

COURSE DETAIL

HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

Country

Netherlands

Host Institution

Maastricht University - University College Maastricht

Program(s)

University College Maastricht

UCEAP Course Level

Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)

Sociology History

UCEAP Course Number

102

UCEAP Course Suffix**UCEAP Official Title**

HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

UCEAP Transcript Title

HIST SPIRITUALITY

UCEAP Quarter Units

6.00

UCEAP Semester Units

4.00

Course Description

This course delves into the sociological-historical contexts of non-institutionalized ideologies at the inter-cultural and inter-disciplinary crossroads of eastern and western religious, philosophical, psychological, and scientific discourses in modern western cultures. It focuses on alternative beliefs and practices of eastern and western charismatic leaders and new religious movements—popularly referred to as "spiritual teachers" or "gurus" and "cults"—in Europe and North America, after 1800. This includes Ralph Waldo Emerson's American Transcendentalism, Helena Blavatsky's Theosophy, Phineas Quimby's New Thought, Vivekananda's Neo-Hinduism, D.T. Suzuki's Neo-Buddhism, Inayat Khan's Neo-Sufism, Count Keyserling's Darmstadt School, C.G. Jung's Eranos Circle and various New Age movements. Students critically reflect on such alternative quests for meaning outside conventional sciences and religions. In doing so, they learn more about post-Enlightenment responses to the "age of reason," post-colonial encounters between eastern and western traditions in a globalizing world, and post-modern blends of methods and theories from different academic and societal domains, which have culminated in a growing cultic milieu of seekers across modern western cultures. Seekers are individuals who collectively identify as spiritual, but not religious. During this course, students reflect on questions such as: Why have so many seekers in modern western cultures turned away from conventional western religions and sciences? Why are they turning to eastern and alternative western traditions instead? How are they selectively combining eastern and western methods and theories into new sources of meaning? What combinations have we seen in the recent past and which ones do we see around today?

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number

HUM2058

Host Institution Course Title

HISTORY OF CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

Host Institution Course Details

<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/file/course-catalogue-2025-2026pdf>

Host Institution Campus

Maastricht University

Host Institution Faculty

University College Maastricht

Host Institution Degree

Host Institution Department

Humanities

Course Last Reviewed

2025-2026

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