

RELS 5322 Research Paper in Religious Studies
Second Term 2023-2024

Lecture Room: YIA_403
 Lecture Time: Wed 7.00 pm – 9.30 pm
 Lecture: Dr. Chow Wai Yin 周惠賢博士
 Phone: 3943 1425 (by appointment)
 E-mail: wychow@cuhk.edu.hk

1. Course Description

The course is designed to facilitate students to develop academic writing skills in Religious Studies with support from other class members and the instructor. Students are encouraged to pursue their own academic interests, informed by the themes or topics they have encountered in taught components of the Religious Studies Program, and to develop appropriate research strategies to explore the study questions, develop a sustained argument, as well as effective academic writing and presentation skills. Students will be asked to present their papers orally in a seminar setting, where the participants will have an opportunity to respond to the presentations.

2. Learning outcomes

Upon completing the course, students should be able to:

- Identify a research topic;
- Collect and synthesize evidence from a wide range of primary and secondary sources applicable to the study of religion;
- Express ideas and arguments clearly;
- Organize the arguments into an organic and coherent essay;
- Do oral presentation in precise ways.

3. Course Schedule

Class/ week	Date	Topic
1	10/1	Lecture Class: Course Introduction
2	17/1	Lecture Class: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is an Academic Writing? • The Methodological and Theoretical Approaches to Religious Studies
3	24/1	Lecture Class: Approach to Ancient “Texts”
4	31/1	Lecture Class: Argument Development and Writing Style and the Hallmarks of Good Scholarship
5	7/2	Zoom Class: Individual Thesis Consultation
6	14/7	No Class: Lunar New Year Vacation
7	21/2	Independent Project: Develop Research Question and Project Thesis
8	28/2	Independent Project: Write a Literature Review
9	6/3	Independent Project: Develop 3 Major Arguments with Evidence Supports
10	13/3	Small Group Presentations

11-15	20/3-20/4	Independent Project: Thesis Writing
-------	-----------	-------------------------------------

Required Readings:

Scott G. Brown, *A Guide to Writing Academic Essays in Religious Studies*. London: Continuum, 2008.

Northey, Margot. *Making Sense: A Student's Guide to Research and Writing: Religious Studies*. Toronto: Oxford University Press 2015.

Michael Stausberg & Steven Engler, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. New York: Routledge 2011.

4. Learning activities

Lecture		Class Discussion		Web-based teaching		Workshop/Presentation		Course Readings		Final Project	
In class	Out class	In class	Out class	In class	Out class	In class	Out class	In class	Out class	In class	Out class
		3				1 hr			3 hrs/w		20 hrs
		M				M			M		M

M: Mandatory activity in the course

5. Assessment scheme

Task	Percentage
Participation and Class/Tutorial Discussions	15%
Presentation	25%
Final Paper	60%

Participation and Class/Tutorial Discussions (15%)

- You are strongly encouraged to participate in the various discussions in the class.

Presentation (25%)

- All students should prepare a 25-min presentation, and follow up questions and discussion. Presenters are encouraged to utilize visual aids (e.g. PowerPoint), and to make their presentations understandable to non-specialists.
- You can formulate your presentation by the following questions:
 - Give an **introduction** and **background information** on your topic. What relevant research has been performed previously?
 - State the problem(s) that remain unanswered.
 - Describe **the methodology** you will use to study the topic. Be sure you fully understand your chosen methods. Give reasons why you chose these methods over other approaches.
 - Present any **information/evidence** you have collected thus far.
 - Describe what you **expect to find (conclusion)**.
 - Explain the significance of your findings (or potential future findings), and etc.

Final written submission of research thesis (60%)

- The thesis should be about ~10,000 words (8,000 in English, 10,000 in Chinese), dealing with a defined scholarly question.
- The thesis should demonstrate appropriate research skills, including the abilities to collect information, to exercise critical judgment, and to present the arguments in a clear and organized manner.
- A soft copy of thesis should be handed in both hard and soft copy via VeriGuide at **11.00 pm on 28/4 (Sunday), 2024**. Late submission will be penalized: 10 marks will be deducted for one day of late submission. *Submission after 10 days will be given a zero mark.*

6. Suggested Readings

Michael Stausberg, Steven Engler, eds., *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. London: Routledge, 2011.

Scott G. Brown, *A Guide to Writing Academic Essays in Religious Studies*. London: Continuum, 2008.

7. Feedback for evaluation

End-of-term university course evaluation will be conducted in class. Students' comments and feedback on the course through e-mails or personal meeting with the instructor are always welcomed.

8. A Facility for Posting Course Announcements

Related course materials are delivered via the platform "BLACKBOARD"
(<http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/eLearning/>)

9. Academic honesty and plagiarism

Students must submit their papers via VeriGuide. Relevant information on academic honesty and plagiarism can be allocated at: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty>