THEO5324 History of Christianity in Asia

Teacher
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Venue
N.A.
Due to the current covid-19 epidemic, the course will be taught online until further notice.

Description
The course introduces the students to the history of Christianity in Asia, from the first century and the eastward movement of earliest Christianity to Christianity in the Sassanid period, life under Islamic rule, the Mongolian period, the missionary spread of Western forms of Christianity in the colonial era and the development of independent forms of Christianity in more recent times. A significant focus of the course will be on recent developments in different parts of Asia.

Expected Outcome
a) The students will gain an understanding of the historical development of Christianity in Asia and will learn to perceive and appreciate Christianity in Asia as, to a significant extent, parallel and independent rather than as latter development to Christianity in Europe.

b) The students will learn about the contemporary challenges of Christian churches in different contexts of Asia and the reasons for different growth developments. They will learn about the concerns of particular contexts.

c) In the different historical developments of Christianity in Asia, the students will encounter different church and faith models and of Christian relations to their cultural environment. The students will equally discover different examples and issues of contextualization.

d) The students will develop sensitivity regarding mission, ecumenism, and contextualization in the postcolonial Asian context and learn about different Christian responses to the multi-religious context of Asia. The focus on the diversity of Christian churches and faith expressions in Asia leads beyond the
dualism of local church and church in the West and helps perceive Christianity in a multi-polar world.
e) Asian Christians are our neighbors both internationally and locally. The study of Asian Christianity is a study of our own local context.

**Structure of the course**
- Lecture with handouts
- Sections with joint discussion or with small-group discussion
- Student presentations towards the end of the course
- Regular homework assignment sheet with reading assignments and possible questions for further discussion; readings are expected to be read in preparation to each lesson and may be the subject of class discussion

**Topics**
- Christianity in the Sassanid period
- The Assyrian Church of the East (Nestorianism)
- Christianity under Islamic rule
- Christianity in the Mongolian Empire
- Jesuit mission in Asia
- Christianity under Portuguese colonialism
- Protestant mission in 19th century Asia
- South Korea: A Christian success story?
- Christianity and Buddhism in Southeast Asia
- The spread of Christianity among ethnic minorities in South and Southeast Asia
- Christianity in Islamic Southeast Asia (Indonesia, Malaysia)
- Christianity in the Hinduist context of India
- Global faith movements in modern Asia

**Handbooks**


**Further readings**

*Generally on Asia and on religion and Christianity in Asia or parts thereof*


**Ecumenism in Asia**


**India**

• ______. *Historiography of Christianity in India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press 2012.

**Indonesia**
Islamic nations


Japan


Korea


**Malaysia**


**Singapore**


**Southeast Asia (Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam)**

**Resource material**
• International Journal of Asian Christianity

**Feedback for evaluation**
End-of-term university wide course evaluation will be conducted in class

**Assessment**
Oral participation 20%; class presentation 20%; church visit report (or book report) 20%; final paper 40%.

**a) Oral participation**
• Physical and mental presence during course
• Quality of contribution to discussion, etc.

**b) Class presentation**
• Presentation on your findings regarding the final paper or possibly presentation on a special topic in the course of the lecture.

**c) Church visit report (or book report)**
Visit a church of another national group (e.g., Korean church; Philippino church; Thai congregation; Indonesian church; Nepali church; etc.) and write a short report (1,500 to 2,000 words) about your observations.

If, due to the pandemic, a proper church visit is not possible, you may write a book review on one of the following books:

Deadline: 10 Nov 2020

d) Final paper
Write an essay about a topic within the broader themes listed below:

• Topic 1:
  Encounter of Christianity and *Islam in Asia*.
  Or: Encounter of Christianity and *Buddhism in Asia*.
  Discuss with reference to specific contexts.

• Topic 2:
  Christianity and *ethnic minorities*. Discuss the historical growth of Christianity among ethnic minorities and analyze reasons for this growth.

• Topic 3:
  Asian Christianity and the *situation of women in Asia*: discuss how Christianity affected gender justice in Asia – both contributing to the equal status of women in society and hindering it. Discuss with reference to historical events.

• Topic 4:
  Christianity and *social change*: Discuss how Christianity acted as a motor of social and political change or possibly as hindrance to it with reference to historical examples.

Note further the following:
• The paper should refer to contexts outside of Hong Kong and Mainland China.
• Around 5000 words
• Include references to at least 6 scholarly works (books or articles)
• Deadline: 12 Dec 2020
• Assessment criteria:
  o Does your paper show knowledge of the topic?
  o Do you include the most important scholarly works?
  o Does your paper contain a clear thesis, an understandable structure, and is your argument convincing?
  o Does your paper show critical engagement and creativity of thought?
## Overview

**PART I  ASIAN CHRISTIANITY FROM JESUS TO THE 19th CENTURY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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| **1** 9 Sept 2020 | Course outline  
Introduction to the course  
a) Why studying church history: how is church history related to theology  
b) Asia as an area of studies and as area of Christian concern |
| **2** 16 Sept 2020 | The spread of Christianity in the first 800 years  
a) The Asian church in the first two centuries  
b) The church under the Sassanid Empire in Persia  
c) Christianity under Islamic rule (7th to 10th century)  
Tutorial: the theological introduction to the Nestorian stele |
| **3** 23 Sept 2020 | Asian Christianity under Mongolian rule and the first wave of Catholic mission  
a) The Assyrian Church of the East under Mongolian rule  
b) Franciscans and the Mongols: The first missionary encounter of Catholic Christianity with Asia under the Mongols (13th to 15th century)  
Tutorial: Contextualization of the Jingjiao: The Jesus-Messiah Sutra  
(possible student presentation on the Jesus-Messiah Sutra) |
| **4** 30 Sept | Catholic Mission to Asia from the 16th to the 19th century  
a) Jesuit mission to Asia  
b) Asian Christianity from the 16th to the 18th century  
Tutorial: Shusaku Endo’s novel *Silence* – historical backgrounds and missional challenges? |
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activities</th>
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| 5 7 Oct 2020 | The emergence of the Protestant mission movement in the West and early Protestant mission in Asia  
|           | a) Backgrounds: The different waves of Protestant mission  
|           | b) Characteristics of Protestant Mission before the 19th century  
|           | c) Protestant mission in Asia before the 19th century  
|           | Tutorial: on the emergence of the Protestant mission movement in the West  |
| 6 14 Oct 2020 | Protestant mission in Asia  
|           | a) China  
|           | b) Korea  
|           | c) Southeast Asia: from Thailand to the Philippines  
|           | d) India  
|           | Tutorial: on contextualization and the impacts of the Protestant mission on Christianity in Asia  
|           | (possible student presentation on the booklet „Good words to admonish the age“ by Liang Fa and its contextualization of the Christian message)  |

**PART II ASIAN CHRISTIANITY SINCE THE 1900s**

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| 7 21 Oct 2020 | Korean Christianity  
|           | a) Historical periods of Korean Christianity  
|           | b) Factors of Christian growth in Korea  
|           | c) Characteristics of Korean Christianity  
|           | d) Christianity in North Korea  
|           | e) Impacts of Korean Christianity and assessment  
<p>|           | Tutorial: on feminist-Christian criticism of Confucianism and on Pentecostalism in Korea.  |
| 8         | Korean Christianity (continue)  |</p>
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| 28 Oct 2020 | f) The Korean mission movement  
g) A concluding assessment of Korean Christianity |
|            | Christianity in the Buddhist context of Southeast Asia: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar  
a) Christianity in Thailand |
|            | Tutorial: On the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism – convergences and conflicts |
| 9 Nov 2020  | Christianity in the Buddhist context of Southeast Asia: Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar (continue)  
b) Christianity in Laos  
c) Christianity in Cambodia  
d) Vietnam  
e) Myanmar |
|            | Tutorial: on Christianity among ethnic minorities in Myanmar |
| 10 Nov 2020 | Christianity in an Asian urban context: the case of Singapore |
|            | Tutorial: on the complex of problems related to mission trips to regional neighbors (or student presentations) |
| 11 Nov 2020 | Christianity facing Islam in Southeast Asia  
a) Indonesia  
b) Malaysia |
|            | Tutorial: on the relationship between Christianity and Islam (or student presentations) |
| 12 Nov 2020 | Christianity in India  
a) The challenge of Hinduism  
b) Dalit Christianity |
|            | Tutorial: Student presentations |
| 13 Dec 2020 | Conclusion: |
| 1) Towards Asian theologies?  
2) Beyond national boundaries  
   - Asian Christianities in a global context  
   - Global faith movements across Asia: Evangelicals, Pentecostals, and Ecumenical Christians |
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<td>Tutorial: Student presentations</td>
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