(New) Religious Representations and Practices in New Media

II Semester 2017/2018 (Summer Semester)
6 ECTS

Lecturer
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Course description

This course focuses on new forms of religiosity that have been emerging in Europe, in the West, as well as in the rest of the world in the last few decades, and the more recent interconnection between these new religious practices and new media (especially, but not exclusively, the Internet).

Some of the questions that will be discussed during the course are: what is a new religious movement? How are (new)religious representations and practices constructed/lived/performed through new media? How do religious communities shape themselves through new media"?

Over the course, a significant number of case studies from throughout Europe will be presented and discussed. Special attention will be devoted to the ethnographic investigations undertaken by the lecturer himself in Italy, Catalonia, and the Czech Republic.

Notions of "religion", "tradition", "new media", and "new religious movements" will be critically examined and discussed during the lessons, with the support of the pertinent literature.

The provisional and approximate structure of the course will be the following:

- Lesson 1, 13.04.2018
  What is religion? What is a new religious movement?

- Lesson 2, 27.04.2018
  Representations and practices of religions and communities in/through the new media.

- Lesson 3, 11.05.2018
  Recapitulation and open discussion; final remarks; exams

Learning and assessment methods

The students will be openly asked to actively participate in the teaching and learning processes. They will be encouraged to ask questions and contribute during the lessons and will also be given the opportunity to express their opinions voluntarily about the readings that will be handed out and read *in itinere*. Nevertheless, the main learning methods will be attendance and participation in classes and the individual study of the literature.

The final assessment will be undertaken through an oral exam with the teacher. The exam will be held by means of questions/answers and discussions about the course and literature contents. Its purpose will be to ascertain the students' knowledge of said contents, but also his/her capacity to acquire and autonomously use critical thinking and research methods.

LITERATURE

Compulsory readings for BA students

C. Helland, "Digital Religion", in D. Yamane (ed.), *Handbook of Religion and Social Institutions,* Springer: Switzerland, 2016, pp. 177-196

J. D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, Routledge, New-York-London 2007, chapter 7 ("Religious Change and New Religious Movements"), pages 160-172

A. Testa, "Religions in Videogames. Historical and Anthropological Observations". In *Online. Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, n. 5, pp. 249-278

Compulsory readings for MA students

C. Helland, "Digital Religion", in D. Yamane (ed.), *Handbook of Religion and Social Institutions,* Springer: Switzerland, 2016, pp. 177-196

J. D. Eller, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion*, Routledge, New-York-London 2007, chapter 7 ("Religious Change and New Religious Movements"), pages 160-172

A. Testa, "Religions in Videogames. Historical and Anthropological Observations". In *Online. Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet*, n. 5, pp. 249-278

K. Rountree, "Context Is Everything: Plurality and Paradox in Contemporary European Paganisms", in K. Rountree (ed.), *Contemporary Pagan and Native Faith Movements in Europe*, Berghahn, New York-London 2015, pp. 1-23

Additional suggested readings

A. Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", in Id., *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis 1996, pp. 27-47

C. M. Cusack, *Invented Religions: Imagination, Fiction and Faith*, Routledge, New York-London 2010

G. Coleman, "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media", in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, n. 39, 2010, 487-505

D. Cowan, *Cyberhenge: Modern Pagans on the Internet*, Routledge, New York-London

L. Dawson, D. Cowan, "Introduction", in L. Dawson, D. Cowan (eds.), *Religion online: finding faith on the internet*, New York : Routledge, 2004, pp. 1-16

R. Hutton, "Modern Pagan Festivals: A Study in the Nature of Tradition", in *Folklore*, n 119, 2008, pp. 251-273

J. F. Mayer, "Croire en ligne: usages religieux d'Internet et catholicisme contemporain", in *Transversalités. Revue de l'Institut Catholique de Paris*, n. 116, 2010, pp. 45-62

D. Visca, "Che fine hanno fatto i nuovi movimenti religiosi?", Prometeo, vol. 116, 2011, pp. 30-37