Comparative Study of Religions (K000796)

Due to Covid 19, the education and evaluation methods may vary from the information displayed in the schedules and course details. Any changes will be communicated on Ufora.

Course Specifications
Valid as from the academic year 2020-2021

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2020-2021

A (semester 1) Dutch

- on campus seminar 20.0 h
- on campus lecture 20.0 h
- guided self-study 5.0 h

Offered in the following programmes in 2020-2021

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<tr>
<th>Programme</th>
<th>Credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures (main subject Arabic and Islamic Studies)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures (main subject China (China Track))</td>
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<td>Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures (main subject China (UGent Track))</td>
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<td>Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures (main subject India)</td>
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<td>Bachelor of Arts in Oriental Languages and Cultures (main subject Japan)</td>
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<td>Bachelor of Arts in African Languages and Cultures</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor of Arts in Moral Sciences</td>
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<td>Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy</td>
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<td>Bachelor of Science in Sociology</td>
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<td>Exchange Programme History</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linking Course Master of Arts in Gender and Diversity</td>
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Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Comparative study of religion, the concept of religion, orientalism, Christianity, Western culture, Indian traditions

Position of the course

This course introduces the student to a range of basic issues in the comparative study of religion and offers the student the necessary skills and concepts to think and argue independently about these issues. This educational component is part of the Minor Cultural Sciences in the third year Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. The course can also support study or degree programmes in the social sciences and humanities that involve the study of different cultures and religions. It contributes to the following educational competences of the degree programme in the Bachelor of Arts in Sociology: B.1.6, B.2.2, B.3.1, B.3.2, B.5.1.

Contents

The course introduces the student to a range of current issues in the comparative study of religion. Its aim is not to teach and memorize a series of facts about the different ‘religions’ of humanity or to compare religion X with religion Y. The aim is to learn how to reason about problems and questions in the study of cultures, religions and

(Draft -- caution, this is not the final version)
Some central questions:
(a) The inconsistency in the use of the term ‘religion’: in the study of religion, there is a confusion concerning the use of the term religion. How does one recognise a phenomenon as a religion? Which contradiction emerges in discussions of religion and how can this problem be addressed?
(b) The cultural universality of religion: one of the basic intuitions in the comparative study of religion is that all cultures have some form of religion. To understand a culture one needs to study its religion. To get to know a person, one needs to find out their religious beliefs. But how do we know this is the case? What is the foundation of this idea: which evidence has been given for the fact that all cultures have religion?
(c) The Western creation of religion in India (and Asia, more generally): India is seen as the country of many religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, etc. Today, however, several scholars in the study of religion problematise this and suggest that these so-called religions are creations, constructions or inventions of the West. What is meant by this? Does this type of hypothesis make sense?
(d) Orientalism: what are the cognitive constraints under which Western culture has understood and described Asian cultures and their traditions?
(e) The theoretical roots and framework of the comparative study of religion: while the comparative study of religion of today claims to be secular and scientific, its conceptual framework is pervaded by concepts like ‘religion’, ‘worship’, ‘god’, ‘salvation’, ‘liturgy’, etc. These concepts have their origin in a Christian-theological framework. Has the study of religion indeed freed itself from the constraints of Christian theology?
(f) The development of a theory concerning the phenomenon of religion: today, we tend to think that we need a ‘good’ definition of the word ‘religion’ to determine whether or not something is a religion and which characteristics religions have. But we can only discover the structure and characteristics of a phenomenon by developing a scientific theory about that phenomenon. What does a scientific hypothesis about religion look like? Which conditions should it fulfil?

To tackle each of these problems the students will read relevant texts. The problem and questions will be introduced in the form of online videos and lectures, after which the students will have the opportunity to discuss the texts, problems and questions with the course teacher in work sessions.

Initial competences
No specific competences are required except the common-sense ideas about religion that exist in the contemporary Western world and a good command of English (which is required for reading the texts that will be discussed during the course).

Final competences
1. To have acquired insight into a number of central issues in the comparative study of religion and to be able to explain these debates.
2. To have the skills to independently and critically read and analyse scientific texts in the comparative study of religion.
3. To be able to formulate a scientifically argued standpoint concerning the course material.
4. To be able to reflect upon one’s own experience and common-sense beliefs concerning non-Western cultures.

Conditions for credit contract
Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment.

Conditions for exam contract
This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract.

Teaching methods
Guided self-study, on campus lecture, online discussion group, on campus seminar.

Extra information on the teaching methods
- The main issues will be introduced and discussed in online videos and lectures.
- The guided self-study (reading of texts) functions as a preparation for the lectures and the seminars.
- On the basis of their guided self-study (reading of texts) and the lectures, the students will be invited to ask questions and participate in discussions during the seminar (or in an online discussion group), under the guidance of the teacher.

Learning materials and price
Scientific texts that will all be made available on Ufora. It concerns English-language texts.

References
Additional background literature will be made available on Ufora.

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Course content-related study coaching
- Opportunity to pose question to the teacher during the seminars or during the consultation hour.
- Opportunity for feedback in the course of writing the paper.
- Opportunity for feedback on exam performance.

Evaluation methods
end-of-term evaluation

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the first examination period
Assignment

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the second examination period
Assignment

Examination methods in case of permanent evaluation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent evaluation
examination during the second examination period is possible

Extra information on the examination methods
Evaluation on the basis of an exam paper. The paper addresses a question or task chosen from a list which will be given to the students at the beginning of the semester. The students can get feedback on a version of their exam paper twice during the semester.

Calculation of the examination mark
100% exam paper.

Facilities for Working Students
The course material will be made available on Ufora as much as possible, including online videos with the relevant parts of the classes. There will be a possibility to join online discussion groups, where the students can discuss the texts and questions with the teacher.