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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