

# RELIGION IN CHINESE SOCIETY

**Credits:** 3  
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## Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the history and functions of religion in Chinese society, focusing on five religious traditions: *Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam* and *popular religion*. It covers not only religious and ethical ideas but also the practices of each tradition.

Field trips to temples, churches and mosques, and visiting some famous Buddhist monks and Taoists are part of the course.

Major Topics are the followings:

- Diffused and Institutional Religion in Chinese society
- Ancestor worship in the integration of the family
- Ritual and Belief in the State Cult
- State control of religion
- Religion and political rebellion
- Chinese religious traditions
- Confucianism as a ritual religion
- Immortality and Mysticism: Taoism as salvation religion
- The Buddhist Conquest of China
- Islam in China
- Popular religion and the great tradition
- Religion under socialism in China
- Religion in contemporary China

**Textbook:** Yang, C. K. *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors*. 1961. Reprint: Prospect Heights. IL: Waveland Press, 1991.

## Suggested Readings:

- Luo Zhufeng, ed. *Religion under Socialism in China*. Translated by Donald E. MacInnis and Zheng Xi'an. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1991 (faculty background). Chinese Communist views. including their distinction between “religion” and “feudal superstition.”
- Naquin, Susan. *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976 (faculty background). Contains the best account of White Lotus “heterodox” beliefs.
- Overmyer, Daniel L. *Religions of China*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986 (student reading). A short and basic survey appropriate for assignment.
- Thompson, Laurence G. *Chinese Religion: An Introduction*. 4th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth,

1989 (student reading). A very readable short book, available in paperback. Although not written strictly from a sociological or anthropological point of view, nevertheless an appropriate text to assign.

- Watson, James L. and Rawski, Evelyn S., eds. *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988 (faculty background).
- Anthropologists and historians deal with a key area of religion and ritual in China.
- Wolf, Arthur P., ed. *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974 (faculty background). An excellent collection of mainly anthropological papers, focusing on aspects of popular religion.

### Course Requirement

1. Attendance is mandatory and punctuality is important. Two excusable absences are acceptable. Starting from the 3rd time, 1 point will be deducted from the total points for each additional absence.
2. No make-up exam will be granted without prior permission of the instructor.

### Homework

Homework is assigned for each unit and must be submitted at the next meet time. Failing to complete and hand in the homework will negatively affect the final result of the course.

### Exam

One exam for this course will be given in the last class of the semester. The exam is basically on the subject matters covered in the course.

### Grading

Attendance & Participation: 10%

Homework: 30%

Exam: 60%

A (4.0)	A- (3.7)	B+ (3.3)	B (3)	B- (2.7)	C+ (2.3)	C (2)	C- (1.7)	D+ (1.3)	D (1)	D- (0.7)	F (0)
100-93	92-90	89-86	85-83	82-80	79-76	75-73	72-70	69-66	65-63	62-60	<59

### Note:

No class between 1 – 7<sup>th</sup> of October during China’s National Day Holidays

Arrangements for field trips are to be announced.

## RELIGION IN CHINESE SOCIETY COURSE SCHEDULE Feb. – Jun., 2012

**Instructor: Prof. Zhang Chongfu**

*The following course schedule is provided on a unit (subject) base rather than time sequence for*

*flexibility.*

## **UNIT I**

### **Introduction to the Course**

#### **Diffused and Institutional Religion in Chinese society**

To prepare students for a better understanding of the Chinese Diffused and Institutional Religion in Chinese society, some basic information on China is needed. Thus the following homework is assigned.

Homework: to read the chapter XII “Diffused and Institutional Religion in Chinese society” (P.294 - 340, Yang, C. K. *Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors*. 1961. Reprint: Prospect Heights. IL: Waveland Press, 1991) and write an abstract of the reading . (maximum words: 300)

## **UNIT II**

### **Ancestor worship in the integration of the family**

Homework: to read the chapter II “Religion in the integration of the family” (P.28 - 57, *Religion in Chinese Society*) and write an abstract of the reading. (maximum words: 300)

## **UNIT III**

### **Ritual and Belief in the State Cult**

Readings: Chapter VII “Operation of the mandate of the Heaven” (P.127 - 143, *Religion in Chinese Society*).

Homework:

1. Give a brief description of the Temple of Heaven.
2. Give a brief description of the Mount Taishan.

## **UNIT IV**

### **State control of religion**

Reading: Chapter VIII “State control of religion” (P.127 - 143, *Religion in Chinese Society*).

Homework:

1. What are the relationship between government and religion?
2. Why Chinese religion always under governments control?

## **UNIT V**

### **Religion and political rebellion**

Reading: Chapter IX “Religion and political rebellion” (P.218- 243, *Religion in Chinese Society*).

Homework: write an abstract of the reading. (maximum words: 300)

## **UNIT VI**

### **Chinese religious traditions**

Suggested Reading: Part one: “the indigenous tradition” (*Julia Ching, Chinese Religion, Orbis Books, 1993*)

Homework: write a short paper about the Chinese religious traditional. (maximum words: 300)

## **UNIT VII**

### **Confucianism as a ritual religion**

Reading: Chapter 3: “morality and rituals: Confucianism as religious humanism” (*Julia Ching, Chinese Religion, Orbis Books, 1993*)

Homework: Write a short paper about your comments on Confucianism. (maximum words: 300)

## **UNIT VIII**

### **Immortality and Mysticism: Taoism as salvation religion**

Reading: Chapter 6: “Taoism as salvation religion” (*Julia Ching, Chinese Religion, Orbis Books, 1993*)

Homework:

1. Did you learn Tai Chi or Martial arts?
2. Please the relation ship between Martial arts and Taoism?

## **UNIT IX**

### **The Buddhist Conquest of China**

Suggested Readings:

Reading: Chapter 8: “Buddhism becomes Chinese” (*Julia Ching, Chinese Religion, Orbis Books, 1993*)

Homework: write a short paper about your comments on “Buddhism becomes Chinese”? (maximum words: 300)

## **UNIT X**

### **Islam in China**

Reading: Chapter 9: “Islam and other middle eastern religion” (*Julia Ching, Chinese Religion, Orbis Books, 1993*)

Homework:

1. Please point out which minorities believe in Islam in China?
2. Did you visit any Moslem restaurants? Please describe the food you ate in the Moslem restaurant.

## **UNIT XI**

### **Popular religion and the great tradition**

Reading: Chapter12 “Popular religion” (*Julia Ching, Chinese Religion, Orbis Books, 1993*)

Homework: Is Taoism a popular religion?

## **UNIT XII**

### **Religion under socialism in China**

Reading: Chapter 5 “Coordinating religion with Socialist society” (P.113-131, Luo Zhufeng, ed. *Religion Under Socialism in China*. Translated by Donald E. MacInnis and Zheng Xi'an. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1991)

Homework: Write a short paper about Marxism and Chinese religion. (maximum words: 300)

## **UNIT XII**

### **Religion in contemporary China**

Reading: Essential bibliographies can be found at

- <http://website.leidenuniv.nl/~haarbjter/chinPRCbib.html>
- [http://web.missouri.edu/~clartp/bibliography\\_CPR.html](http://web.missouri.edu/~clartp/bibliography_CPR.html)

Homework: Please write a paper about the resurgence of traditional religions in contemporary China. (maximum words: 300)

*Notes:*

1. *The schedule is flexible and subject to change so as to meet the individual needs of students.*
2. *Field trips are to be arranged. Dates for trips will be announced after the confirmation of the administration of the Office of Overseas Students.*
3. *The last day of the semester (Wednesday, Dec. 13<sup>th</sup>) is for the final examination.*