

Religion in Modern Society
SOCI4209
CUHK Department of Sociology
Fall 2021
Andrew Junker

Instructor: Andrew Junker, PhD

Dr. Junker is Hong Kong Director for the Yale-China Association located at New Asia College and is an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology

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Office hours by appointment

Language of instruction: English

Meeting Details: WMY 505 (Wu Ho Man Yuen Building) on Friday AM 9:30 to 11:15

Tutorial location and Time: TBA

Course Description:

Modernity has long been imagined as a kind of a secular space and time, empty of religion. Yet, religion is found in modern societies everywhere, often thriving and influencing politics, culture, and civil society. The majority of Hong Kongers identify as non-religious and yet signs of religious belief and practice abound throughout the city. Why? In this course, students will study how sociologists have theorized and investigated religion and modernity together. We will not focus on any particular faith, doctrine, or systems of beliefs and ritual. Instead, we will emphasize the relationship of “religion” – broadly defined – to other social formations, such as cultural solidarity, gender hierarchy, capitalism, state regulation, political movements, marketplace competition, and democracy. The course will introduce classical and contemporary social science theories and also explore specific topics related to religion in Chinese societies. Students will be asked to think, discuss, and write about big ideas and bold arguments. Pandemic allowing, we will also do optional field trips to religious sites in Hong Kong.

The course is taught by Adjunct Assistant Professor Andrew Junker, who also directs the Yale-China Association’s work at New Asia College. Dr. Junker earned a Ph.D. in sociology at Yale and an M.A. in religious studies at Indiana University. He has been a Thomas J. Watson Fellow, for which he spent a year doing participation observation research on religious and secular printmaking in Japan and India. He also taught social theory for four years at the University of Chicago as a Harper Fellow in the Society of Fellows in the Liberal Arts. Dr. Junker’s research interests on religion have included religion and politics, modern Chinese social movements, medieval Chinese Buddhism, and gender and ancestor worship.

Formal assessments in the course are weekly discussion board posts (200 words or less) and three short papers.