

Critical Issues in Religious History (A006712)

Course size (nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings in academic year 2025-2026

A (semester 2) English Gent

Lecturers in academic year 2025-2026

Kurtz, Paul Michael	LW03	lecturer-in-charge
Menéndez Sánchez, Guillermo	LW03	co-lecturer
Nicosia, Giorgia	LW03	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2025-2026

	crdts	offering
Bachelor of Arts in Art History, Musicology and Theatre Studies	5	A
Bachelor of Arts in History	5	A
Exchange Programme Cultures and Languages in Context	5	A
Exchange Programme History	5	A
Linking Course Master of Arts in History	5	A
Elective Set History	5	A
Elective Set Religion Studies	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

History of Religion, History of Mentalities, Judaism, Christianity, Antiquity, Modernity

Position of the course

This advanced course offers a diachronical, thematic approach of the religious past and enlarges the chronological courses on Antiquity, the Middle Ages, the Early Modern and the Modern Times of BA1 and BA2.

Starting from a special focus upon the role of religion in processes of socialisation and cultural appropriation, the course helps students gain insight in the 'longue durée' of European cultural history and historical mentalities. They are explicitly confronted with interdisciplinary approaches, of which they should learn to critically assess the value for historical research.

Contents

This course focuses primarily on the role of religion in social and cultural history across Europe. It is structured around central topics that are not only current in recent research but also relevant to questions of religion and society in Europe today.

The course is thus not comprehensive but selective, with an emphasis on the Ancient and Late Modern periods. It will help to discover interdisciplinary relations with insights deriving from cultural anthropology, sociology of religion, religious studies, and art history.

Note: this course places heavy emphasis on reading and discussion. Students must come to class having read all assigned (1) primary sources and (2) secondary literature carefully. They must also have them to hand during class and be prepared to engage them actively.

Initial competences

To have successfully completed the courses History of the Classical Antiquity, History of the Middle Ages, Early modern History and History of the Modern and Contemporary Period or to have acquired the necessary skills by other means. Good active knowledge of English is required (speaking, reading, writing). Passive knowledge of French and German (reading) is recommended.

Final competences

- 1 To be able to discover cultural historical correlations throughout history.
- 2 To be acquainted with the most important theoretical and methodological debates in today's cultural history.
- 3 To be able to integrate critically the insights from other human sciences in historical research.
- 4 To be able to formulate, explain, and defend a decent cultural historical argumentation orally.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is unrestricted: the student takes into consideration the conditions mentioned in 'Starting Competences'

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, Independent work, Peer teaching

Extra information on the teaching methods

Independent work: required reading, with supplementary reading

Group work: presentations that contextualise and analyse texts from selected authors and sources

Peer teaching: student-led discussions of the material presented

Study material

Type: Slides

Name: Slides (Lectures)

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Number of Slides : 130

Oldest Usable Edition : n/a

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Type: Slides

Name: Slides (Student Presentations)

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Number of Slides : 400

Oldest Usable Edition : n/a

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : No

Available through Student Association : No

Type: Reader

Name: Selection of articles and book chapters (PDFs)

Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty

Optional: no

Language : English

Number of Pages : 600

Available on Ufora : Yes

Online Available : No

Available in the Library : Yes

Available through Student Association : No

Additional information: Texts primarily in English but also in French and German. Reading: 500pp. (ca. 50/week) + 100pp. (2 x 50 for group presentations)

References

Course content-related study coaching

- Occasional support via UFORA
- Office hours of the lecturers
- Feedback after the exam

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Presentation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

not applicable

Extra information on the examination methods

Presentations: detailed, in-depth analysis and contextualisation

Participation: collaboration in group work, engagement in class discussion

Oral exam: open questions based on the lectures, readings, discussions, and student presentations

Calculation of the examination mark

Combination of continuous assessment (2 presentations and weekly participation, for 40% of total score) and periodical evaluation (oral exam, for 60% of the total score).

If different group members clearly show a different degree of input, then the final mark per student belonging to the same group can still differ.

The deadlines for the presentations must be respected. If not, a mark can be deducted from the total.

When the student obtains less than 10/20 for at least one of the components, they can no longer pass the course unit as a whole. If the total score does turn out to be a mark of ten or more out of twenty, this is reduced to the highest fail mark (9/20).

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:

- Possible exemption from educational activities requiring student attendance; tasks are imposed in substitution after discussion with the lecturer
- Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year
- Feedback can be given during an appointment during and after office hours

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy