

Hist 706
Religion, Modernity and Re-enchantment
Spring 2022
Tuesdays 1:20-3:15
Mosse Humanities 5257
Prof. Anne Hansen

Course Overview

What does it mean to acknowledge the presence of spirits in the world? How do we approach the study of enchantment, spirits and spirit specialists from the standpoint of the academic discipline of the history of religion? How does taking account of the spirit world challenge or revise scholarship on religion? Modernity? Ethics and morality? Where can we find traces of spirits in historical archives? How do we read sources that are understood to be enchanted or that intend to enchant?

In this seminar, we will grapple with scholarly approaches to and definitions of enchantment, and work on theorizing enchantment in relation to Asian religions. The course will focus on building skills in critical reading and analysis and responding to scholarly writing and argumentation.

Learning Objectives

By taking this seminar, you can expect to:

- Read new and classic works that bring together treatments of religion, modernity and enchantment with respect to Asian and other religious traditions
- Query the categories of “enchantment” and “modernity” and think about their usefulness and limitations
- Learn how to critically read and evaluate scholarly articles and books on religion for their arguments and scholarly interventions (rather than evaluating their truth claims)
- Learn how to approach reading and organizing your understandings of key questions and categories critical to a particular field, in this case, religion and enchantment
- Gain an introduction to methods, approaches, perspectives, and orientating questions in the history of religion and other related fields to be able to utilize and integrate these approaches in your own work
- Consider whether and how “enchanting” our approach to the history of religion changes our understanding of localized religious phenomena, practices, ideas, texts, communities, individuals, material culture, the environment, or ethics

- Cultivate skills in writing confidently about religion, modernity and enchantment and Asian religions

Assignments & Grading

- Written (50%): Choose between writing:
 - i) eight 2-2.5 page short response papers on *one* of the assigned readings from sessions 2-9, 10 or 13, OR
 - ii) a thematically related 20 page *draft* essay on a topic related to the seminar, determined in consultation with the instructor. The format and content of response papers will be discussed at the first seminar meeting.
 - For students who have elected to write final papers, they will be due on our assigned exam date. Otherwise, short response papers are due Monday evenings by 9pm the day before the assigned reading will be discussed.
- Discussion facilitation (20%): Teams of students will collaborate to lead weekly discussions starting with session 5. A format for discussion facilitation will be provided. Discussion facilitators will prepare powerpoint slides, hand-outs, whiteboard presentations, or other interactive activities for discussions. Each student will help to lead 2 different sessions.
- Discussion preparation (20%): In the weeks when not facilitating discussion, students will each prepare and bring written questions and notes on the reading assignments to class. A suggested format for these discussion notes will be discussed at the first seminar meeting.
- Critical application (10%): Toward the end of the semester, students will use the knowledge and critical analytical skills they have gained in the seminar in a Book Manuscript Chapter Workshop. Students will read and offer oral and written questions and comments (2-2.5 pages) on a chapter of Anthony Irwin's manuscript-in-progress on ethics and enchantment in northern Thai Buddhism with the author.

Course workload

This is a 3 credit seminar, requiring a total of 135 hours of work. I anticipate that you will need to set aside an average of 9-10 hours/week for reading and writing assignments in addition to class time. There are two reading/writing weeks built in to the schedule to ensure that you have enough time to complete assignments.

Texts

Most of the assigned readings are available online or as PDFs on your Canvas course site. In most cases we will read excerpts of books, with the exception of Robert Orsi's *History and Presence*. Please purchase that book for session 5.

Office Hours

Tuesdays 3:30-4:30, History Chair Office 3211 Mosse Humanities

Schedule of Readings

INTRODUCTION

Session 1. January 25. Introductions, instructions

PART I/ KEYWORDS: RELIGION, MODERNITY, ENCHANTMENT

Session 2. February 1. “Religion”

- Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious”
- Russell McCutcheon, “ “They Licked the Platter Clean”: On the Co-Dependency of the Religious and The Secular” (2007)
- Jolyon Baraka Thomas, “Introduction: The Universal Particularity of Religious Freedom,” chapter 1 “The Meiji Constitutional Regime as a Secularist System”

Drawing on Smith and McCutcheon, what are we talking about when we refer to “religion”? How do we know what religion is and isn’t? What is “religion-making”? How does Jolyon Thomas take these ideas on board in his recent history of mid-20th century religious freedom in Japan? Drawing on Thomas’ treatment of religion in this book, what are some issues we need to pay attention to in studying religion in a particular historical period and place? Using Thomas’ work as a model, how might you begin to break down the sub-categories of “religion” relative to your own subject(s) of study?

Session 3. February 8. “Modernity”

- Max Weber, chapter 2 “The Spirit of Capitalism” (see pp. 37-38) and chapter 5 “The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism” (pp. 302-322), excerpts from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (written in German in the early 20th c, published in English in 1930)
- Robert Hefner, “Multiple Modernities: Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism in a Globalizing Age” (1998)
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Khadi and the Political Man” from *Habitations of Modernity* (2002)
- Frederick Cooper, “Modernity” from *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (2005)

How is “modernity” described and treated in these different works? What are some of its characteristics or “hallmarks”? Why and how is “modernity” connected to colonialism? What is an “alternative modernity” and what might it look like? What are the possible pitfalls involved in using an over-determined category like “modernity”? How might you use the category of “modernity” in your own work?

Session 4. February 15. “Enchantment”

- Philip Taylor, “Modernity and Re-enchantment in Post-revolutionary Vietnam” (introduction to his 2007 edited volume *Modernity and Re-enchantment*)
- Peter Jackson, “Modern Magic and Prosperity in Thailand” (Introduction to his just-published in 2022 monograph *Capitalism, Magic, Thailand: Modernity with Enchantment*)

What is “enchantment” and “re-enchantment”? How and why are recent scholars using these terms? How are they related to Weber’s understandings of religion, enchantment, modernity, and capitalism?

PART II/ WRITING ENCHANTMENT

For sessions 5-12, pay close attention to the case studies of, definitions/uses and approaches to “enchantment” used by each scholar, and the questions and sub-questions they pose related to religion and (re)enchantment. Students will present the following readings in tandem presentations, with the exception of session 12.

Session 5. February 22. History “with the gods fully present”

- Robert Orsi, *History and Presence* (2016)

Session 6. March 1. Ghosts of war

- Heonik Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* - Introduction, chapter 1 “Ghosts of War,” chapter 2 “Mass Excavation,” chapter 6 “Transforming Ghosts” (2008)
- Lisa Arensen, “The Dead in the Land: Encounters with Bodies, Bones, and Ghosts in Northwestern Cambodia” (2017)

Session 7. March 8. Graveyards and other occupied landscapes

- Lisa Arensen, “Displacement, Diminishment, and Ongoing Presence: The State of Local Cosmologies in Northwest Cambodia in the Aftermath of War” (2012)
- Faizah Zakariah, “Birth, Life, and Afterlife of an Indonesian Graveyard: Environmental Rule and Its Discontents” (2021)
- Terenjit Sevea, *Miracles and Material Life: Rice, Ore, Traps and Guns in Islamic Malaya* - chapter 3 “The Pawang's Wonderful Nose for Ore” (2020)

Session 8. March 22. Reading/writing week - no seminar meeting - Association for Asian Studies. We’ll talk about how to attend virtual or live sessions of the conference this week in lieu of a seminar meeting.

Session 9. March 29. Two magical Buddhist figures

- Justin McDaniel, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk* - Introduction, chapter 1 “Monks and Kings”

- Thomas Patton, *The Buddha's Wizards: Magic, Protection, and Healing in Burmese Buddhism* - Introduction, chapter 1 "Vanguards of the *Sāsana*" (pp. 1-17), chapter 2 "The Buddha's Chief Wizard" and chapter 5 "Wizards in the Shadows"

Session 10. April 5. Magic with words & writing

- Richard Fox, *More than Words: Transforming Script, Agency, and Collective Life in Bali* - chapter 1 "Manuscripts, Madness," chapter 2 "Writing and the Idea of Ecology," chapter 3 "The Meaning of Life, or How to Do Things with Letters"
- Susan Conway, *Tai Magic: Arts of the Supernatural in the Shan States and Lan Na* - chapter 1 "Setting the Scene" (this is short and for comparison's sake with Fox's study)

Session 11. April 12. Reading/writing week - no seminar meeting - preparation for Book Chapter workshop. Read Irwin manuscript chapter. 2-2.5 page comments due before class meeting, by 5pm on Sunday April 18.

Session 12. April 19. Book Manuscript Chapter Workshop

- Discussion and comments on Irwin manuscript chapter on "vibrant geographies" in northern Thai Buddhism.

PART III/ CONCLUSIONS

Session 13. April 26. New work on markets, medicine, consumption, and religion

- Donnie Moodie, "Retail Religion: Hinduism for a Neoliberal Age"
- Lisa Björkman and Patton Burchett, "The Value of Tantra: Markets, Modernity, and Mumbai's Master of Mantra"
- Susan Rasmussen, "Re-Thinking a Matrilineal Myth of Healing: Tuareg Medicine Women, Islam, and the Market in Niger" (all articles from *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 2021)

How do these recent works understand and employ the category of "religion"? Medicine and healing? What happens when we connect the study of "religion" and the marketplace? What new scholarly approaches can you identify in this work? What is fruitful about these new approaches? How does it also build on older scholarly questions and conversations? How do these studies relate to our study of "enchantment"?

Session 14. May 3. Conclusions: appraisals of "enchantment" as a concept and approach