Religion 385

Religion in Chinese Society

Fall 2012
TTh 5:00-6:20
Slocum 104

Instructor: Gareth Fisher
gfisher@syr.edu
Office: Hall of Languages 513, 443-5914
Office Hours: TTh 1-3 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 focus on the practice of religion in contemporary mainland China and Taiwan.

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 (15%).
You will be expected to come to class prepared to contribute your questions and insights on the course readings, lectures, and films. While regular 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 (15%)
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 4 p.m. on the day of the class. **Because the purpose of the questions is to facilitate class discussion, late questions will be not be accepted.** A list of sample reading questions will be made available on the first day of class.

3. Midterm (October 25) (15%) and final (December 13) (20%) papers 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 27; Final copy due December 6 (25%).

In this paper, you will combine library research with your own analysis 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 your proposed topic for the research paper no later than Tuesday, September 11 at 3 p.m. 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-relate 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.
Course Readings and Assignments

Tuesday, Aug. 28
Course introduction

Thursday, Aug. 30 *

I. THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN CHINESE SOCIETY
A. Cosmology, Fate, and Harmony
Tuesday, Sept. 4 *

B. The Imperial Metaphor: the Celestial Bureaucracy and the State
Thursday, Sept. 6 *

Tuesday, Sept. 11
RESEARCH PAPER WORKSHOP
No assigned readings

C. Popular Worship: Gods, Goddesses, and Ancestors
1. God and Goddess Worship
Thursday, Sept. 13 *
1) Scott, For Gods, Ghosts, and Ancestors, pp. 41-51, 79-91.
3) Film (in class): Mazu: Taiwan’s Guardian Goddess.

Tuesday, Sept. 18 *

Thursday, Sept. 20 *
2. Ancestor Worship
1) Scott, pp. 103-35.

Tuesday, Sept. 25*
D. Ghosts and Spirits
1) Scott, pp. 53-61, 91-101.

Thursday, Sept. 27 *

E. Shamanism and Divination
Tuesday, Oct. 2*

Thursday, Oct. 4 *
2) Scott, pp. 63-73.

Tuesday, Oct. 9 *
F. Institutionalized Religion and the Professional Priesthood

Thursday, Oct. 11 *
SKIM MOSTLY.

Tuesday, Oct. 16 *
G. Sectarian Movements and Religious Communities
II. RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA

Thursday, Oct. 18 *
A. The End of the Imperial Era and the Beginning of “Religion”

Tuesday, Oct. 23 *
B. A Struggle for Revival

Thursday, Oct. 25 – No class – GF away at conference
MIDTERM SHORT PAPER DUE to Hall of Languages 501

Tuesday, Oct. 30 *
C. Mediating Modernity

Thursday, Nov. 1 *
D. Religion on the Margins

Tuesday, Nov. 6 *

Thursday, Nov. 8 *
E. “Minority” Religion

Tuesday, Nov. 13 *
   1) Davis, pp. 123-78.

Thursday, Nov. 15
   1) Madsen, Democracy’s Dharma, pp. xxiii-xxvi; 1-15; 51-84.
T. Nov. 20 and Th. Nov. 22
NO CLASS – Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, Nov. 27
Film (in class): Cheng Yan
RESEARCH PAPER FIRST COPY DUE in class

Thursday, Nov. 29 *
1) Madsen, pp. 85-130.

Tuesday, Dec. 4 and Thursday, Dec. 6
CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECTS
No Assigned Readings

Thursday, Dec. 6
RESEARCH PAPER FINAL COPY due in class

FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAMINATION: Due Thursday, Dec. 13 at 2:45 p.m. (at the conclusion of the designated final examination period for the class).