

**RELI 3047 Islam (3,2,1)**

This course aims to (1) demonstrate analytical skills related to religious studies as applied to studies of Islam; (2) evaluate the central significance of divine revelation and prophecy within Islamic communities; (3) demonstrate a general understanding of Islamic institutions and forms of life, especially within their significance with specific Middle Eastern cultures during certain historical periods; and (4) appreciate the major contributions of Islamic culture to various civilizations, including past and present Chinese civilization.

**RELI 3055 Logic and Scientific Methodology (3,2,2)**

Logic is the study of patterns of valid inference. This course introduces some basic concepts for understanding a logical system and the techniques to draw valid inferences. Apart from purely rational knowledge like logic, the course also discusses methodological issues in the philosophy of science, such as Mill's methods, induction and its problems, probability and causal explanation.

Technicality will be kept to the minimum to make this foundational course beneficial to students from any background. Students are likely to find it useful in further philosophical study to have some familiarity with a formal logical language and the ability to use it to investigate logical relationships and to understand its use by others. This course also prepares students to proceed with courses in epistemology and philosophy of language.

**RELI 3056 Philosophy of Mind, Consciousness, (3,2,2)  
and Personal Identity**

Philosophy of mind is the study of the nature of the mind and various conceptual puzzlements related to any mental aspects and activities of life, in particular humans. It is one of the oldest yet still the most prolific fields in philosophy. Contemporary discussions are fuelled by tremendous advances in many areas—neurosciences, psychology, psychiatry, medical sciences, linguistics, sociology, artificial intelligence, computer studies, robotics, to name but a few—giving the area a huge interdisciplinary character without detracting from its unique philosophical relevance.

This course aims to survey a particular issue in the philosophy of mind, namely, the mind-body problem. Dualists claim that mind and body are distinct substances, whereas physicalists claim that mental states are just physical states. The course starts by examining the origin and the implications of Descartes' dualism, and moves into the current philosophical debate on the relationship between the mental and the physical. Various theories will be examined including behaviourism, identity theory, functionalism, interpretativism, and eliminativism. The focus is on whether physicalists can reply to the challenges on intentionality, propositional attitudes and phenomenal consciousness. It explores what it means to be a person and how personal identity is formed. In the end of the course, we reflect on some assumptions such as the distinction of the subjective versus the objective, and whether the mind is confined by the body.

**RELI 3057 Philosophy, Modernism and (3,2,2)  
Postmodernism**

We have entered into a postmodern age, yet how should it be characterized exactly? Jean-Francois Lyotard, a French philosopher, once defined postmodern as "incredulity toward meta-narratives", meaning that an essential characteristic of the postmodern age is its disbelief in many modern ideas such as progress in history, reason and the existence of absolute truth. Instead, the postmodern era is marked by entrenched understanding of power relations in many areas, the emphasis on diversity and plurality, attempts to re-examine the nature of capitalism, the influence of consumerism and of new technology in the society, etc.

This course focuses on the philosophical debates between the modern and the postmodern ideas. It examines critical issues about the nature of truth, reason, agency, freedom, power, and knowledge by comparing the Enlightenment Project and critiques from postmodern philosophers. A focal debate is on

whether we shall become relativists or nihilists while living in a pluralistic society. Textual studies and in-depth discussions will be conducted.

**RELI 3065 History of Modern Western (3,2,2)  
Philosophy: From Descartes to Marx**

This course aims to systematically introduce students to philosophies that shape the modern world. It covers the period from Descartes (the 17th century) to Marx (the 19th century). The course will outline the thoughts of various significant thinkers in the period, trace debates among their contemporaries, and show how they set the agenda for later generations. Students are expected to philosophize with the great thinkers. The objective is to develop an entrenched understanding of ideas that still influence us today.

**RELI 3066 The Meaning of Humanity: The (3,2,2)  
Philosophies of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche**

Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche were seminal thinkers who have changed the course of philosophizing in our modern and postmodern era. They are often referred to as the fathers of existentialism and postmodernism. From their thoughts emerged provocative themes which are still very hotly discussed today, such as truth as subjectivity, the single individual, the leap of faith on the side of Kierkegaard, and the death of God, the Superman, and the transvaluation of values on the side of Nietzsche. They show comparable views in exposing the problems of man, of dominant philosophical traditions and of human society. Despite their common insights, however, their philosophies stem from very different foundations and go to opposite conclusions. For Kierkegaard, he holds on to an absolute faith in the Christian God in the face of uncertainty. And for Nietzsche, in foregoing both religion and morals, he posits artistic creation as the ultimate solution to save man from falling apart in the void of truth. The present course aims at a critical discussion and comparison of the important themes in the philosophies of the Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. It will also investigate in what manners these authors could help us understand ourselves and chart our search for truth and meaning of life.

**RELI 3067 Modern Logic and Logics in Religious (3,2,1)  
Discourse**

The course aims to provide a comparative study of modern logic and logics developed in different religious systems. In this course, we will introduce theories and concepts developed by modern logicians. Special attention will be given to first order theory of logic and some of its meta-theorems. We will then discuss logics developed in various religious systems such as Mohist and Buddhist logics as well as logical principles and concepts developed by medieval Christian thinkers. Throughout the discussion, we will refer to the theories and concepts of modern logic whereas it is deemed appropriate.

**RELI 3075 Religions and Animals (3,2,2)**

Is it true that different religious traditions benefit animals? Are religious people and religious institutions more or less likely to be respectful to animals—either those kept as companions or those used for other human purposes? This course is mainly designed to explore the role and status of animals of different religious traditions, in which the positive and negative resources will be addressed in order to equip students to understand the influence of religious traditions towards human attitude on animals. Moreover, the course will introduce the contemporary discussion towards animals rights and animals welfare movement in order to have dialogue between ethical and religious perspectives towards the human-animals relationship. Lastly, some current issues, e.g. food industry, animals test, vegetarianism and laws about animals, will be examined.

**RELI 3076 Religion and Consumerism (3,2,2)**

Of the various socio-cultural phenomenon of the late 20th and early 21st century, consumerism is the most conspicuous. This course first examines the socio-economic and technological factors

that give rise to a consumer society, and the ideological impetus that give rise to the ideology of consumerism in its various forms and manifestations. The critique towards such consumerism would then be examined. After that, the religious reflection from various religious thinkers and practitioners towards modern day consumerism would be outlined and analysed. The spiritual movements arising from notable religious practitioners towards such consumerism would be examined. Their mutual influence and enrichment with secular counter-consumerism movement will be considered too. Lastly the impact of modern consumeristic attitude towards religious attendance and practice would be examined.

**RELI 3077 Religion and Social Movements (3,2,2)**

This course introduces students to the major social science theories of religion. We look at the explanatory value of these theories for various aspects of political development and social movements: institutions and structures, various forms of social movements, church-state relationship, civil society, democratization, etc. What effect does religion have on political democratization and social change within and across societies? How effective are current theories in adequately explaining the interplay between religion and social life? The course encourages a dialogue on different methodological approaches to the study of religion, politics and social movements.

**RELI 3085 Chinese Popular Religion (3,2,2)**

Is popular religion a residual category in the study of Chinese religions? Or is it actual the dominant form of Chinese religions? This is a course designed to give students a general introduction to the Chinese popular religion from historical and sociological perspectives. We will cover theoretical, thematic, textual and theatrical/ritual aspects of Chinese popular religious traditions. Students will learn the intimate relationship between these popular religions and the historical/social contexts from which they emerged and transformed.

**RELI 3086 Religion, Violence and Peace (3,2,2)**

The complex relationship between religion, violence, and peace is a central problem that bridges the boundaries of academic disciplines, historical periods, and global cultures. In recent years it has taken center stage in a number of academic disciplines including history, anthropology, political science, and of course, religious studies. While some scholars have argued that religion has been "hijacked" by violence, others have asserted that religion is inherently violent. Still others have moved for a more nuanced argument by positing that religion, conflict, and violence are interwoven across history and cultures. They have stressed that religions sometimes nurture their identities by being in conflict with dominant cultures, and that this conflict is not necessarily always violent, but can produce enormous benefits. But are conflict and violence necessary components of religion? Can religion be a resource for peace? We shall explore this question and the viewpoints and arguments that inform it.

**RELI 4005 Philosophy of Religion (3,2,1)**

This course aims to (1) raise students' awareness of the fundamental philosophical problems associated with religion; (2) introduce students to the religious views of some of the most influential philosophers who have grappled with such problems; (3) foster an appreciation of how each philosopher's solutions to these problems arises out of the presuppositions inherent in his overall approach to philosophy; and (4) stimulate students to think philosophically about their own attitudes towards religion.

**RELI 4006 Comparative Philosophy: East and West (3,2,1)**

This course aims to (1) provide students with a synoptic understanding of the universal ideas shared by Eastern and Western philosophies; (2) equip students with an analytic ability to explore the contrasts between Eastern and Western philosophies; and (3) encourage students to develop analytic and argumentative skills through the process of reading, speaking, and writing about various philosophical issues.

**RELI 4015 Mysticism and Religious Experience (3,2,1)**

This course aims to (1) become familiar with some of the most influential mystics who have interpreted their religious experiences in philosophically significant ways; (2) consider and critically assess a selection of classical and contemporary theories of the nature of religious experience; (3) encourage students to recognize a dimension of religion that goes beyond doctrinal belief and ritual practice; and (4) promote open discussion and debate regarding various controversial issues that arise in the process of trying to understand mystical world views.

**RELI 4016 Selected Topics/Readings in Philosophy (3,2,1)**

This course aims at helping the student to investigate a specific philosophical theme through a detailed study of a selected text (1) arouse students' interest in the important issues concerning philosophical issues and problems; (2) engage in a close reading of a selected philosophical topic/text so as to discover the major philosophical themes and insights contained therein; (3) cultivate students' ability in critically assessing various philosophical viewpoints towards a specific topic; and (4) further aims/objectives pertaining to the selected topic/readings can be furnished here.

**RELI 4017 Chinese Christianity (3,2,1)**

This course aims to (1) introduce the general history of various forms of Christianity which have entered into Chinese societies, including representatives from Oriental, Roman Catholic, Protestant and Russian Orthodox churches; (2) investigate the cultural encounters between different forms of Christianity and Chinese cultures of various periods so that the resultant effects on the development of certain kinds of Chinese Christianity can be explained; (3) provide students with a fairly thorough account of the nature and development of Christianity in modern China; (4) guide students in grasping how the faith of Chinese Christians is expressed in daily life and yearly cycles of religious festivals; and (5) arouse students' interests in the problems related to Christian faith and practice within cultural China during ancient and modern periods.

**RELI 4025 Christianity and Chinese Culture (3,2,1)**

The course aims to (1) examining the deeper dynamics of cultural dialogue and cross-culture communication arising from Christianity's encounter with Chinese culture; (2) exploring the multiple tensions between Chinese culture and Western culture informed and inculcated by Christianity, locating these tensions to the fundamental religious dimension of their respective worldviews; and (3) reflecting on these tensions existentially as they occur in Hong Kong with people living on a Chinese cultural substratum yet fast assimilating Christian ideas and practice into their daily lives.

**RELI 4026 Christianity, Modern Science and the Environment (3,2,1)**

This course aims to (1) enrich students' intellectual experience through a fruitful experience in inter-disciplinary studies of science and religion, and to help them understand the recent developments; (2) stimulate students' interest in the quest for meaning and truth in both science and religion; (3) stimulate students' concern for the environment by exploring the ethical and spiritual resources of the Christian religion; and (4) help students develop a critical appreciation of the creative tensions between science and religion.

**RELI 4027 Selected Readings In Christian Studies (3,2,1)**

This course aims to (1) provide students with a basic understanding of the rich variety of Christian theological texts; (2) enable students to appreciate the thoughts of Christian thinkers through the primary texts; and (3) help students enjoy reading primary texts.

**RELI 4035 Comparative Religious Themes (3,2,1)**

This course aims to (1) enhance a deeper understanding of the world's living religions by building upon what the students have learnt in the first two years of their programme; (2) find out the