# 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 method used by historians of religions to examine their subject of study (that is to say, religions). In fact, the History of religions is a science studying phenomena that, over time, have been qualified as ‘religious’, analysing and comparing them while taking into account the related processes and the contexts in which they are rooted. Therefore, the course aims to provide students with a precise knowledge of the fundamental religious typologies, but also with a critical approach towards other and different methods for the analysis of religious matters.

- 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 (module 1 - 6 ECTS)

*Studying religions over time and space, their nature, and their function. The main results of historical-religious research.*

Advanced course (module 2 - 6 ECTS)

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

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

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

*3 - Lost Christianities: the Gnostic Valentinians (2nd-3rd century A.D.) in Nag Hammadi’s texts.*

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

***READING LIST***

Basic course:

Reference texts:

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

2. Readings that can be consulted 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 (cur.), *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.

Sources and materials provided in lectures and made available 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 edition 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 indicated in class and available on BlackBoard.

***TEACHING METHOD***

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

***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***

There are no prerequisites for attending the course (e.g. knowledge of Greek, Latin, or else). However, students are expected to show a certain interest and intellectual curiosity towards the religious experiences of humanity, both in the past and the present. According to their degree curriculum, students can enrol in the Complete course (12 ECTS), or just in the Basic course (6 ECTS) and then, if needed, in the Advanced course (6 ECTS). The students who intend to acquire only 6 ECTS will have to attend the Basic course instead of the Advanced one. The reading list mentioned above is only indicative, as it represents an introduction to the topics analysed during the course. The detailed reading lists for the exam, for both the Basic and the Advanced course, will be specified 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.