

## **RHIB14, History of Religions: Level 2, 30 credits**

*Religionshistoria: Fortsättningskurs, 30 högskolepoäng*

**First Cycle / Grundnivå**

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### **Details of approval**

The syllabus was approved by The Pro Dean of First and Second Cycle Studies at The Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology on 2026-06-08 (U 2026/397). The syllabus comes into effect 2026-09-01 and is valid from the spring semester 2027.

### **General information**

The course is offered as a freestanding course. It can be selected as a specialisation course in the Bachelor's programme in Religious Studies and Theology. It can be included in a first or second cycle degree.

*Language of instruction:* Swedish and English  
Elements in other Scandinavian languages may occur.

*Main field of study*      *Specialisation*

History of Religions      G1F, First cycle, has less than 60 credits in first-cycle course/s as entry requirements

### **Learning outcomes**

On completion of the course, students shall be able to

#### **Knowledge and understanding**

- demonstrate a broad understanding of the emergence and development of the academic discipline History of Religions,
- identify and describe central scholarly positions and changes in approaches to the study of religion,
- account for how the development of new methods has influenced the formation of History of Religions as an academic discipline,
- identify and describe contemporary Asian religious practices using relevant academic terminology,

- account for how Asian spiritual practices interact with and shape global cultural contexts in Asia, Europe, the Americas, and beyond,
- demonstrate a broad understanding of the social functions and political significance of religions in historical and contemporary contexts in relation to current theoretical perspectives,
- account for and provide examples of historical and contemporary expressions of the relationship between politics and religion in relation to modernization, globalization, gender relations, and migration,
- account for discussions concerning the concepts of religion and politics in different historical and social contexts,
- explain the characteristics of an academic paper in relation to other genres and forms of writing, such as journalistic reporting or political opinion pieces,

### **Competence and skills**

- independently discuss and analyze connections between key stages in the development of the discipline History of Religions,
- apply basic theoretical perspectives to the history of Religious Studies,
- critically analyze, in written and spoken form, basic concepts and central practices within the Asian religious field,
- independently summarize the development and presence of Asian spiritualities in global contexts,
- reflect on the religious field in Asia and its global impact by applying relevant theoretical perspectives,
- compare selected influential religio-political movements,
- critically analyze debates concerning religion and politics in a multi-religious and multicultural Europe, with particular focus on Sweden,
- analyze how religious traditions and historical events have been used to legitimize political and/or ideological positions in historical and contemporary contexts,
- produce a short academic paper on the theme of religion and spirituality,
- formulate a research problem with a clear aim and research question,
- use terminology and perspectives from Religious Studies in relation to religiosity and spirituality,
- identify, select, and critically evaluate scholarly literature in the field,
- present and discuss the subject in writing using correct and academically appropriate language,
- use an academically accepted system for citations, references, and bibliographies,

### **Judgement and approach**

- discuss and take a basic critical position on different theoretical approaches within the academic study of religion,
- evaluate and critically reflect on the emergence of the academic discipline History of Religions in relation to gender and minority issues,

- distinguish between emic terminology applied by believers and etic semantic choices and concepts applied in academic contexts,
- critically evaluate claims and representations concerning religion and politics in contemporary media and public debate,
- critically engage with theoretical perspectives on religious change, modernization, colonialism, globalization, and migration,
- critically engage with the content of religio-political statements,
- distinguish between applying a scholarly perspective and an insider religious perspective to a topic within religion and spirituality.

## Course content

The course consists of the following modules:

1. History of Religions: A Historical and Thematic Introduction, 7,5 credits
2. Asian Religious Practices in Global Contexts, 7,5 credits
3. The Political Power of Religion in Past and Present, 7,5 credits
4. Religion, Spirituality, and Academic Writing, 7,5 credits

Module 1 provides a historical overview of the academic discipline History of Religions. Through thematic studies in the history of the discipline and close engagement with classical works, students become acquainted with important stages in the emergence and development of the field. The historical overview is approached through close readings of historical and contemporary studies of ancient religions – for example Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman religion – as well as the religions of minorities and Indigenous peoples, such as African, Native American, or Sámi religions. Students are introduced to, and invited to critically engage with, central debates that have shaped the academic study of religion and the development of the discipline. The module applies a range of critical perspectives – including postcolonial, gender-critical, and historical-critical approaches – and provides a broad introduction to methods and theories in History of Religions.

From Zen meditation and Kundalini yoga to qigong, feng shui, and martial arts films, Asian spiritual and physical practices have spread across the globe. Module 2 provides an overview of current developments in the religious field in Asia and their global implications. Students learn to contextualize contemporary Asian spiritualities – for example yoga, meditation, divination practices, and martial arts – from historical and global perspectives. The module examines the social, cultural, and intellectual dynamics that shaped the emergence of reformist movements, practices, and organizations during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It also explores the global dissemination of spiritual and physical practices, their interaction with contemporary consumer cultures, and current debates concerning health, politics, social change, and environmental sustainability.

Module 3 examines the interplay between religion and politics in relation to processes of social change in historical and contemporary contexts. Drawing on critical and contextual perspectives, the module analyzes European and global experiences of the political dynamics of religion, as well as religion as a theme in contemporary public debates and political practices. What do we mean by “religion” and “politics”, and how are these related to each other both as concepts and as social phenomena? How do they relate to historical and contemporary processes such as Hellenization, state formation, imperialism, the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, modernization, colonialism, nationalism, globalization, transnational migration, postmodernity, and

populism? What does “political religion” mean in different forms and contexts, and what issues are connected to discussions of religious extremism and fundamentalism? A particular focus of the module is Swedish society as an arena for diverse religious and political interests, both historically and in the present, in relation to discussions of religio-cultural diversity, marginalization, and racism.

Module 4 trains students to undertake an independent assignment to be presented in the form of a short academic paper. The module aims to introduce and develop academic writing skills. It begins with an introduction to terminology and perspectives used within the study of religion to understand different forms of religiosity and spirituality.

## Course design

Module 1: The teaching consists of lectures and seminars.

Module 2: The teaching consists of lectures and seminars. Attendance at all 10–12 teaching sessions is mandatory. Absence may be compensated for with written assignments in accordance with instructions from the lecturer. Students who are absent from more than 30 % of the teaching sessions will need to retake the module.

The module includes an ethnographic component in which students – individually or in smaller groups – plan and carry out a study visit. The visit may consist of participant observation, an interview, or other forms of structured insight into a group in which Asian spirituality is a defining element. Students are responsible for establishing contact with the field, conducting the visit, and documenting their observations applying ethnographic methods in accordance with research ethical principles. The module entails a mandatory oral presentation of the study visit.

Module 3: The teaching consists of lectures and seminars.

Module 4: The teaching consists of lectures and supervision.

## Assessment

Module 1: The assessment is based on a written take-home exam.

Module 2: The assessment is based on a written take-home exam.

Module 3: The assessment is based on three written assignments and oral presentations of them at three seminars.

Module 4: The assessment is based on a minor paper of approximately 40,000 characters, including spaces, a cover sheet, table of contents, and bibliography, and on a final defence seminar.

The examiner, in consultation with Disability Support Services, may deviate from the regular form of examination in order to provide a permanently disabled student with a form of examination equivalent to that of a student without a disability.

## Grades

Grading scale includes the grades: Fail, Pass, Pass with distinction

For a grade of Pass on the whole course, the student must have been awarded a grade of Pass for all modules. For a grade of Pass with distinction on the whole course, the student must also have been awarded a grade of Pass with distinction for at least two modules.

## Entry requirements

General entry requirements and successful completion of at least 15 credits within Religious Studies: Level 1 (REVA10/ÄRED11), of which at least 10 credits must consist of Modules 2 and 4. Alternatively, general eligibility and successful completion of at least 15 credits within Islamic Studies: Level 1 (ISLA11) or at least 15 credits within Jewish Studies: Level 1 (JUDA12/JUDA13), or the equivalent.

## Further information

- The course is offered at the Centre for Theology and Religious Studies, Lund University.
- The modules can also be taken as freestanding courses (RHIB32, RHIB33, RHIB34, and RHIB35).
- The credits allocated for course content that in whole or in part is commensurate with another course can only be credited once for a degree.