

Course Description Religion and Power (30 ECTS Credits)

Programme: UTVRELIG

Full-time study

Valid from autumn semester 2014

The course description is approved by the Dean 5 July 2011
and revised by the Vice Dean 29 August 2012
Literature updated 2 December 2014

Faculty of Education and International Studies
Department of International Studies and Interpreting

Introduction

The Faculty of Education and International Studies (LUI) at Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA) offers a one semester full-time program (30 ECTS) in *Religion and Power* in Pondicherry, India. The program is a joint venture between LUI/HiOA and Kulturstudier (Culture Studies), an independent Oslo-based organization that offers international academic courses at study centers in Vietnam, India, Ghana, Argentina and Nicaragua.

The program *Religion and Power* incorporates perspectives from anthropology and religious studies. The objective of the program is to give students an understanding of substantive issues related to the relationship between religion and politics. The program joins a general approach to the topic with a specific regional focus on South Asia. A combination of academic lectures, lectures on topics of contemporary national and international concerns, seminars, discussions, excursions, and interaction with the immediate surroundings offers broad perspectives on the relation between religions and politics and various approaches to its study. The course language is English.

Target groups

The *Religion and Power* program directs itself to:

- Bachelor students
- Professionals (journalists, teachers, diplomats, NGO workers, etc.) and others who seek to deepen their knowledge on, and analytical skills related to, the course topic.

Admission requirements

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements for Higher Education Entrance Qualification in Norway (*generell studiekompetanse*).

Learning outcomes

The objective of the course *Religion and Power* is to give students an interdisciplinary understanding of the relationship between religion and politics, in general and in the South Asian region in particular. These two dimensions, the regional and the general, are integrated in a mutually reinforcing way. This provides students with a rare opportunity to exemplify general, analytical insights with present-day local and national concerns, drawing on experiences and material from the immediate surroundings. The course puts particular emphasis on how religion and socio-religious structures affect gender roles. Not only does this serve to situate the broader subject of religion and power within a particular empirical topic; it also facilitates a study that is particularly tuned to contemporary debates on religion, which frequently are coined in the language of gender relations and power.

Knowledge

- Relationship between religion and politics
- Gender relations and power
- Religious diversity and pluralism in the South Asian region
- Contemporary theories and perspectives within anthropology and religious studies.
- Religion as a sociocultural phenomenon

Skills

- Ability to reflect analytically on various ways in which politics affect religious structures, practices and beliefs
- Ability to reflect analytically on various ways in which religion and religious discourses affect politics, including contemporary employments of religion as a political resource

- Ability to reflect analytically on the religious component of contemporary conflicts, wars, riots and issues of national and global security
- Ability to reflect analytically on the dynamics of pluralistic and multicultural societies
- Ability to reflect analytically on the complexity of alterations in gendered hierarchies that follow socio-religious change
- Ability to reflect analytically on the relation between economic development and religious continuity and change
- Ability to reflect analytically on processes of local negotiation and appropriation of globalized religious ideologies and discourses

General competence

The overall aim of the course is interdisciplinary. Nonetheless, the separate modules present perspectives and insights gained from anthropology and religious studies respectively. With a firm grounding in these disciplinary bases, the students are well equipped for an interdisciplinary approach to relations between religion and power.

Content

The program consists of two interdependent courses: *Religion, society and power in South Asia* and *Anthropology: Religion and power*

I. Anthropology: Religion and Power (10 ECTS)

Anthropology: Religion and Power

The course is suitable for students with prior knowledge of anthropology as well as for students with no formal anthropological training who have an interest in general anthropological issues. The course offers analytical perspectives on enduring anthropological fields of interests – such as religion and ritual, political structures and the dynamics of power, gender, ethnicity, sociocultural change, and research practices and methodology. Its theoretical emphasis is on the most recent developments within anthropological approaches to religion as a sociocultural phenomenon, paying special attention to how the major world religions of Christianity and Islam are perceived, received and appropriated in different cultural contexts and localities. Based on a selection of ethnographic monographs and articles, the course facilitates and encourages broad cross-cultural comparison, which is a key feature of the discipline. The comparative method promotes an exploration of structural similarities as well as diversities in response to social and ideological change. This opens for a better-informed approach to the otherwise vague and frequently opinionated studies of so-called globalization. In addition, the detailed empirical descriptions of the monographs will stimulate critical reflection on the cultural origins of the norms, values and practices of the students' own societies. The cross-cultural comparative approach is also a valuable methodological tool in relation to the regional course, *Religion, society and power in South Asia*.

2. Religion, society and power in South Asia (20 ECTS)

The course provides students with knowledge of religious diversity and pluralism in the South Asian region, today and throughout history, and enables them to reflect analytically on religious pluralism as a phenomenon. The course addresses the interplay between different religious traditions and their reciprocal influence in shaping the region. Emphasis is also put on the numerous, and frequently violent, conflicts that religious diversity has brought about, and particularly on the relationship between religion and politics in the formation of the modern Indian state. The course is customized to students' stay in Pondicherry, where the religious pluralism and diversity at stake is experienced daily. Regular lectures and seminars are supplemented with excursions and "mini fieldworks", facilitating a unique empirical approach to the theoretical perspectives and general analytical insights. In combination with the course *Anthropology: Religion and power*, students are provided a rare opportunity for first-hand experience of the role of religion in multicultural societies.

Course work requirement

The following work requirements must be met before the examination may be set:

A five week self-study period prior to arrival in Pondicherry, where students read assigned parts of the course literature and write a paper of between 500 and 600 words that summarizes the applications of 'power' in the readings; and an oral presentation in English of the chosen topic for the *Religion, society and power in South Asia* course to teachers/seminar leaders and co-students at the study center in Pondicherry. Should the seminar leaders find that either of the work requirements fail to meet satisfactory academic standards, the student will have to revise and resubmit the paper/prepare a new oral presentation based on feedback from the seminar leaders, at a new date set by the seminar leaders.

Assessment

Anthropology: Religion and power: individual home exam, with deadline ten days after handout. Essay of 3,500 words (+/- 10 %), not including list of references. English or either of the Scandinavian languages is admissible. The paper must be submitted electronically in Word or PDF format within the deadline. More information about it may be obtained from HiOAs web pages. The home exam is graded A-E for passed and F for failed. Two internal examiners will assess the paper.

Religion, society and power in South Asia: essay on topic of choice, with supervision from either lecturer or seminar leader. 6,000 words (+/- 10 %) not including list of references. Deadline Dec. 10/June 1. English or either of the Scandinavian languages is admissible. The essay must be submitted electronically in Word or PDF format within the deadline. More information about it may be obtained from HiOAs web pages. The essay is graded A-E for passed and F for failed. One internal and one external examiner will assess the essay.

Grading Scale

Grading scale will be according to the ECTS-grading scale, with A-E as pass grades and F as fail grade.

Criteria for the different grades

Symbol	Name	General, qualitative description of grade
A	Outstanding	An outstanding performance. The assignment paper/performance documents outstanding subject knowledge and an outstanding degree of independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
B	Very good	A very good performance, well above the average. The assignment paper/performance documents very good subject knowledge and a high degree of independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
C	Good	An average performance. The assignment paper/performance documents a fair level of subject knowledge and some degree independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
D	Fairly good	A performance below average. The assignment paper/performance documents a level of subject knowledge with some deficiency, and shows a lesser degree of independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
E	Adequate	A performance satisfying the minimum requirements. The assignment paper/performance documents low degree of subject knowledge, and shows a low level of independence and ability in relating subject knowledge to the educational goals of the course.
F	Not approved	The assignment paper/performance does not satisfy minimum requirements

New or postponed examination

Students who fail their examination, or who pass but wish to improve their grade, may submit a new paper in connection with the ordinary examinations the following term. This also applies for students with valid absence.

Regulations for new or postponed examinations are available in *Regulations relating to studies and examinations at Oslo University College*. Students must register for a new or postponed examination. More detailed information about registration and times for new or postponed examinations is available on the web site www.hioa.no > Studier og kurs.

Literature

Changes may occur. Any change in the literature list must be approved by the Head of Studies.

Anthropology: Religion and power

Text books

Eriksen, Thomas Hylland. 2010. *Small places, large issues* (3rd edition). Pluto Press, chapters 1, 3, 6-11, 14 and 16 (168 pages)

Monographs

Ewing, Katherine 2008. *Stolen Honor. Stigmatizing Muslim men in Berlin* Stanford University. Press.

Tuzin, Donald 1997. *The Cassowary's Revenge* University of Chicago Press.

Wikan, Unni 1991. *Behind the veil in Arabia* University of Chicago Press.

Articles and chapters

De Neve, Geert. 2005. "Weaving for IKEA in South India: Subcontracting, Labour Markets and Gender Relations in a Global Value Chain Fuller", in Assayag, Jackie and Chris Fuller eds., *Globalizing India. Perspectives from Below*. Anthem Press, pp. 89-115 (26 pages)

Eriksen, Annelin. 2005. "The gender of the church: conflicts and social wholes on Ambrym, Vanuatu", in *Oceania*, vol 75, pp 284-300 (16 pages)

Lukes, Steven. 2005. *Power. A radical view* (2nd edition). Palgrave Macmillan, chapter 1, pp. 14-59 (45 pages)

Mayblin, Maya. 2011. "Death by marriage: Power, pride, and morality in Northeast Brazil", in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol 17, pp 135-153 (18 pages)

Meyer, Birgit. 2004. "Christianity in Africa. From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches", in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol 33, pp 447-474 (27 pages)

Nanda, Serena. 2011. "Hijras", in Jacobsen, Knut A. ed., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. 3*, Leiden, Brill, pp 82-89 (7 pages)

Reddy, Gayatri. 2009. "Men' who would be Kings: Celibacy, Emasculation, and the Re-Production of Hijras in Contemporary Indian Politics", in Jacobsen, Knut A. ed., *Modern Indian Culture and Society*, vol. 2 London: Routledge, pp 402-426 (24 pages)

Robbins, Joel. 2007. "Continuity thinking and the problem of Christian culture. Belief, time and the anthropology of Christianity", in *Current Anthropology*, vol 48, pp 5-38 (33 pages)

Turner, Victor. 1975. "Ch I: Social dramas and ritual metaphors", in *Dramas, fields, and metaphors*, Cornell University Press, pp. 23-60 (37 pages)

Wikan, Unni. 1999. "Culture: a new concept of race", in *Social Anthropology*, vol 7, pp 57-64 (7 pages)

Total: approx. 1000 pages*

Religion, society and power in South Asia (20 ECTS)

Books

Bates, Crispin. 2007. *Subalterns and Raj: South Asia Since 1600*. London, Routledge, chapter 1-11 (212 pages)

Flood, Gavin D. 1996. *An introduction to Hinduism*. Cambridge, London, Routledge (341 pages)

Jacobsen, Knut A. (ed.). *South Asian Religions on Display: Religious Processions in South Asia and the Diaspora*. London, Routledge (paperback edition 2009), introduction + chapters 1, 2 and 5, pp. 1-45, 77-91 (59 pages)

Jacobsen, Knut A. 2012. *Pilgrimage in the Hindu Tradition: Salvific Space*. London, Routledge (Paperback edition 2014) (195 pages)

Articles and chapters

Beltz, Johannes. 2004. "Contesting Caste, Hierarchy, and Hinduism: Buddhist discursive practices in Maharashtra". In Surendra Jonghale and Johannes Beltz, (eds), *Reconstructing the World: B. R. Ambedkar and Buddhism in India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 245-66 (22 pages).

Chen, Martha Alter. 2011. "Widowhood", in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. III Society, Religious Specialists, Religious Traditions, Philosophy*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 173-176 (4 pages).

Clémente-Ojha, Catherine. 2011. "Female Ascetics", in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. III Society, Religious Specialists, Religious Traditions, Philosophy*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 60-67 (8 pages).

Courtright, Paul. 2011. "Sati", in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. III Society, Religious Specialists, Religious Traditions, Philosophy*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 165-172 (8 pages).

* Selected parts of the monographs will be emphasized.

- Deliège, Robert. 1993. "The Myths of Origin of the Indian Untouchables". *Man NS*. 28:3, pp. 533-49 (17 pages).
- Eaton, Richard. 2000. *Essays on Islam and Indian History*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, pp. 249-275 (27 pages).
- Gupta, Dipankar. 2005. "Caste and Politics: Identity over System." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 34, pp. 409-27 (19 pages).
- Hancock, Mary. 2010. "Domestic Rituals", in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. II Sacred Texts and Languages, Ritual Traditions, Arts, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 347-360 (14 pages).
- Humes, Cynthia Ann. 2002. "Is the Devi-Mahatmya a Feminist Scripture", In Alf Hiltebeitl and Kathleen M. Erndl (eds.), *Is the Goddess a Feminist: The Politics of South Asian Goddesses*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 123-150 (28 pages).
- Kaur, Ravinder. 2008. "Dispensable Daughters and Bachelor Sons: Sex Discrimination in North India", *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 26, 2008, pp. 109-114 (6 pages).
- Larson, Gerald James, 1995, *India's Agony Over Religion*, Albany, State University of New York Press, pp. 44-141 (98 pages).
- Lorenzen, David N. 1987. "Traditions of Non-caste Hinduism: The Kabir Panth." *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (n.s.), 21:2, pp. 263-283 (21 pages).
- Nagarajan, Vijaya. 2010. "Rangoli and Kolam", in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. II Sacred Texts and Languages, Ritual Traditions, Arts, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 472-478 (7 pages).
- Oberoi, Harjot, 1994, *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity, and Diversity*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, pp. 1-35; 381-426 (82 pages).
- Omvedt, Gail, 2003, *Buddhism in India*, Delhi, Sage, pp. 1-22; 217-265 (72 pages)
- Pintchman, Tracy 2010. "Vratas", in Knut A. Jacobsen (ed.), *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism, Vol. II Sacred Texts and Languages, Ritual Traditions, Arts, Concepts*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 427-434 (8 pages).
- Platvoet, Jan. 1995. "Rituals as Confrontation: The Ayodhya Conflict." In Jan Platvoet and K. van der Toom (eds.), *Pluralism and Identity: Studies in Ritual Behaviour*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 187-226 (40 pages).
- Robinson, Francis, 1983, "Islam and Muslim society in South Asia", in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N.S.), 17 (2), pp. 185-203 (19 pages).
- Robinson, Rowena. 2003. *Christians in India*, Delhi, Sage, pp. 11-33; 69-138; 193-202 (103 pages).
- Rodrigues, Hillary. & John S. Harding 2009. *Introduction to the Study of Religion*. New York, Routledge. Ch. 1 and 3, pp 1-17, 49-73 (32 pages).
- Sastri, K. A. Nilakanta, 1999, *A History of South India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, 4th ed., pp. 381-398 (18 pages).
- Sen, Amartya. 1998. "On Interpreting India's Past." In Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (eds), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India*, Delhi, Oxford University Press, pp. 10-35 (26 pages).

Sikand, Yoginder. 2003. *Sacred Spaces: Exploring Traditions of Shared Faith in India*, Delhi, Penguin Books, pp. 1-52; 116-133 (70 pages).

Sweetman, Will. 2003. "'Hinduism' and the History of 'Religion': Protestant Presuppositions in the Critique of the Concept of Hinduism." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, 15, pp. 329-53 (24 pages).

Waghorne, Joanne Punzo, 2002, "Chariots of the God/s: Riding the Line Between Hindu and Christian", in Selva J. Raj og Corinne C. Dempsey (eds.), *Popular Christianity in India*, Albany, State University of New York Press, pp. 11-37 (27 pages).

Wilkinson, Steven I. 2008. "Muslims in post-Independent India." In John L Esposito, John O. Voll and Osman Bakar (eds), *Asian Islam in the 21st Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 177-96 (20 pages).

Wirsing, Robert G. 2007. "Unholy Alliance: religion and political violence in South Asia." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 30:1, pp. 25–42 (18 pages).

Total: approx. 1600 pages