

Religion in Contemporary Nordic Countries (7,5 ECTS credits)

Level: 1st cycle

Discipline: THEOLOGY (Theological Studies in Culture and Society)

Course ID: 0411

Admission requirements

General admission requirements for university studies. Students taking part in the course as a part of their Bachelor's degree program must have completed Course A, Introduction in Philosophy and Theology (30 ECTS credits). Students taking part in the course as a freestanding course are expected to have corresponding prior knowledge.

Educational goals

After completing the course, the student is expected to be able to:

- Give an account of central features of the religious landscape in the Nordic countries.
- Describe and compare how religious practices are shaped by social, political, and historical conditions in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland.
- Demonstrate the ability to critically reflect on religious change, secularization, and pluralism in the Nordic context.
- Apply basic ethnographic and theoretical tools to the study of lived religion in contemporary society.
- Show the ability to communicate observations and analysis in a structured and academically grounded form.

Course content

The contemporary religious landscape of the Nordic countries – Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and Iceland – has undergone significant transformations in recent decades. These countries share a historical background in Lutheran Christianity and a strong welfare-state model, but recent decades have seen increased pluralism, immigration, spiritual experimentation, and changing church-state relations. The course uses case studies and ethnographic materials to explore religious expressions in the Nordic context, including Lutheranism, Catholicism, Orthodoxy, Pentecostalism, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, New Age movements, and Nordic Neopaganism. The course will also examine theories of secularization and lived religion, focusing on how religion functions in societies often seen as “secular.”

Teaching and examination

Instruction will consist of lectures, online discussion forums and seminars at the two mandatory full-day meetings. Examination will be in the form of weekly written reflections, active participation, a presentation and a final paper (5–7 pages), the latter of which will be the basis for the course grade (100%).

Bibliography

Furseth, Inger & Calhoun, Craig J, *Religious complexity in the public sphere : comparing Nordic countries*, 1st ed. 2018 edition. ed. (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017) (selected chapters)

Tweed, Thomas A, *Crossing and dwelling: a theory of religion* (Cambridge, Mass. ; Harvard University Press, 2006) (selected chapters)

Additional book chapters and articles provided digitally (around 200 pages in total).

Supplementary videos and ethnographic clips.

See also "Kursplaner: allmänna bestämmelser" (Course plans: General rules)

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Valid as 2025-08-15