Syllabus

Religions and Belief Systems of Taiwan
International Doctoral Program in Asia-Pacific Studies
(other students accepted with permission)

David Blundell, Ph.D.

This course is about exploring the religions and belief systems of Taiwan as an overview with specific case studies from perspectives drawn from the anthropology and sociology of religion.

Our journey begins with a theoretical foundation in the study of belief systems. Once we savor what theology and cross-cultural studies offer for the understanding of religions and beliefs, the course will examine the earliest belief systems in Taiwan for prehistory to the ethnographic present. The course is divided into sections (each section of two or three weeks) based on theoretical perspectives and historical chronologies.

Requirements and course activities include keeping a weekly notebook, participating in outings, taking a quiz, and writing a term paper. Most readings will be supplied.

Tuesday’s Seminar Calendar, Spring 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Theme Topic</th>
<th>Preview / Homework / Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>2. 19</td>
<td>Postponed first class meeting</td>
<td>Plan for make up, MWR</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. 26</td>
<td>Welcome / introduction</td>
<td>About yourself</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. 05</td>
<td>What are belief systems?</td>
<td>Your thoughts for discussion</td>
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<td>3. 12</td>
<td>Anthropology of religions</td>
<td>World-wide beliefs, heritage of Asia</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. 19</td>
<td>Religions in Taiwan from China</td>
<td>What are systems of belief (religions)?</td>
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<td>3. 26</td>
<td>Islam – population and mosques</td>
<td>Extent of Islam in Taiwan</td>
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<td>4. 02</td>
<td>Indigenous beliefs</td>
<td>Film: Amis Hip Hop</td>
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<td>4. 09</td>
<td>18 deity kings, dog temple</td>
<td>Guest speaker, Igor</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. 16</td>
<td>Sources from nature</td>
<td>Animism, guest speaker, Chris</td>
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<td>4. 23</td>
<td>Buddhism and Japanese period</td>
<td>Review</td>
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<td>4. 30</td>
<td>Mid-term exam</td>
<td>To be taken in class</td>
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<td>5. 07</td>
<td>Christian missionary</td>
<td>Spanish/Dutch to Dr Mackay / KMT</td>
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<td>5. 14</td>
<td>New beliefs in Taiwan</td>
<td>Our contemporary beliefs</td>
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<td>5. 21</td>
<td>Academia Sinica</td>
<td>Institute of Ethnology Museum</td>
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<td>5. 28</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Review session</td>
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<td>6. 04</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. 11</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
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Scores are based on (1) attendance and participation 20%, (2) mid-term 30%, (3) group or individual final presentation 30%, (4) notebook 20%. 
Section One
In the first weeks, philosophical academic studies of religions are explored and analyzed in the context of their social, political, and ideological roles from selections of Edward Tylor, James Frazer, Émil Durkheim, and Mircea Eliade. Charles Sanders Peirce’s work sets the tone for comprehension of semiotics. Edmond Leach presents his “Time and False Noses” in Rethinking Anthropology concerning sacred and profane social occasions. This leads to Mary Douglas with her Purity and Danger. Works of Clifford Geertz and Jacques Maquet are presented in terms of symbolic and aesthetic orientation in cultural systems. The instructor will prepare these materials and other writings for the class. Students are encouraged to share their own selected readings to share.

Section Two
Once having a footing in religion studies, the class explores beliefs from Taiwan prehistory such as the Megalith. This introduces the concepts of animism that existed across Eurasia from earliest times. Ancient sacred sites in Taiwan point to a spread of connections with other megalith and dolmen cultures existing in Korea, Japan, Siberia, etc. Books selections from Sacred Places: Prehistory and Popular Imagination by Bob Trubshaw, and other works will be prepared for the class.

Section Three
In the past few millennia, history metal age influences bring waves of beliefs brought by traders and immigrate groups. Taoism is introduced as a belief system important to the island brought by incoming Chinese people during the past 400 years. The philosophical and functional meanings of Taoism are traced through writings and practices in Taiwan.

Section Four
Introduction to Christian (Protestant and Catholic), Islamic, Buddhist systems and others are brought in as they appear with various settlements in Taiwan. For example Buddhism arrived as a component of Taoism, became its own religion brought in by imperial Japan, with mainland immigration in the 1940s to became rekindled and transformed from lineage masters of China and Tibet. Christianity introduced some of the first written texts in Taiwan and over the past 400 hundred years created a viable layer of beliefs in Taiwan. Islam came from Southeast Asia as it spread from there, mainland immigration in 1949, and with Arabian diplomacy in the 1960s. These forms of religion are discussed, as they are manifest in Taiwan.

Section Five
With the lifting of martial law in Taiwan a resurgence of beliefs flourished in the population including modern new age, indigenous revival, and new aspects of established religions, such as engaged and socially activist orientated groups including volunteerism and environmentalism. These strands of contemporary religions in Taiwan will be viewed in terms of daily experiences manifest in society.
Selected Readings:

Blundell, David
1984 Stone and water. Bulletin of the Department of Anthropology, National Taiwan University, 44:71-78.

Clart, Philip, Charles B. Jones

Douglas, Mary

Durkheim, Émile

Eliade, Mircea

Frazer, James

Geertz, Clifford

Hoskins, Janet

Jones, Charles Brewer

Jordan, David K.
Katz, Paul R.

Kilborne, Benjamin, and L.L. Langness, eds.

Leach, Edmund

Lin, Wei-ping
2009 Local history through popular religion: Place, people and their narratives in Taiwan. Asian Anthropology 8: 1-30.

Lopez, Donald S., Jr. ed.

Maquet, Jacques

Needham, Rodney

Nadeau, Randall, and Chang Hsun

Prattis, Ian J.

Sangren, P. Steven

Sutton, Donald
Tao, Hung-Lin and Powen Yeh

Trubshaw, Bob

Tsai, Wen-hui

Tylor, George
1871 *Primitive Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.