

# **Spirituality and Religion: Theories, Concepts, and Methods**

Wouter J. Hanegraaff & Marco Pasi

MA Program Religion and Spirituality

1<sup>st</sup> semester, Block 1, 2020-2021

Opening session: Monday 7 Sept. 13.00-15.00 (Bushuis F0.21)

Regular sessions: Tuesdays & Thursdays 15.00-1700 (Zoom)

## **Objectives**

Having completed this course, students will have a basic understanding of the most important concepts, debates, methods, and theories in the academic study of religion, with particular attention to the relationship between religion and spirituality. They will be able to apply and develop this knowledge and these tools in a creative manner to research as well as in handling relevant social issues.

## **Contents**

This course provides an introduction to the most important concepts, debates, methods, and theories in the academic study of religion, with particular attention to the relationship between religion and spirituality. Chief focuses of attention are the relevant terminologies in this field of study and the debates around them (e. g. "religion," "spirituality," "esotericism," "mysticism," "myth," "symbol," "ritual"); what is at stake in academic discussions about "Western" perspectives on religion/spirituality and their alternatives; the relation between institutional and doctrinal forms of "religion" and more individual and praxis-oriented types of "spirituality"; the importance in this context of apologetics and polemics; and how to combine interdisciplinary approaches with methodologies specific for (intellectual) history, the social sciences, and the study of literature, the arts, and popular culture.

## **Study Materials**

Will be provided.

## **Canvas**

Please make sure that you are properly registered as student in this course on Canvas. This is crucial because the updated schedule of the course will be made available there, and emails with important information are sent only through this system.

## **Suggestion**

On Tuesday mornings, 9.00-12.00, Prof. Hanegraaff teaches a lecture course "Western Culture and Counter Culture" in the Bachelor program. Master students in the program Western Esotericism or the Research Master Study of Religion are *very welcome* to attend this course as auditors, as it will provide them with a useful historical overview of religion

and spirituality (as well as Western esotericism) in Western culture from antiquity to the present.

### **Procedure**

These are the requirements for successfully completing the course:

#### 1. Presence and active participation

You are required to attend at least ten of the twelve online sessions. Failure to be present at more than two sessions without prior notice and convincing arguments results in a *judicium* “insufficient”. Active participation means that you have read the materials for each week and take part in the discussions. You will be asked questions about the texts, so be prepared!

#### 2. Questions

At least 24 hours prior to each session (with the exception of the first one) you are expected to post a question on Canvas about one of the class readings. Again, you can skip two sessions. Failure to submit a question for more than two sessions without prior notice and convincing arguments results in a *judicium* “insufficient”.

#### 3. Question moderation

Each participant is expected to act as question moderator at least once. This means that you collect the questions of your colleagues on Canvas and distill from them one or two questions that seem most important and relevant to you. Immediately after the break you will be given the opportunity to summarize the main drift of the questions. For this you will have ca. five minutes.

#### 4. Take-home examination

This examination consists of a small number of questions related to the lectures and the materials that have been studied. In response to each question you are asked to write down a short but clearly formulated argument that demonstrates your understanding of the issues that have been discussed and your ability to engage them in a critical manner. You will be invited to express your own scholarly opinion and back it up with well-informed arguments. Because this is a “take-home” examination, you will have ample opportunity to re-read the required texts and refer to them in your questions. While it is not mandatory, you are welcome to bring in other materials (primary or secondary sources) as well, so as to make your answers more solid and interesting. In case of an insufficient result (i.e. a grade below 5.5), one resit is possible.

### **Recommendations**

Please note that the readings cover an average of appr. 90 pages per week, so the six-week period of teaching will be quite intense. In a short period you will be introduced to many new ideas that require serious reflection, so please make sure to use your time well. While there is no teaching in week 1 of the first block of semester 1, it is a very good idea to *use this week as preparation* and begin reading already well in advance of class meetings. This is all the more important because very soon after, you will embark on a second six-week period in a new course, with new readings. You do not want to be exhausted by the end of the semester.

You can of course read all the texts in digital format, but please be aware that reading lengthy and difficult texts directly from screen has negative effects on the human brain that will interfere with your concentration. To make efficient use of your time and mental resources, while minimizing stress, it is therefore better to *print the texts and read them*

*from paper*. Furthermore, please try to resist the temptation of cutting corners by “browsing” these texts quickly and superficially, as opposed to reading them slowly and with full concentration (while using a fixed system for underlining and highlighting important passages). It feels counter-intuitive at first, but please trust us: experience shows that in this manner you will end up needing *less* time, not more. And those are not the only benefits, for you will find that you remember better what you have read, you will understand it better, and much more fun as well.

## Program

- 7 September 0. Introduction: How this course works (Hanegraaff & Pasi)  
**On-site for those who can be physically present.**  
**Location: Bushuis F0.21**
- Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Imagining the Future Study of Religion and Spirituality,” *Religion* 50:1 (2020), 72-82.
- 8 September 1.a. Introduction: How this course works (Hanegraaff & Pasi)  
**Online via Zoom, for those who cannot be physically present  
(but welcome also to those who came to the Monday session)**
- Wouter J. Hanegraaff, “Imagining the Future Study of Religion and Spirituality,” *Religion* 50:1 (2020), 72-82.
- 10 September 1.b Western culture and global perspectives (Hanegraaff)
- Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., University of California Press, 2012, 1-62.
- Richard King, *Orientalism and Religion: Postcolonial Theory, India and “The Mystic East”*, London and New York, Routledge, 1999, 35-61.
- 15 September 2.a. Key concepts in the study of religion (Pasi)
- Jonathan Z. Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious,” in: Mark C. Taylor (ed.), *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, The University of Chicago Press, 1998, 269-284.
- Kevin Schilbrack, “What Does the Study of Religion Study?,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 111:3 (2018), 451-458.
- Russell T. McCutcheon: “Introduction: The Manufacture of ‘Religion,’” and “The Category Religion in Recent Scholarship,” in: Idem: *Manufacturing Religion: The Discourse on Sui Generis Religion and the Politics of Nostalgia*, New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997, 3-26.
- 17 September 2.b. Key concepts in the study of spirituality (Hanegraaff)
- Walter Principe, “Toward Defining Spirituality,” *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses* 12:2 (1983), 127-135 [135-141 can be skipped]

Leigh Eric Schmidt, "The Making of Modern 'Mysticism,'" *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71:2 (2003), 273-302.

Heinz Streib & Ralph W. Hood, "'Spirituality' as Privatized Experience-Oriented Religion: Empirical and Conceptual Perspectives," *Implicit Religion* 14:4 (2011), 433-453.

22 September 3.a. Historical and comparative methods (Hanegraaff)

Michael Bergunder, "Comparison in the Maelstrom of Historicity: A Postcolonial Perspective on Comparative Religion," in: Perry Schmidt-Leukel & Andreas Nehring (eds.), *Interreligious Comparisons in Religious Studies and Theology*, London, Bloomsbury, 2016, 34-52.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Reconstructing 'Religion' from the Bottom Up," *Numen* 63 (2016), 576-605.

24 September 3.b Social-scientific methods (Popp-Baier)

Bender, Courtney, and Omar McRoberts, "Mapping a Field: Why and How to Study Spirituality," *SSRC Working Papers* (Oct. 2012), 1-28.

Complementary reading (non-obligatory):

Berghuis, Joantine, Jos Pieper, and Cok Bakker, "Conceptions of Spirituality among the Dutch Population." *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 35 (2013), 369-397.

29 September 4.a. Textual hermeneutics and experience (Hanegraaff)

*Corpus Hermeticum I*  
*Corpus Hermeticum XI*  
*Corpus Hermeticum XIII*  
*The Ogdoad and the Ennead*

1 October 4b. Religious reform and transformation (what spirituality does to religion) (Pasi)

William L. Portier and C.J.T. Talar, "The Mystical Element of the Modernist Crisis," in: C.J.T. Talar (ed.), *Modernists and Mystics*, Washington, D.C., The Catholic University of America Press, 2009, 1-22.

Hayley E. Pangle, "Christian Mysticism as a Threat to Papal Traditions," *Grand Valley Journal of History*, 1:1 (February 2012), 1-6.

Jack Finnegan, "Cults and the Occult: A Challenge for the Church," *The Furrow*, 36:8 (Aug. 1985), 492-500.

Bobby Karle, SJ, "Ignatian Yoga", *The Jesuit Post*, 6 Oct. 2016, <https://thejesuitpost.org/2016/10/ignatian-yoga/>.

6 October 5.a. Polemics and politics (what religion does to spirituality) (Hanegraaff)

Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, London: Paladin 1970, 19-52.

R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe 950-1250*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2007, 6-25, 117-171.

Edward Bever, *The Realities of Witchcraft and Popular Magic in Early Modern Europe: Culture, Cognition, and Everyday Life*, New York: Palgrave 2013, 349-372, 381-399.

8 October 5.b. Political and legal issues (Pasi)

J. Gordon Melton, "The Modern Anti-Cult Movement in Historical Perspective," in: Jeffrey Kaplan & Heléne Lööw (eds.), *The Cultic Milieu: Oppositional Subcultures in an Age of Globalization*, Altamira, Walnut Creek, 2002, 265-289.

Massimo Introvigne, "Advocacy, Brainwashing Theories, and new Religious Movements," *Religion*, 44:2 (2014), 303-319.

Adèle van den Plas, "Ayahuasca under International Law: The Santo Daimé Church in the Netherlands," in: Beatriz Caiuby Labate & Henrik Jungaberle (eds.), *The Internationalization of Ayahuasca*, Lit: Münster 2011, 327-338.

13 October 6.a. Religious and spiritual creativity (Hanegraaff & Pasi)

Marco Pasi, "Hilma af Klint, Western Esotericism and the Problem of Modern Artistic Creativity," in: Kurt Almqvist & Louise Belfrage, *Hilma af Klint: The Art of Seeing the Invisible*, Stockholm, Ax:son Johnson Foundation, 2015, 101-116.

Wouter J. Hanegraaff, "Transitioning to the Cosmos: Musical Esotericism and Consciousness Change," Online lecture with slides & music <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1HVe-4SBOZs>

15 October 6.b. Lived religion (Ivanescu)

Anna Fedele and Kim E. Knibbe, "Introduction. Spirituality, the Third Category in a Gendered Triangle," in: Anna Fedele and Kim E. Knibbe (eds.), *Secular Societies, Spiritual Selves? The Gendered Triangle of Religion, Secularity and Spirituality*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2020, 1-29.