# History of Religions

## Prof. Giuliano Chiapparini

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

The course aims to provide students with:

- Module 1 (6 ECTS credits: basic course): An introduction to the method and object of the History of Religions, a historical-comparative science that studies phenomena that have been classified as ‘religious’ over time. In particular, the course aims to offer a reflection on a historical and comparative basis (method) around the notion of ‘religion’ (object), providing an understanding of fundamental religious typologies and guidance on various other methods for analysing religious elements;

- Module 2 (6 ECTS credits: advanced course): By studying ‘case studies’ (to be chosen from a list of options), students can thoroughly test the effectiveness of the historical-religious method applied to different areas of religion. The theme will be approached from the particular perspective of the historical-religious discipline, that is, based on a historical and comparative investigation and the historical-critical analysis of sources and documents relevant to the religious contexts in question.

By the end of the course, students will:

* understand and be able to use the language and tools of historical-religious research correctly;
* know the main themes and problems proposed by the history of the discipline and the current state of historical-religious research;
* know the content covered during the course and in the material on the reading list;
* be able to apply investigative methods to problems and specific documents;
* be able to demonstrate independence of judgement and the ability to make effective arguments in oral communication.

***COURSE CONTENT***

Basic course (Modulo 1 - 6 ECTS credits)

*Religions in time and space: themes and problems. The nature and function of religion. The History of Religions and its method.*

Advanced Course (Module 2 - 6 ECTS credits)

Three of the following topics (chosen by student survey):

*1 - The ‘new’ religious movements in the world*

*2 - The concept of ‘sacred’ in Rudolf Otto (†1937) and Mircea Eliade (†1986)*

*3 - Figures between human and divine: heroes, prophets, thaumaturges and saints*

*4 - Dualistic variations among the Valentinian Gnostics of the second century*

*5 - The Biblical book of ‘Wisdom’ and worship of the goddess Isis*

*6 - Religions in protohistory and prehistory*

***READING LIST***

Basic course:

Reference texts:

M.V. Cerutti, *Storia delle religioni. Oggetto e metodo,* *temi e problemi*, EDUCatt, Milan, 2014 (the parts indicated in lectures).

Texts which may be referred to during the course:

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.

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 (ed.), *Storia Religioni Comparazione. Ricordando Ugo Bianchi nel centenario della nascita*, Edusc, Rome 2022.

Sources and materials provided in lectures and made available on BlackBoard.

Advanced course

Sources and materials provided in lectures and made available on BlackBoard. Lecture notes and individual reading.

***TEACHING METHOD***

Lectures/workshops incorporating both audiovisual and paper-based materials: the workshop approach will naturally be more marked on the advance course.

Should the Covid-19 health emergency prevent in-person teaching and/or assessment, ongoing or final, remote alternatives will be put in place via the university BlackBoard platform, Microsoft Teams and any other means, details of which will be provided at the beginning of the course, so as to ensure learning objectives are met whilst safeguarding students’ health.

***ASSESSMENT METHOD AND CRITERIA***

Students will be assessed by means of an oral test in which the lecturer will check their understanding of the subjects covered during the course and in the texts on the exam syllabus. In particular, the lecturer will assess, for the general part, knowledge of the main themes and problems of the historical-religious discipline, and, for the single-subject part, the understanding of the issues addressed as well as the ability to approach the documents in question through proper historical contextualization and a proper understanding of the content they offer.

Students who demonstrate they have an in-depth, systematic view of the subjects covered in lectures, together with the ability to express ideas with clarity and effective language will achieve top marks. Students with memorised knowledge of the material as well as correct, but not always appropriate, language will achieve fair marks. Students with minimal knowledge of the course topics and/or some vague language will achieve a pass mark. Students who present vague information and demonstrate gaps in their knowledge of the subjects discussed during the course and in the material on the exam syllabus will not pass the exam.

***NOTES AND PREREQUISITES***

The course requires no special prerequisites (e.g. knowledge of Greek, Latin etc.) However, students are expected to demonstrate an interest in and intellectual curiosity about issues connected with the religious experiences of humanity, both past and contemporary. Students wishing to take only 6 ECTS credits must take the basic course not the advanced course. The above reading list is indicative and introductory in nature, designed to provide an overview of the subject; it does not constitute the exam syllabus. Details of the examination syllabus for both the basic and the advanced courses will be provided during lectures

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.