

Divinity School of Chung Chi College  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

## **THEO 5933: Media, Popular Culture and Christianity 媒體、普及文化與基督教**

Semester 2, 2019-2020

**Lecturer:** Yam Chi-Keung 任志強

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### **Logistics:**

Time: Fridays 7:00pm – 9:30pm

Venue: HYS LG04

### **Course Description:**

This course is a critical exploration of the intricate relationships between popular media culture and Christianity. While popular culture and the media have long become a daily reality for many in the world, these have seldom been taken seriously by theologians and scholars of religion. Also, the relationship between popular media and religion (including Christianity) is often overlooked in academic studies until relatively recent time. We shall reexamine various manifestations of popular culture from Christian theological perspectives, and also probes into the subtle interrelatedness between media culture and Christianity as an organized religion. This course engages with the vigorously developing interdisciplinary field of media, religion, and culture (MRC) as its wider academic context; at the same time it attends particularly to the Chinese language popular media and Chinese Protestantism in Hong Kong.

### **Prerequisite:**

No formal prerequisite, but participants are EXPECTED to be fairly knowledgeable about the basics of Christian tradition and its contemporary expression, particularly in the Hong Kong and global Chinese contexts. Some academic background in the theological disciplines is ASSUMED, while academic or practical background in the media or communication or cultural studies would be advantageous.

### **Expected Learning Outcomes:**

Upon successful completion of this course, participants should be able to:

1. Demonstrate critical understanding of the role of the media in contemporary society and culture, as well as the multiple and intricate relationships between popular media cultures and the Christian Church;
2. Critically evaluate particular media works in their various forms from Christian theological perspectives;

3. Engage with important texts in the field as well as available theological resources with reasonable familiarity;
4. Relate discussions in the course to their personal and communal experience of media consumption and involvement;
5. Use the foundation built in this course for further academic work in areas related to media, popular cultures and Christian theology.

**Special Note:**

The design and purpose of this course are academic in nature – it focuses on theoretical quests and reflections rather than general daily practices of the ‘how to’.

It is also designed to be interactive – the default mode of learning is through active involvement from all participants instead of long structured lectures by the instructor.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Reading and Participation [20%]

- a. *Before* each class session, *study* at least one piece of the required readings specified for that session, and try to read at least one additional piece of suggested reading. Participants are expected to be familiar with the main points of the readings before class.
- b. Active participation in weekly class discussions. (Attendance is presumed and mere attendance is not considered active participation.)

2. Reflective Book Report [30%]

A reading report on ONE of the following books (marked with an asterisk [\*] in the list of important texts in this syllabus):

- Campbell and Garner, *Networked Theology*.
- Ford, *A Theology for a Mediated God*.
- Horsfield, *From Jesus to the Internet*.
- Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*.
- Mitchell, *Media Violence and Christian Ethics*.
- Mitchell, *Promoting Peace, Inciting Violence*.

Requirements:

- a. Present a descriptive summary of the major points in the book;
- b. Highlight what you consider as the most important concepts of the author(s) as well as the major arguments around those points; explain why they are important to you;
- c. Discuss critically the relevance of the book’s content to your concerns, interests, and/or context.
- d. Assessment criteria include: accurate understanding of the book; ability of applying concepts to own situation; clarity and logic in presentation. (Please refer to details on Blackboard.)
- e. Length: Not more than 2000 words, either in Chinese or English. (Works exceeding more

than 100 words beyond the limit will not be graded.)

- f. Submission: Upload .doc or .odt to Blackboard with VeriGuide – NO pdf please.
- g. Deadline: 28 February 2020. (Works submitted on or after 7 March will automatically receive an F grade.)

### 3. Final Essay [50%]

- a. An integrative paper on an issue of the participant's own choice – it should:
  - i. fall within the main concerns of the course;
  - ii. indicate the participant's own learning / discovery throughout the course;
  - iii. focus on a specific topic covered in the course, possibly (but not necessarily) an expansion and deepening on the short reflection paper.
  - Assessment criteria include: clarity in defining the issue and objective; sufficient critical engagement with relevant reference materials; originality, clarity, logic; proper formatting and language style. (Please refer to details on Blackboard.)
- c. Length and format:
  - Approximately 5000 words, either in Chinese or English. (Works exceeding 5500 words will not be graded.)
  - Must be typed in 12-point font size, double spaced.
  - Word count includes footnotes but exclude bibliography.
  - For the sake of your reader, please use footnotes rather than endnotes or author-date citation format.
  - Please follow consistent a style guide which is commonly used in the humanities – such as Chicago, Harvard, MLA, etc.
- d. Submission: upload .doc or .odt file to Blackboard with VerigGuide; no pdf please.
  - Deadline: 1 May 2020
  - Late submissions:
    - Special grace for late submission will be granted ONLY in cases of unforeseen personal or direct family disasters, such as serious illness, injuries or death. It is the participant's responsibility to obtain written (email) consent from the lecturer as early as possible and absolutely not after the deadline.
    - Otherwise: a sub-grade will be deducted per day from works submitted after the deadline (e.g., B+ becomes B, C- becomes D, etc.); works received on or after 9 May 2020 will automatically receive an F grade.

#### **Academic Integrity:**

This course, as in the case of the whole Chinese University of Hong Kong as well as any decent institution in the world, takes a stance of zero tolerance toward academic dishonesty. Submitted works that are found to have committed plagiarism will automatically receive an F grade and the case will be reported to University authority concerned, and could result in the termination of study at the University. Plagiarism defined in its plain sense is the act of using other people's works or ideas without duly acknowledging it, thus intentionally or unintentionally creating an impression that the piece in question is one's own original creation. Repeated use of one's own work without proper acknowledgement is considered self-plagiarism and is therefore penalised

in the same manner.

For more information that can help you further understand and comply with the University's standard in academic honesty, please refer to the CUHK official website on this issue: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

### **Important Texts (selected):**

In addition to reading materials listed in weekly requirements, course participants are encouraged and expected to become familiar with at least some of the books here:

Brown, Delwin, Sheila Greeve Davany, and Kathryn Tanner (eds). *Converging on Culture: Theologians in Dialogue with Cultural Analysis and Criticism*. AAR & Oxford University Press, 2001.

Campbell, Heidi A. (ed). *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. Routledge, 2013.

Campbell, Heidi A. *When Religion Meets New Media*. Routledge, 2010.

\*Campbell, Heidi A. and Stephen Garner, *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture*. Baker Academic, 2016.

Cheong, Pauline Hope, Stefan Gelfran, Peter Fischer-Nielson and Charles Ess (eds). *Digital Religion, Social Media, and Culture*. Peter Lang, 2012.

Cobb, Kelton. *The Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture*. Blackwell, 2005.

\*Ford, Dennis, *A Theology for a Mediated God: How Media Shapes Our Notions about Divinity*. Routledge, 2016.

Hoover, Stewart M. *Religion in the Media Age*. Routledge, 2006.

Hoover, Stewart M. and Knut Lundby (eds). *Rethinking Media, Religion, and Culture*. Sage, 1997.

\*Horsfield, Peter. *From Jesus to the Internet: A History of Christianity and the Media*. Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Lundy, Knut. *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*. Peter Lang, 2009.

Lundy, Knut (ed). *Religion across Media: From Early Antiquity to Late Modernity*. Peter Lang, 2013.

- \*Lynch, Gordon. *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*. Blackwell, 2005.
- Lynch, Gordon (ed). *Between Sacred and Profane: Researching Religion and Popular Culture*. I.B. Tauris, 2007.
- Lynch, Gordon, Jolyon Mitchell, with Anna Atrhan (eds). *Religion, Media and Culture: A Reader*. Routledge, 2012.
- \*Mitchell, Jolyon. *Media Violence and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- \*Mitchell, Jolyon. *Promoting Peace, Inciting Violence: The Role of Religion and Media*. Routledge, 2013.
- Mitchell, Jolyon and Sophia Marriage (eds). *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture*. T&T Clark, 2003.
- Morgan, David (ed). *Key Words in Religion, Media and Culture*. Routledge, 2008.
- Spadaro, Antonio. *Cybertheology: Thinking Christianity in the Era of the Internet* (ET Maria Way) Fordham University Press, 2014.
- Travagnin, Stefania (ed). *Media and Religion in China: Insights and Case Studies from the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong*. Routledge, 2017.
- 吉見俊哉,《媒介文化論》(蘇碩斌中譯)。臺北: 群學, 2009。
- 林瑋嬪 (主編),《媒介宗教: 音樂、影像、物與新媒體》。臺北: 國立臺灣大學出版中心, 2018。
- 駱穎佳,《後現代拜物教 - 消費文化的神學批判》(新編)。香港: 基督徒學生福音團契, 2010。
- 葉菁華 (編),《信仰市場, 消費教會: 消費主義與當今教會》。香港: 基督教文藝出版社, 2013。

## Course Contents and Schedule:

### LEVEL ONE: THE GROUNDWORK

**Week 1  
(10 Jan)**

#### **Prologue: Christian Theological Perspectives on Culture and the Media**

A. Required reading:

1. Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, Ch. 2 and 5.

B. Other suggested readings:

1. Cobb, *Blackwell Guide*, Ch. 3-4.
2. H. Richard Niehuhr, *Christ and Culture* (Harper, 1951).
3. Paul Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (Oxford, 1959).

**Week 2  
(17 Jan)**

#### **From Media Effects to the Mediatization of Everything**

A. Required readings:

1. Knut Lundy, 'Introduction: Mediatization as Key', in Knut Lundby (ed), *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, 1-18.
2. 吉見俊哉, 《媒介文化論》, 1-106.

B. Other suggested readings:

1. Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture*, Ch. 1, 6, 7, 8.
2. Cobb, *Blackwell Guide to Theology and Popular Culture*, 'Introduction' and Ch. 1-2.
3. Simon During (ed.), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed) (Routledge, 1999):
  - Ch. 1: During, 'Introduction'
  - Ch 2: Adorno & Horkeimer, 'The Cultural Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception'
  - Ch. 7: Stuart Hall 'Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies'

**【24 Jan Lunar New Year's Eve: university holiday】**

**Week 3  
(31 Jan)**

**\*Self-study - NO class meeting\***

**The Intersection of Popular Media and Christianity in Hong Kong**

A. Required readings:

1. Yam Chi-Keung, 'Projecting Christian Faith on the Hong Kong Screen', *Studies in World Christianity* 15 (2009) 2: 113-130.
2. Yam Chi-Keung, 'Engagement in Television by Protestant Christians in Hong Kong', *Studies in World Christianity* 11 (2005) 1: 87-105.
3. 任志強, 〈卅年回望身後事——今日教會群體所虧欠蘇恩佩前輩的〉, 收錄於文蘭芳、何盛華、李淑潔合編《把火種撒在地上》(突破, 2013), 154-161。【原刊《時代論壇》1284 (2012年4月8日) 專論】

**LEVEL TWO: ISSUES AT THE CORE**

**Week 4  
(7 Feb)**

**From 1947 to 1997 to 2047: Evolving Landscape of Media, Society and Protestantism in Hong Kong**

A. Required readings:

1. Yam Chi-Keung, 'Regarding the Interplay of Popular Media and Religion in Hong Kong', in *Media and Religion in China: Insights and Case Studies from the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong*, edited by Stefania Travagnin (Routledge, 2017), 35-52.
2. 任志強 〈從媒體文化的比喻窺探闖中人：闖間神學芻議〉, 收錄於邢福增、關瑞文、吳青主編,《人言我為誰乎? 盧龍光院長榮休紀念文集》(香港: 基督教文藝出版社, 2014), 603-614。

B. Other suggested readings:

1. 任志強 〈懸吊的時代, 懸吊的信仰〉,《時代論壇》1584 (2018年1月7日) 4-5: 專論。
2. 任志強 〈懸吊時代的信仰實踐: 靈性革命2019〉,《時代論壇》1636 (2019年1月6日) 4-5: 專論。
3. 任志強 〈懸吊狀態下的宗教改革2020〉,《時代論壇》1688 (2020年1月5日) 4-5: 專論。

**Week 5  
(14 Feb)**

**Mobile Network and the Future of Humanity**

A. Required readings:

1. Heidi Campbell and Stephen Garner, *Networked Theology: Negotiating Faith in Digital Culture* (Baker Academic, 2016), 1-59.
2. 任志強〈合一與多元：媒體生態巨變下的實況與挑戰〉，收錄於林榮樹主編，《多元氛圍下的證道與教導》（崇基學院神學院，2016），100-114。

B. Other suggested readings:

1. Heidi Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. Routledge, 2013.
2. Knut Lundby, 'Dreams of Church in Cyberspace', in Pauline Hope Cheong et. al. (eds.), *Digital Religion, Social Media, and Culture*. Peter Lang, 2012, 25-42.
3. Peter Horsfield, '“A Moderate Diversity of Books“? The Challenge of New Media to the Practice of Christian Theology', in Pauline Hope Cheong et. al. (eds.), *Digital Religion, Social Media, and Culture*. Peter Lang, 2012, 243-258.
4. Jan van Dijk, 'Introduction', in *The Network Society* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). Sage, 2012, 1-21.

**Week 6  
(21 Feb)**

**Visuality, Textuality and the Theological Unease**

A. Required reading:

1. Dennis Ford, *A Theology for a Mediated God: How Media Shapes Our Notions about Divinity* (Routledge, 2016), 1-66.

B. Other suggested readings:

1. Jacques Ellul, *Humiliation of the Word* (ET, Eerdmans, 1986).
2. David Morgan, *The Sacred Gaze* (University of California Press, 2005), Ch. 1 – 3 (pp. 25-112).
3. Walter Ong, *Orality and Textuality* (Routledge, 2002 [1982]), Ch. 4 (pp.77-113).
4. 駱穎佳《後現代拜物教》，142-157：〈影象越界〉。



### **LEVEL THREE: WHEN POPULAR MEDIA CONFRONT CHRISTIANITY**

#### **Week 7 (28 Feb)**      **News Media and the Framing of Reality** (guest lecture by Ms Ho Ka Ming)

A. Required reading:

1. 區家麟《二十道陰影下的自由》(香港中文大學出版社, 2017)。

B. Other suggested readings:

1. Mitchell, *Media Violence and Christian Ethics*,
  - Ch. 1: 'Remembering violent news'.
  - Ch. 2: 'Reframing news'.
  - Ch. 3: 'Re-envisaging Photojournalism'.

#### **Week 8 (6 March)**      **Mass Media and the Construction of Collective Identity**

A. Required readings:

1. 馬傑偉、曾仲堅《影視香港：身份認同的時代變奏》(香港中文大學香港及亞太研究中心, 2010)。
2. Gordon Mathews, Lui Tai-lok, and Eric Ma, *Hong Kong, China: Learning to Belong to a Nation* (Routledge, 2008), Ch.4: 'Representing the nation in the Hong Kong mass media'.

B. Other suggested reading:

1. 馬傑偉《電視與文化認同》(突破, 1996)。

#### **Week 9 (13 March)**      **Advertising, Hyper Consumerism and Eco-Disaster**

A. Required readings:

1. Mitchell, *Media Violence and Christian Ethics*, Ch. 6: 'Reappraising advertisements'.
2. 駱穎佳《後現代拜物教》, 25-141, 172-180.

B. Other suggested readings:

1. Tom Beaudoin, *Consuming Faith: Integrating Who We are with What We Buy* (Sheed and Ward, 2003; 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2007).
2. Simon During (ed), *The Cultural Studies Reader* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (Routledge, 1999).
  - Ch. 28: Meaghan Morris, 'Things to do with Shopping Centres'.
  - Ch. 29: Raymond Williams, 'Advertising: The Magic System'.

**Week 10  
(20 March)**

**Narrative Media and the Cultural Turn of Theology**

A. Required readings:

1. Clive Marsh and Gaye Ortiz (eds), *Explorations in Theology and Film* (Blackwell, 1997):
  - Ch. 2: Marsh, 'Film and Theologies of Culture'.
  - Ch. 18: Marsh and Ortiz, 'Theology beyond the Modern and the Postmodern: A Future Agenda for Theology and Film'.
2. Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) (Baker Academic, 2006), Ch. 10: 'Responding to Movies Theologically'.

B. Other suggested readings:

1. Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed) (Baker Academic, 2006), Ch. 1-4, 8.
2. Yam Chi-Keung, 'A Secular Gospel for the Marginal: Two Films of Stephen Chow as Hong Kong Cinematic Parables', in *Exploring Religion and the Sacred in a Media Age*, edited by Christopher Deacy and Elisabeth Arweck (Ashgate, 2009), 203-218.
3. Yam Chi-Keung, 'Contemporary Christianity and the Religiosity of Popular Chinese Cinema', in *Christianity in Contemporary China: Socio-cultural Perspectives*, edited by Francis K.G. Lim (Routledge, 2013), 91-104.
4. 任志強〈人算什麼？從《猩凶革命》與猿人電影系列再思人的角色與位置〉，載於王初福主編，《睇電影，學神學》（宣道出版社，2013），37-50。

**Week 11  
(27 March)**

**Popular Music and the Shaping of Contemporary Spirituality**

(guest lecture by Mr Enoch Lam)

A. Required readings:

1. Tom Beaudoin, *Secular Music and Sacred Theology* (Liturgical Press, 2013).
2. Clive Marsh and Vaughan S. Roberts, *Personal Jesus: How Popular Music Shapes our Souls* (Baker Academic, 2013).
3. 朱耀偉《歲月如歌：詞話香港粵語流行曲》（香港：三聯，2009）。

B. Other suggested readings:

1. Jeremy Begbie, *Theology, Music, Time* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 9-68.

3. Jeremy Begbie, *Music, Modernity, and God: Essays in Listening* (Oxford University Press, 2013), Ch. 1, 7, 8.

**【Week 12 (3 April): University Reading Week – no class meeting】**

**EPILOGUE: MEDIA, THEOLOGY AND CHRISTIAN PRAXIS**

**Week 13  
(17 April)**

**Re-envisioning Christian Media Praxis and Theology in Hong Kong**

A. Required reading:

1. Yam Chi-Keung, 'The Curious Case of Discovering Noah's Ark in Hong Kong', in *Media and Religion in China: Insights and Case Studies from the Mainland, Taiwan and Hong Kong*, edited by Stefania Travagnin (Routledge, 2017), 241-255.

**ESCHATON  
(1 May)**

**\*\* Submit Final Essay \*\***

Nothing can possibly be perfect in this imperfect world.  
Just get it done and upload.