

Refugees, Migrants, and Religion



Module Code: 008GR

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Term 1 - 30 credit 3rd year module (Geography)



What are we investigating in this module?

The intertwining of geographic movement of religions and the migrant/refugee bodies that carry them in both national and transnational contexts. The course is organised in three parts:

- The opening lectures question the secular/religious binary and ask what lived experiences of migration can tell us about religions. This opens up way of thinking how religions 'speak back' to knowledge produced by the social sciences anchored in a European tradition.
- Part two of the course focuses on the kinds of journeys undertaken - whether they are voluntary such as pilgrimages, or forced where the mobilisation of religious identities in projects of sectarianism can be a key trigger for mass displacement
- The final leg of the course takes in refugee and migrant centred perspectives. It explores issues around the securitisation of Muslims, faith based activism as a response to exclusionary border practices of nation-states, and the implications for religious identities as gendered roles are transformed and re-negotiated through migration and displacement.



What are we investigating in this module?

Here are some key questions:

How do refugees and migrants adapt their religious traditions in their host societies?

What space is there for religious plurality given states have long sought to foster religious homogeneity to unite their citizenry?

How do religious identity markers overlap with those of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, and sexuality in the context of power hierarchies and relations of inequality prevalent in host societies?



Learning aims and outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Summarise and explain key concepts while acknowledging that terms like “religion,” and “sacred space,” have histories and contain biases.
- understand and distinguish between different spatial approaches to the study of religion to better imagine the life of religious actors on the full range of geographical scales, from the local to the global.
- analyse and critically evaluate contemporary struggles and contestations over the role of religion in migratory processes.
- articulate how religious traditions and spaces are used in public debate to address issues of immigration and refugee movements.
- describe the religious dynamics of migration and experiences of refuge.



Assessments and Course Organisation

The course is organised over ten 3 hour workshops. The workshops will comprise of a lecture component and a seminar where discussion will be guided by the required readings for the week.

The assessment has two components:

- Portfolio assessment: Four (600 words) concept notes explaining key ideas. Students can choose four from ten concept notes they complete over the duration of the course. 40% weighting.
- Final essay (3000 words). 60% weighting.



Indicative readings

1. Levitt, P. (2003) “You know Abraham was really the first immigrant: religion and transnational migration”. *International Migration Review* 37(3): 847-873
2. Tweed, T.A. (2006), *Crossing and dwelling: A theory of religion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
3. Proctor, J. (2006.) Introduction: Theorizing and Studying Religion, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96:1, 165-168.
4. Asad, T. (2003). *Formations of the secular: Christianity, Islam, modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
5. L. Mavelli and E. Wilson (eds.) (2016.) *The refugee crisis and religion: secularism and hospitality in question*. Rowman and Littlefield.
6. Kong, L. (1990). *Geography and religion: Trends and prospects*. *Progress in Human Geography* 14 (3): 355–71.
7. Kong, L. (2001). Mapping “new” geographies of religion: Politics and poetics in modernity. *Progress in Human Geography* 25 (2): 211–33.
8. Hoskins, J. A. (2015), “What is a refugee religion? Exile exodus, and emigration in the Vietnamese diaspora”, in A. Horstman & J. H. Jung (eds.) *Building Noah’s ark for migrants, refugees and religious communities*