related to the course material: First copy (10%) due November 4; Final copy due November 30 (25%).
In this paper, you will combine library research with your own analyses on a topic of your choice related to the role of religion in Chinese society either historically or in the contemporary period. You are required to submit their proposed topic for the research paper no later than Tuesday, September 14 by e-mail. A detailed list of guidelines for researching and writing the paper will be distributed during the first week of class.

Once the first copy is reviewed and graded, you will be scheduled for a fifteen-minute appointment with me to get feedback. The final copy of the paper should follow my suggested revisions.

During the final week of classes, you will present a brief informal presentation of your research work to the class. This presentation will be worth 10% of the grade for the final paper.

### Academic Integrity

The Syracuse Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that **it is their responsibility** to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort.

For more information, see Academic Integrity Office, [http://academicintegrity.syr.edu](http://academicintegrity.syr.edu).

### Students with Disabilities / Special Needs

**Students with Disabilities/Special Needs:** If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services, [http://disabilityservices.syr.edu](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu) located at 804 University Avenue, room 309, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented disabilities “Accommodation Authorization Letters,” as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

If you have already been issued an Accommodation Authorization Letter, it is your responsibility
to provide the instructor with a copy during the first week of class.

Course Readings and Assignments

Tuesday, Aug. 31
Course introduction

Thursday, Sept. 2 *

I. THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN CHINESE SOCIETY
A. Cosmology, Fate, and Harmony

Tuesday, Sept. 7 *

B. The Imperial Metaphor: the Celestial Bureaucracy and the State

Thursday, Sept. 9 *
1) Bokenkamp, Stephen, “Record of the Feng and Shan Sacrifices,” in *Lopez*, pp. 251-60.

C. Popular Worship: Gods, Goddesses, and Ancestors

1. God and Goddess Worship

Tuesday, Sept. 14 *
3) Film (in class): *Mazu: Taiwan’s Guardian Goddess*.

Thursday, Sept. 16 *

2. Ancestor Worship

Tuesday, Sept. 21 *
1) Scott, pp. 103-35.

D. Ghosts and Spirits
Thursday, Sept. 23 *
1) Scott, pp. 53-61, 91-101.

Tuesday, Sept. 28 *

E. Shamanism and Divination
Thursday, Sept. 30 *

Tuesday, Oct. 5 *
2) Scott, pp. 63-73.

F. Institutionalized Religion and the Professional Priesthood
Thursday, Oct. 7 *

Tuesday, Oct. 12 *

G. Sectarian Movements and Religious Societies
Thursday, Oct. 14 *
II. RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Tuesday, Oct. 19
Introductory Lecture (no assigned readings)
MIDTERM SHORT PAPER DUE.

A. The Legacy of Communism
Thursday, Oct. 21 *

B. Rediscovering Roots
Tuesday, Oct. 26 *

Thursday, Oct. 28 *

B. Mediating Modernity
Tuesday, Nov. 2 *

C. Alternative Cosmologies
1. On the Margins of Legality
Thursday, Nov. 4
2) Film (in class): Protestants in China: A Growing Spiritual Movement

RESEARCH PAPER ROUGH DRAFT DUE

2. Resistance to the State
Tuesday, Nov. 9 *

D. “Minority” Religion
Thursday, Nov. 11 *

Tuesday, Nov. 16 *
1) Davis, pp. 123-78.

Thursday, Nov. 18
NO CLASS – GF away at American Anthropological Association meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 23 *
1) Madsen, Democracy’s Dharma, pp. xxiii-xxvi; 1-15; 51-84.

Thursday, Nov. 25
NO CLASS – Thanksgiving.

Tuesday, Nov. 30
Film (in class): Cheng Yan
RESEARCH PAPER FINAL COPY DUE

Thursday, Dec. 2 *
1) Madsen, pp. 85-130.

CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECTS
Tuesday, Dec. 7 and Thursday, Dec. 9

FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION: Due Thursday, Dec. 16 at 2:45 p.m. (at the conclusion of the designated final examination period for the class).