

Contexts, Sources and Methods for the Critical-Historical Research and Discussion of Religion

Organised by

Fondazione per le scienze religiose (FSCIRE) – Bologna/Palermo

Tangaza University College (TUC) – Nairobi

Kenyatta University (KU) – Nairobi

5 September-28 November 2024

1. General information

Duration: 13 weeks

Period: every Thursday from September 5th to November 28th

Week break: October 7th to 13th

Hours of teaching: 1.45 hrs. per week, from 2.30pm to 4.15 EAT/1.30pm to 3.15 (due to the switch to the standard time, after October 27th the CET time will be at 12.30am-2.15pm)

Virtual synchronic group activities: 1 hour every other week (exact time to be decided by each group)

Enrolment cost: free of charge

Online Platform: Zoom (the link of the meetings will be shared few days before the beginning of the course)

Contact person: Francesco Cargnelutti, cargnelutti@fscire.it

Parallel VE module: students interested in an introduction to the historical research on religion can participate in the seminar "Methodology of research in religious studies" (for more information on this see our website veread.org or email us info@veread.org)

2. Description/course purpose

The course provides participants with crucial skills to interpret the religious phenomena of the past and to understand the dynamics of the present with a view to foreseeable future developments. The lectures focus on the Eastern African context, its different religious traditions (Christianity, Islam, African Traditional Religion), and interreligious dialogue. Specific relevant subjects will be analyzed in depth and from a comparative as well as interdisciplinary point of view (African-European). In addition, the course will foster knowledge about the religion of the others, challenging the existing preconceptions and negative stereotypes and stimulating curiosity through the interactive exchange of ideas between East African and European students. Student-centered teaching and learning is the main focus of the course.

3. Course structure/modules

The specialization course consists of:

- **Three modules:** Module 1 – *How to study and research religion in Africa*; Module 2 – *Christianity and Islam*; Module 3 – *Interreligious dialogue, new religious movements and current issues*. In each module different case studies, their research methods/perspectives and sources will be discussed and analyzed by a lecturer.
- **Student-centered activities** (based on the Virtual Exchange Model) to promote intercultural and transnational discussion. The students will be divided in small international break-out groups, guided by a trained facilitator. These activities (such as sources analysis, debates, guided discussions) are a constitutive element of the seminar.

The VE activities are based on textual analysis.

Students' assignment: participants in the course are divided into small transnational groups. Within each group, two different texts are assigned to two sub-groups. In alternative, if the number of participants is not too consistent, each sub-group get the same text. As a diachronic activity, the two sub-groups will analyze and compare the two readings, further research the topic (searching for additional literature) and prepare a synthesis (where the main thesis of the author as well as critical points will be highlighted and questioned) to be presented at the beginning of the synchronic classes. The presentation of the groups' synthesis is followed by a discussion with all the participants in the course (based on question points that each group has previously shared with the other groups on a "handout").

Facilitators' task: they will support the groups in their diachronic as well as synchronic activities, setting a schedule for project work.

Lecturers' task: they will provide a couple of texts (depending on how many students we have) related to their specific lecture's topic and suitable to stimulate the discussion.

4. Expected learning outcomes

- Participants will become familiar with the main methodological steps to study religion from a critical-historical point of view;
- They will thus be able to identify the main tools and resources of academic research, to identify the relevant literature for their research topic, to access and analyze a variety of different sources (both written and oral), and to write their own essays and long papers;
- To strengthen this methodological training, students will also acquire a general knowledge of the main historiographical theories and theoretical framework;
- Students will become familiar with different aspects of african religious history and african religious Landscape;
- Finally, thanks to the different Virtual Exchanges activities implemented, students will enhance their critical thinking, acquire strong intercultural communication skills and improve their self-confidence.

5. Evaluation of the students

Participants will be evaluated on the basis of their active involvement in the activities and on the basis of their presentation. Moreover, each participant is required to write a paper on the content of the presentation. Students not enrolled in KU or TUC, will receive a participation certificate of attendance by FSCIRE.

6. Evaluation of the Specialization Course

A general evaluation of the course and its activities (through evaluation questionnaire and formative assessment) will be carried out by FSCIRE.

7. Course modules and content

Module 1 – *How to study and research religion in Africa*

- 5 September** *Introduction to the Specialization Course and to VEREAD* – Dr. **Iaria Macconi** (FSCIRE) and Dr. **Francesco Cargnelutti** (FSCIRE)
- 12 September** *How to define religion and history of religion?* – Dr **Radoslaw Malinowski** (Church History Department/Tangaza University College)
- 19 September** *Cultural Africa and the contemporary church* – Dr. **David Eliaona** (IRDIS/Tangaza University College)
- 26 September** *African spirituality and african traditional religion* – Fr. **Maganya H. Innocent** (IRDIS/Tangaza University College)

Module 2 – *Christianity and Islam*

- 3 October** *African instituted churches* – Prof. **Philomena Mwaura** (Kenyatta University)
- 17 October** *Vatican II and ecumenism: historical trajectory and research trends* – Prof. **Alberto Melloni** (FSCIRE and UNIMORE)
- 24 October** *History of islamic civilization* – **IRDIS**
- 31 October** *Shariah law* – Dr. **Newton Kahumbi Maina** (Kenyatta University)

Module 3 – *Interreligious dialogue, new religious movements and current issues*

- 7 November** *Introduction to interreligious dialogue* – Fr. **Felix Phiri** (IRDIS/Tangaza University College)
- 14 November** *History of christian-muslim Relations* – **IRDIS**
- 21 November** *Cultural issues and new religious movements* – Dr. **Zacharia Samita** (Kenyatta University)
- 28 November** *Women in the religious panorama of Africa* – Prof. **Philomena Mwaura**