Welcome to the course. This Canvas site is your guide through twelve sessions on religion as rebellion, resistance, counter-power and social critique.



About Rebel Religion and the course

From times of mythology and ancient Greece, Rome and Judaism, to the secularism and late modernity of the 20th and 21st centuries, religious individuals and groups have rebelled against established religious systems, and political leaders, governments and established society.

Rebellion appears at the very genesis of many religions, both ancient and modern, and it continues to mark moments of transformation in states and societies. We see it today as well, from the exile of the Dalai Lama, to upheavals in Europe, the US, and in the Middle East. Rebellion – against established religious, political and social structures – seems a key driver of the history of religion itself, past and present.

We may agree or disagree with the rebels, but their actions carry important lessons on the dynamics of power, resistance and change. Authorities tend to respond by defending the status quo with increased control and security, while oppositional groups develop new forms of organisation and protest.

In this course, we explore religion as a form of counter-power and social critique. Studying religious rebellion offers students a unique outsider's perspective on religion, society, and politics, and helps us understand some of the key tensions that shape the modern world.

We begin by examining the myths, histories, and ideas that frame movements of religious resistance. We then analyse recurring patterns in religious conflict and innovation, showing how similar structures appear across different contexts, often in new and surprising ways. In the second part of the course, we focus on conflicts that continue to influence global politics and culture today.

Learning objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:
- Identify key cases of religious rebellion in history and in the modern world.
- Analyse the social, political, and theological significance of religious rebellion.
- Discuss theories and methods relevant to rebellion, revolution, ritual, liminality, authority, society and end of times in relation to concrete case studies.
- Critically reflect on the role of religion as counter-power in shaping societies past and present.

In this course, you will gain a broad understanding of how religion can be understood as a force of rebellion, resistance, and counter-power across historical periods and in the contemporary world. Through analyses of cases from ancient uprisings to modern activist movements, you will develop the theoretical and methodological skills needed to identify patterns of religious rebellion and interpret their social, political, and theological motivations.

The course draws on theories of rebellion, ritual, and liminality, as well as perspectives from sociology, anthropology, and political theory. We will train these approaches through in-class discussions, written assignments and creative outputs (podcasts, videocast etc.) This gives you considerable freedom to explore the cases that interest you most, provided you engage critically with the theoretical frameworks and offer your own analytical reflections.

By the end of the course, you will be well equipped to analyze how religion functions as a form of counter-power, to understand its role in shaping societies past and present, and to apply the concepts developed in class beyond the specific cases of religious rebellion.

Auditorium at UCPH:

The auditorium is at UCPH South Campus, Karen Blixens Vej 16, 2300 København.

Easiest public transport is metro to "Islands Brygge" Station. From there, 3 minutes into the Campus buildings.

The auditorium is **KUA3 - 7C.1.19** which means building 7, section C, one flight up, room number 19.

Static map - look for building 7C in the grey

Google maps - pin for exact location

Course Content (Modules):

Jan Loop as course responsible:

1st Session: Foundational Myths of Rebellion (25 August)

2nd Session: Moses the Liberator (1 September)

3rd Session: Jesus the Radical (15 September)

4th Session: Muhammad the Revolutionary (22 September)

5th Session: Rejection of the Temporal World (29 September)

6th Session: Reforming the World (13 October)

Niels Valdemar Vinding as course responsible:

7th Session: Dangerous Dissidence (20 October)

8th Session: World Wars and Religious Resistance (27 October)

9th Session: The Wretched of the Earth (10 November)

10th Session: Religious and Political Terror (17 November)

11th Session: Religious Rebels in the 20th and 21st Centuries (24 November)

12th Session: Religious Rebellion in a Global World (1 December)

Course Instructions:

A. How this course works:

1. **Before class:** Read primary sources, complete the guiding questions, and submit a short preparation task, if one is defined.
2. **In class:** Work with texts, concepts and cases through discussion, debate and group analysis.
3. **After class:** Consolidate the session and connect it to your essay or creative project.
4. **Papers**: Draw your observations and reflections together in the two paper assignments for this class.

B. Course syllabus and bibliography:

- Reed, Jean-Pierre, and Warren S. Goldstein. "**An Introduction to the Critical Study of Religion in Rebellions, Revolutions, and Social Movements**." Religion in Rebellions, Revolutions, and Social Movements. Routledge, 2022. 1-27. (This gives a nice vocabulary, but be critical of the critical theory of religion ...)
- Blickle, Peter. 1981. “Reformation Theology and Revolutionary Practice.” In The Revolution of 1525: The German Peasants’ War from a New Perspective, 155–161. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jenkins, Philip. 2007. “Religion, Repression, and Rebellion.” The Review of Faith & International Affairs 5 (1): 3–11.
- Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2008. Global Rebellion: Religious Challenges to the Secular State, from Christian Militias to Al Qaeda. Vol. 16. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Lincoln, Bruce. 1985. “Notes toward a Theory of Religion and Revolution.” In Religion, Rebellion, Revolution: An Interdisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Collection of Essays, 266–292. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Camus, Albert. **The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt**. (L'Homme révolté). 1951

C. Assignments and grading:

Attendance (10%) and active participation (20%) is part of the overall grade.

- Roll call 10%
- Participation 20%
- Assignment 1: 30%
- Assignment 2: 40%

Six smaller participation exercises are to be uploaded throughout the semester.

Participation Exercise 1: Moses reflection (3rd September)

Participation Exercise 2: Muhammed reflection (24th September)

Participation Exercise 3: Reformation reflection (15th October)

Participation Exercise 4: World War and Resistance reflection (29th October)

Participation Exercise 5: Religious Terror reflection (19th November)

Participation Exercise 6: Gender, Climate and Conspiracy reflection (3rd December)

Two larger assignments will be given during the class:

Assignment 1: “The Religious World as a World Apart”. Deadline is 22 October 2026 at 11:59 PM
As a written essay, analyse and discuss one or more of the following key pairs of concepts as part of grasping the world view of ancient and early modern rebel religions: “Order and chaos”, “Power and counter-power”, “Authority and authenticity”, “Theology and politics”, “Rebels as heroes and/or prophets”, “Utopia or apocalypse”.

Assignment 2: “Religious Rebellion in a Global World”. Deadline is 8 December 2026 at 11:59 PM
In a Podcast, Videocast, Interview, Website entry (on Canvas) or similar, explore and discuss contemporary or future rebellions and reflect on the role that religion plays in them.

Session 1: Foundational myths of rebellion (25 August)

Class outline 1: Foundational myths of rebellion (25 August)

An Introduction to the Critical Study of Religion in Rebellions, Revolutions, and Social Movements_26_01_21_05_20_30.pdf

Session 2: Moses the Liberator (1 September)

Class outline 2: Moses the Liberator (1 September)

Participation Exercise 1

3. Sep3 point

Session 3: Jesus the Radical (15 September)

Class outline 3: Jesus the Radical (15 September)

Session 4: Muhammed the Revolutionary (22 September)

Class outline 4: Muhammed the Revolutionary (22 September)

Participation Exercise 2

24. Sep3 point

Session 5: Rejection of the Temporal World (29 September)

Class outline 5: Rejection of the Temporal World (29 September)

Session 6: Reforming the World (13 October)

Class outline 6: Reforming the World (13 October)

Participation Exercise 3
15. Okt4 point

Session 7: Dangerous Dissidence (20 October)

Class outline 7: Dangerous Dissidence (20 October)

Edmund Campion's "Challenge to the Privy Council" 1580 [Brag]

Cavanaugh, 1995: A fire Strong Enough to Consume the House

Rose, 2020: Dissent and the state: Persecution and toleration

CulturalSurvivalRadicalHope.pdf

John Winthrop - Model of Christian Charity.pdf

Auken on State of Exception in Law & Religion in the 21st 2010.pdf

Session 8: World Wars and Religious Resistance (27 October)

Class outline 8: World Wars and Religious Resistance (27 October)

Bonhoeffer 1933.pdf

Participation Exercise 4
29. Okt3 point

Session 9: The Wretched of the Earth (10 November)

Class outline 9: The Wretched of the Earth (10 November)

FANON_On_Violence.pdf

Session 10: Religious and Political Terror (17 November)

Class outline 10: Religious and Political Terror (17 November)

Participation Exercise 5
19. Nov3 point

Session 11: Religious Rebels Behind Bars (24 November)

Class outline 11: Religious Rebels - Behind Bars (24 November)

Break Every Yoke - Religion, Justice, and the Abolition ... by Joshua Dubler & Vincent W Lloyd, Oxford, 2019.pdf

"All America Is a Prison": The Nation of Islam and the Politicization of African American Prisoners, 1955–1965

Session 12: Religious Rebels Today – Gender, Climate and Conspiracy (1 December)

Class outline 12: Religious Rebels Today – Gender, Climate and Conspiracy (1 December)

Participation Exercise 6
3. Dec4 point

Helpful information for University of Copenhagen Online

Absalon semester start guide! Create frontpage, change navigation menu, import from a course ect.

Absalon help for students - see your Study Page at KUnet

Getting started with Absalon - for teachers

Books and journals for your study from Copenhagen University Library