

PIA4027: RELIGIONS AND SOCIETY IN ASIA

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Religions and Society in Asia

Subject Code

PIA - Public and International Affairs

Course Number

4027

Academic Unit

Public and International Affairs (PIA)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

AIS4027 Religions and Society in Asia
GE2135 World Religions

Exclusive Courses

Nil

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course offers an introduction to the study of religion in Asian societies. We will begin by discussing classical approaches to defining religion and studying its role in society. We will then answer two critical questions about religion. First, what do religious beliefs and practices look like in various parts of Asia? Second, how do these beliefs and practices inform people's everyday lives? We will explore each of these questions at the level of society, at the level of organizations within society, and at the level of individuals.

This course surveys a broad range of religious ideas and practices belonging to different Asian traditions. Our survey includes Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. These religious traditions are important factors in the history, cultures, and literatures of South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

	CILOs	Weighting (if app.)	DEC-A1	DEC-A2	DEC-A3
1	Describe the relation between religion, ethnicity, and conflict, with examples;		x	x	
2	Use sociological theories and lived realities to explain and predict secularization and religious revival;		x	x	
3	Describe the reasons why religions develop and change as societies change;		x	x	x
4	Explain state policies on religion in selected societies in Asia		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

	LTAs	Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	CILO 1-4	Lectures and seminars	1, 2, 3, 4	
2	CILO 1-4	Presentations	1, 2, 3, 4	
3	CILO 1-4	Field trips, field trip reports	1, 2, 3, 4	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

	ATs	CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("- " for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Active participation/discussion in class (ask questions, make comments, continue the discussion, etc.)	1, 2, 3, 4	10	-	Yes
2	Attendance	1, 2, 3, 4	10	-	No
3	Midterm and Final Quizzes	1, 2, 3, 4	80	-	No

Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

Seminar participation and presentations

Criterion

Active and informed participation in class/class etiquette

Presence and communication

Organization and quality of material presented

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking reflected in class discussions, group participation, written work, and the quiz. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, as well being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Evidence of good ability to think conceptually reflected in class discussions group participation, written work, and in the quiz. Major themes of the lectures and readings are understood. Student is able to form plausible arguments and reasonably convincing conclusions about key issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, and have a broad understanding of the theories that underpin them.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Evidence of incomplete/marginal ability to analyze material presented in lectures and discussion groups. While the student has regularly attended class, performance has been below class average demonstrating only a general understanding of lectures and reading materials as shown in class discussions, group participation, written work, and the quiz. Student cannot make sustained arguments or reach convincing conclusions.

Marginal (D)

Evidence of limited comprehension of the lectures or reading materials. The student was marginal in class discussions. Limited participation in discussions, and group work. The course-work was of a low standard and the quiz result was weak. Student has a very limited grasp of key issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, and the theories used to explain them have not been understood.

Failure (F)

Little or no effort put into the course. The student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyze issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, and the related theories. The students has missed a number of classes and participated little, if at all, in class discussions and group activities. Course-work, if submitted, has been of a poor standard or plagiarized. The quiz result was poor.

Assessment Task

Coursework

Criterion

Completion of readings and writing assignments

Application and demonstrated comprehension of theories and approaches covered in the course

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking reflected in class discussions, group participation, written work, and the quiz. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, as well being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Evidence of good ability to think conceptually reflected in class discussions group participation, written work, and in the quiz. Major themes of the lectures and readings are understood. Student is able to form plausible arguments and reasonably convincing conclusions about key issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, and have a broad understanding of the theories that underpin them.

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Evidence of incomplete/marginal ability to analyze material presented in lectures and discussion groups. While the student has regularly attended class, performance has been below class average demonstrating only a general understanding of lectures and reading materials as shown in class discussions, group participation, written work, and the quiz. Student cannot make sustained arguments or reach convincing conclusions.

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Failure (F)

Little or no effort put into the course. The student has failed to demonstrate even a minimal capacity to analyze issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, and the related theories. The students has missed a number of classes and participated little, if at all, in class discussions and group activities. Course-work, if submitted, has been of a poor standard or plagiarized. The quiz result was poor.

Assessment Task

Quizzes on lectures and readings

Criterion

Quality and demonstration of knowledge gained from readings and lecture notes.

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Evidence of excellent conceptual and critical thinking reflected in class discussions, group participation, written work, and the quiz. Ability to comprehend and critique lectures and reading materials. Student is able to make sophisticated arguments and draw insightful conclusions about the key issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, as well being able to extend the different theoretical models in a clear and precise manner.

Good (B+, B, B-)

Evidence of good ability to think conceptually reflected in class discussions group participation, written work, and in the quiz. Major themes of the lectures and readings are understood. Student is able to form plausible arguments and reasonably convincing conclusions about key issues and debates concerning colonialism, post-colonial societies, issues of identity, and other historical and contemporary dynamics discussed during the module, and have a broad understanding of the theories that underpin them.

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Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Religions and social conflict; religion and the state; religion and gender; religion and welfare.

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Nil

Additional Readings

Title	
1	Bowie, Fiona. The anthropology of religion: an introduction. Malden, MA ; Oxford : Blackwell Pub., 2006.
2	Bstan-#dzin-rgya-mtsho, and Thupten Jinpa. The World of Tibetan Buddhism : an Overview of Its Philosophy and Practice. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995.

3	Cannell, Fenella. <i>Power and Intimacy In the Christian Philippines</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
4	Flood, Gavin D. <i>An Introduction to Hinduism</i> . New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
5	Flueckiger, Joyce Burkhalter. In <i>Amma's Healing Room : Gender and Vernacular Islam In South India</i> . Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
6	Formichi, Chiara. <i>Islam and the Making of the Nation : Kartosuwiryo and Political Islam In Twentieth-century Indonesia</i> . Leiden: KITLV, 2012.
7	Goh, Robbie B. H. <i>Christianity In Southeast Asia</i> . Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2005.
8	Ikeya, Chie. <i>Refiguring Women, Colonialism, and Modernity In Burma</i> . Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011.
9	King, Richard. <i>Orientalism and Religion : Post-colonial Theory, India and the Mystic East</i> . London: Routledge, 1999.
10	Lopez, Donald S. <i>Curators of the Buddha : the Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
11	Masuzawa, Tomoko. <i>The Invention of World Religions, Or, How European Universalism Was Preserved In the Language of Pluralism</i> . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
12	McDaniel, Justin Thomas. <i>The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk : Practicing Buddhism In Modern Thailand</i> . New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.
13	Safi, Omid. <i>Progressive Muslims : On Justice, Gender and Pluralism</i> . Oxford: Oneworld, 2003.
14	Smith, David. <i>Hinduism and Modernity</i> . Malden, MA : Blackwell Pub., 2003.
15	Tiyavanich, Kamala. <i>Forest Recollections : Wandering Monks In Twentieth-century Thailand</i> . Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997.