Religion 385
Religion in Chinese Society

Spring 2015
Instructor: Gareth Fisher
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Office: Hall of Languages 505
Office Hours: W 12-2 or by appointment

TTh 5:00-6:20
Hall of Languages 215

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 not be accepted.** A list of sample reading questions will be made available on the first day of class.

3. Midterm (Feb. 26) (15%) and final (May 7) (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 March 24; Final copy due April 28 (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 Thursday, January 29 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

I. COURSE INTRODUCTION

Tuesday, Jan. 13
Outline of class; introduction of research papers

Thursday, Jan. 15
The Three Teachings: Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism
(no assigned readings)

Tuesday, Jan. 20 *

II. THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE IN CHINESE SOCIETY

A. Cosmology, Fate, and Harmony

Thursday, Jan. 22 *

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

Tuesday, Jan. 27 *
1) Bokenkamp, Stephen, “Record of the Feng and Shan Sacrifices,” in Lopez, pp. 251-60.

Thursday, Jan. 29 *
RESEARCH PAPER WORKSHOP
No assigned readings

C. Popular Worship: Gods, Goddesses, and Ancestors

1. God and Goddess Worship

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

Thursday, Feb. 5 *
Tuesday, Feb. 10 *

2. Ancestor Worship
   1) Scott, pp. 103-35.

Thursday, Feb. 12 *

D. Ghosts and Spirits
   1) Scott, pp. 53-61, 91-101.

Tuesday, Feb. 17 *


E. Shamanism and Divination

Thursday, Feb. 19 *


Tuesday, Feb. 24 *

   2) Scott, pp. 63-73.

Thursday, Feb. 26 *

F. Institutionalized Religion and the Professional Priesthood


MIDTERM PAPER DUE IN CLASS.

Tuesday, Mar. 3 *


**Thursday, Mar. 5**

**G. Sectarian Movements and Religious Communities**


**Tuesday, Mar. 10 and Thursday, Mar. 12 – NO CLASS – Spring Break**

**Tuesday, Mar. 17 – NO CLASS – GF away at conference**

**II. RELIGION IN CONTEMPORARY CHINA**

**Thursday, Mar. 19**

**A. The End of the Imperial Era and the Beginning of “Religion”**


**Tuesday, Mar. 24**

Continued discussion of religion in Republican and Maoist-era China (no assigned readings). **RESEARCH PAPER FIRST DRAFT DUE.**

**Thursday, Mar. 26**

**B. A Struggle for Revival**


**Tuesday, Mar. 31**

**C. Mediating Modernity**


**Thursday, Apr. 2**

**D. Religion on the Margins**


**Tuesday, Apr. 7**


**Thursday, Apr. 9**

**E. “Minority” Religion**


**Tuesday, Apr. 14**

1) Davis, pp. 123-78.

**Thursday, Apr. 16**


**Tuesday, Apr. 21**


2) Film (*in class*): *Cheng Yan*

**Thursday, Apr. 23**

1) Madsen, pp. 85-130.

**Tuesday, Apr. 28**

CLASS PRESENTATIONS OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

RESEARCH PAPER FINAL COPY due in class

No Assigned Readings

**FINAL PAPER:** Due Thursday, May 7 at 5 p.m. to Hall of Languages 501.