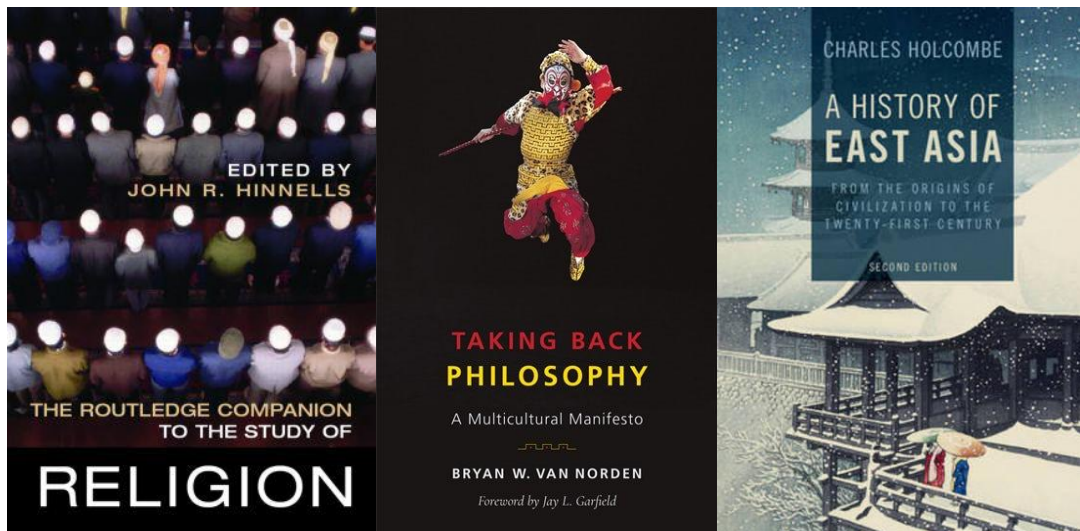


Department of Religious Studies: suggested pre-reading

The Department of Religious Studies offers degree programmes which explore core questions of Religious Studies and a unique opportunity to understand religions and other lived philosophies in global perspective. Our department is home to three subject areas: Asian Studies, Global Philosophies and Religious Studies.

Below, you'll find some highly recommended and reasonably priced pre-reads.



Asian Studies

Recommended book:

Holcombe, Charles. *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty First Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

“Introduction to East Asian Traditions” is the core module for Asian Studies during the first term. Charles Holcombe’s *A History of East Asia* starts with a discussion on how to understand “East Asia” as a cultural sphere. We’ll discuss this chapter in detail during the first week of class. Holcombe’s book provides excellent historical background information on China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

Global Philosophies

Recommended book:

Van Norden, Bryan. *Taking Philosophy Back: A Multicultural Manifesto*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2017.

Comparative philosophy is a hot topic. Yet, there are still scholars who question the existence of philosophy in non-Western parts of the globe. Bryan Van Norden wrote a compelling book about the need to take non-Western philosophy seriously. Van Norden is an expert in Chinese philosophy and draws on many examples from Asian philosophical traditions.

This book is also highly recommended for Asian Studies students and Religious Studies students interested in non-Western philosophy.

Religious Studies

Recommended book:

Hinnells, John (ed.). *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2005.

In the first week of the core module “What is Religion?” we’ll reflect on the question “why study religions”?

To give you a taster of the kind of texts we’ll discuss during the seminars, have a look at John Hinnells’s introductory chapter: “Why Study Religions?” in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* (pp. 5-20). You can find a link to this chapter in your welcome email.

Read the chapter and try to answer the following questions:

1. Why is it, according to the author, important to study religions? Do you agree? Are there other reasons why it is important to study religion, not mentioned in the text?
2. What is the difference between “religious studies” and “theology”?
3. What are the advantages and disadvantages of inside and outside perspectives for the study of religion?
4. Can you find more information about the author, John Hinnells (maybe through a search on the internet)? What was his specific field of expertise? How does he relate to his own research in this introductory chapter on “Why study religions?”
5. Max Müller famously stated: ‘He who knows one knows none’. (Quoted by Hinnells on page 14) What does Müller mean and why does Hinnells agree? Hinnells does not give any background information about Müller. Can you find more information about him? What was Müller’s importance in the history of religious studies?

The other chapters in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion* provide good gateways into the various (sub)fields of Religious Studies.