



Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology

RHIB34, History of Religions: The Political Power of Religion in Past and Present, 7.5 credits

Religionshistoria: Religionens politiska kraft i historia och nutid, 7,5 högskolepoäng
First Cycle / Grundnivå

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 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 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,

Competence and skills

- 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,

Judgement and approach

- 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.

Course content

The course 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 course 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 course 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.

Course design

The teaching consists of lectures and seminars.

Assessment

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

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 written assignments and the oral presentations of them. 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 of the written assignments.

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 course is also included as module 3 of RHIB14, History of Religions: Level 2.
- 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.