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Prerequisites
RELG 253 Religions of East Asia and/or RELG 252 Hinduism and Buddhism, or permission of instructor.

Course Description
This course introduces students to the diversity of religious practice in the Chinese cultural sphere (Mainland China, Taiwan, and the Diaspora). 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 on 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.

This course may cover materials considered politically sensitive by certain jurisdictions. Please contact Prof. Lai if you have concerns about engaging with such materials.

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 in specific, and religion in general.

Required Texts
1. All readings are posted on myCourses

Course Format
Under the extraordinary circumstances during the global COVID-19 pandemic, the delivery of this course will be done through a combination of recorded lectures and Zoom sessions.

1. Lecture recordings will be uploaded to myCourses before each Tuesday.
2. **Zoom Sessions**
   Every Thursday from 11:35am-12:55pm (our scheduled class time), we will meet on Zoom for questions and discussions. To allow for open and free discussion, and to respect students’ privacy, Zoom sessions will **NOT** be recorded. If you live in a different time zone, or your current situation prevents you from attending, please email Prof. Lai to discuss alternatives.

**Assessment**

**Participation** 15%
You are expected to read course readings in advance and participate regularly in our Zoom and myCourses discussion. You will be graded on your answer to the posted discussion questions as well as your conversation with fellow students. You must engage with course materials in your response. You are also encouraged to post thoughtful questions to the discussion board.

**Quizzes** 15%
(Sep 22, Oct 6, Oct 27)

**Curating Chinese Religions** x2 25%
(Due Oct 15 and Nov 5)
Students will identify examples of Chinese religions, which can be a blogpost, tweet, news, video, object, personal experience, etc., and write a 500-word piece 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** 45%
You will write a final research paper on the topic of your choice.
1. By Nov 12, 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 (40%), due on Dec 7, 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. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the **Office for Students with Disabilities**, 514-398-6009.
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 email should include the course number in the subject field. Please save lengthy questions about course material for office hours and allow at least 2 days for email responses.

**Course Schedule**

**Part I: The Foundations of Religious Practice in China**

Sep 3  Introduction to Course

Sep 8, 10 Defining Chinese Religion
2. Kuo, Contextualizing “Chinese Religions.”
3. (Optional) Barrett, “Chinese Religion in English Guise.”
Sep 15, 17 Early Chinese Cosmology  
2. Wang, Yinyang, 41-82.

Sep 22, 24 To Live as Long as Heaven and Earth  
3. (Optional) Company, Making Transcendents, 39-61

Sep 29, Oct 1 Confucianism as State Cult  
2. Selection from the Analects of Confucius

Oct 6, 8 Ancestors and Ghosts  

Oct 13, 15 Deities and Gods  
1. ter Haar, Guan Yu, ch. 5.  

Oct 20, 22 Buddhism: Sinification or Conquest?  
2. Yu, Kuan-yin, selection.

Part II: Religions in Modern China

Oct 27, 29 The Religious Question of Modern China  

Nov 3, 5 Religion Under the CCP  

Nov 10, 12 Christianity with Chinese Characteristics  
3. (Optional) Yang, “Lost in the Market, Saved at McDonald's.”

Nov 17, 19 Ethnicity, Religion, and the State  
1. Kang, “Two Temples, Three Religions, and a Tourist Attraction,” 227-255.  

Nov 24, 26 Revival of Traditions  
1. Billioud, “Contemporary Confucian Revival.”  
2. Chau, “Temples and Festival in Rural and Urban China.”

Dec 1  Conclusion and Reflection: Zoom Session

**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 any 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.

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” (see McGill’s guide to academic honesty for more information).

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.