# History of Religions

## Prof. Giuliano Chiapparini

***COURSE AIMS AND INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES***

The course aims to provide students with

- in module 1 (6 ECTS: basic course): an introduction to the methodology used by the historians of religion to examine the object of their research (that is to say, religions). In fact, the History of religions is a science which studies those phenomena that, over time, have been qualified as ‘religious’, and analyses and compare them taking into account the processes concerning them and the contexts in which they are rooted. Therefore, the course aims to provide students with a precise knowledge of the main types of religions, but also a critical orientation towards other and different methods for the analysis of religious events;

- in module 2 (6 ECTS: advanced course): through the analysis of ‘case studies’ (to be chosen from among a list of options), students will be enabled to check thoroughly the effectiveness of the application of the historical-religious methodology in different fields related to religions. In fact, the topics will be compared from the peculiar perspective of the historical-religious discipline, that is to say on the basis of a historical and comparative research and a historical-critical analysis of the sources and the documents related to the religious fields being examined.

At the end of the course, students will be able to:

* understand and use vocabulary as well as the tools of historical-religious research in a correct way;
* know the main topics and problems raised by the history of the studies and the current status of historical-religious research;
* know the topics analysed during the course and included in the reading list specified below;
* apply research methodologies to specific problems and documents;
* show independent judgment and argumentative skills in oral communication.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Basic course (module 1 - 6 ECTS)

*Studying religions in time and space, as well as their nature and function. The most important results of historical-religious research.*

Advanced course (module 2 - 6 ECTS)

Two of the following topics (to be selected by means of a student survey):

*1 - Religions in Progress: ‘new’ religious movements (NRMs) in the world.*

*2 - Medieval Christian heresies: the case of ‘Cathars’.*

*3 - Lost Christianities: Valentinian Gnostics (2nd-3rd century AD) in the works by Nag Hammadi.*

*4 - Hermes between Classical Greece and Late Antiquity: magical and philosophical intersections.*

***READING LIST***

Basic course:

1. Textbook of reference:

Maria Vittoria Cerutti, *Storia delle religioni. Oggetto e metodo,* *temi e problemi*, EDUCatt, Milan, 2014 (the parts specified in class).

2. Readings that students can consult during the course:

Ugo Bianchi, *Religions in Antiquity. I: Christiana. II: Gnostica et Manichaica,* edited by L. Bianchi, Vita e Pensiero, Milan 2014-2015.

Angela Maria Mazzanti, Giulio Maspero (cur.), *Storia Religioni Comparazione. Ricordando Ugo Bianchi nel centenario della nascita*, Edusc, Rome 2022.

Maria Vittoria Cerutti (ed.), *Allo specchio dell’altro. Strategie di resilienza di ‘pagani’ e gnostici tra II e IV secolo d.C.*, Cantagalli, Siena 2023

Giulia Sfameni Gasparro, *Introduzione alla storia delle religioni,* Laterza, Rome-Bari 2011.

Giovanni Filoramo, Maria chiara Giorda, Natale Spineto (eds.), *Manuale di Scienze della religione,* Morcelliana, Brescia 2019.

3. The sources and the teaching material made available in class and on Blackboard.

Advanced course

1. Textbooks or scientific articles of reference (only the parts specified in class):

Eileen Barker, *I nuovi movimenti religiosi. Un’introduzione pratica*, Italian ed. by Massimo Introvigne, Mondadori, Milan 1992 (or. Engl. *New Religious Movements: a Practical Introduction*, HMSO, London 1989, 19912).

Francesco Zambon, *La cena segreta. Trattati e rituali catari*, Adelphi, Milan 1997.

Andrea Annese, Francesco Berno, Daniele Tripaldi (curr.), *I codici di Nag Hammadi. Traduzione italiana integrale*, Carocci, Rome 2023.

Antoine Faivre, *Eternal Hermes. From Greek God to Alchemical Magus*, Phanes Press, Grand Rapids, MI 1995.

2. Other readings and sources specified in class and made available on Blackboard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures-practical activities in class with the support of video and paper teaching material: clearly, the practical approach will be more pronounced during the Advanced course.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

The assessment of the intended learning outcomes will consist in an oral exam in which the lecturer will test the students’ understanding of the topics examined during the course and treated in the textbooks included in the reading list. In particular, for the general part of the course, students will be assessed on their knowledge of the main topics and problems of the historical-religious discipline, while, for the single-subject part of the course, they will be tested on their understanding of the issues examined in class, as well as the ability to approach the documents proposed, through an adequate historical contextualisation and a correct analysis of the contents they offer.

The students showing a systematic and in-depth understanding of the topics examined in class and a good mastery of the specific terminology will be awarded with excellent marks. The students showing a mnemonic knowledge of the subject and using terminology in a correct – yet not always appropriate – way will be awarded with good marks. The students showing a minimal knowledge of the topics examined during the course and/or an occasionally inappropriate use of the terminology will simply achieve the pass mark. The students showing a poor knowledge of the topics examined during the course and in the reading list for the final exam, as well as a superficial use of the terminology will get negative marks.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

There are no prerequisites (e.g. the knowledge of Greek, Latin, or other) for attending the course. However, students should show a certain interest and intellectual curiosity towards the topics related to the past and the contemporary religious experiences of humanity. Depending on their degree curriculum, students can enrol in the Complete course (12 ECTS), or the Basic course (6 ECTS) that can be followed by the Advanced course (6 ECTS). Please note that those who intend to get only 6 ECTS are expected to attend the Basic course instead of the Advanced one. The reading list mentioned above is just an indication to introduce students to the topics examined during the course. A detailed reading list for both the Basic and the Advanced course will be made available in class. Non-attending students will have the possibility to define an alternative reading list.

Further information can be found on the lecturer's webpage at http://docenti.unicatt.it/web/searchByName.do?language=ENG or on the Faculty notice board.