

RELG 354 | EAST 304 Chinese Religions

McGill University
Fall 2024
TR 11:35-12:55, Birks 203

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Prerequisites

RELG 252, RELG 253, or permission of instructor.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the diversity of religious practice in the Chinese cultural sphere. While most introductory courses and textbooks on Chinese Religions are organized by “isms”: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, this neat division is fundamentally misleading. First, each of these three traditions is deeply influenced by and borrows heavily from one another. Second, many Chinese religious practices belong as much to none of the three traditions as they do one or more. The everyday practice of Chinese religion revolves around ancestor worship, longevity practices, morality, rituals, and the veneration of a pantheon of gods and spirits. This course explores China’s dazzling religiosity through a vast range of practices and cultural expressions. We will also examine the relationship between religion and larger social, economic, and political changes in modern China.

Course Objectives

- To introduce students to the major concepts, themes, issues, and their cross-fertilization in Chinese religions and culture.
- To provide student with an understanding of the role of religion in Chinese societies and, more importantly, what it means to be "religious" in the Chinese context.
- To foster a sensitivity to and appreciation for the various expressions of Chinese religion in a global era.
- To encourage students to reflect on their own assumptions and biases about Asian religions specifically, and religion in general.

Required Texts

All readings are posted on myCourses

Assessment

Attendance & Participation 10%
You are expected to **read** assigned readings in advance, **attend** lectures, and **participate** regularly in class discussion. All classes are in-person and there will be **no lecture recordings** available.

In-Class Midterm 20%

Curating Chinese Religions x2 30%
You will identify examples of Chinese religions, which can be a blogpost, tweet, news, video, object, personal experience, etc., and write a 500-word paper that contextualizes, explains, or critically reflects on concepts and practices introduced in the course. You can submit your assignments **anytime** before the deadlines.

Final Research Paper

40%

You will write a final research paper on the topic of your choice.

1. You will submit a one-page paper proposal (5%) describing a topic or question to be investigated. Attach an annotated bibliography of 4-5 sources.
2. Your final paper should be approximately 2000 words (8-10 pages, double-spaced).

Course Policies

1. As the instructor of this course, I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. If you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss with me and/or [Student Accessibility & Achievement](#).
2. No extension for submitting written assignments will be allowed without documented evidence of a medical or family emergency. Late submissions will be subject to a 5% penalty per day, including weekends.
3. All emails should include the course number in the subject field as well your full name and student ID number in the signature. Note that you are expected to use your **official McGill email** for all University-related communications. We will NOT discuss confidential issues, such as your grades, in emails sent from non-McGill, personal email addresses. Please save lengthy questions about course material for office hours and allow at least 2 days for email responses.

Reassessment

Requests for reassessment of written assignments must be made within one week after they are returned. Your grade after the reread, which might be higher or lower than the original one, will be your final grade. Beyond that, please refer to the official [Reread Policy of the East Asian Studies Department](#) or the [School of Religious Studies](#).

Use of Generative AI Tools

While I do not ban the use of generative AI tools, I strongly discourage it primarily because it is counterproductive. For your writing assignments, you will be assessed for your ability to analyze, engage with course materials, make claims, and support your claims. AI tools are not particularly sophisticated in such tasks. In other words, you will do poorly if you rely on generative AI tools in writing your papers. However, if you choose to use them as learning aids, you should include an appendix in your paper explaining which tool(s) are used and for what purpose. Failure to do so might be considered a breach of academic integrity.

McGill Policy Statements

Language of submission

In accord with McGill University's [Charter of Students' Rights](#), students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French written work that is to be graded. This does not apply to courses in which acquiring proficiency in a language is one of the objectives. (Approved by Senate on 21 January 2009)

Conformément à la [Charte des droits de l'étudiant](#) de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté, sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue. (Énoncé approuvé par le Sénat le 21 janvier 2009)

Academic integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the [Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures](#) (Approved by Senate on 29 January 2003) (See McGill's [guide to academic honesty](#) for more information).

Extraordinary Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or assessment tasks in this course are subject to change and students will be advised of the change.

Land Acknowledgment

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous people whose footsteps have marked this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.