

Management of Religious Diversity

Code: 44041
ECTS Credits: 6

2025/2026

Degree	Type	Year
Social Policy, Employment and Welfare	OT	0

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Teachers

Maria Esther Fernandez Mostaza

Teaching groups languages

You can view this information at the [end](#) of this document.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites.

Objectives and Contextualisation

The persistent religious visibility in the contemporary public sphere requires the analysis of how religions manifest in urban space. This course critically examines the relationship between religion, politics and city, focusing on the territorialization of religious diversity and the challenges of its inclusive public management. Being three the great axes:

The complex relationship between gender and religion in public space constitutes a fundamental axis. Religious norms about the body and clothing are analyzed, their interaction with equality policies, negotiations about bodily religious symbols in public institutions, and conflicts around religious practices that involve the body (halal/kosher food, ritual modifications, births and deaths).

Migratory movements reconfigure religious urban landscapes, creating new urban religious geographies. The relationship between migrations and religion generates challenges for the accommodation of confessional diversity in cities, connecting local dynamics with global processes of political and social transformation. In that sense, the course also addresses the emergence of new forms of religiosity and their manifestation in urban space. The religious appropriation of public space through festivals, processions and celebrations is examined.

Finally, it analyzes how public institutions manage religious diversity in the institutional framework: education, health, funeral services and prisons, considering accommodation strategies that respect religious freedom and equality principles.

In short, the approach is interdisciplinary that combines theoretical reflection with applied ethnographic work, including analysis of institutional protocols and case studies.

Competences

- Design, implement and evaluate social policies and processes for resource redistribution and improvement of citizens' welfare, in different contexts and from a European perspective.
- Recognise the main economic, political, social and cultural transformations of complex societies in order to analyse the fundamental challenges they pose to equality and welfare.
- To apply the gender approach in the analysis of the relationship among labour market, cares and social inequality.
- Use and manage bibliography and IT resources in the field of study.

Learning Outcomes

1. Analyse the challenges posed by religious diversification to the design of public policies and models for community life.
2. Identify gender as one of the main social relations that shape the management of diversity.
3. Identify public policy's dilemmas, challenges and main characteristics when decisions are taken on social intervention in the area of management of religious diversity in Europe.
4. Use and manage bibliography and IT resources in the field of study.

Content

The course is structured around three axes, each of which develops a set of specific topics detailed below.

1. Rethinking religion
 - a. What is religion?
 - b. Theoretical debates around religion
 - c. Conceptual clarification
 - d. The "invention" of religion
2. Transformations of the religious landscape today
 - a. Secularization, pluralism, and globalization
 - b. Believing in the diaspora: migration, gender and socialization
 - c. New forms of spirituality: the body and the sense in dispute
3. Managing religion? Dilemmas and opportunities
 - a. Local management of diversity. Challenges and experiences of urban governance
 - b. Accommodation to public institutions: prisons, hospitals, and educational centers

Activities and Methodology

Title	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Type: Directed			
Team work	35	1.4	1, 2, 3, 4
Theoretical sessions	35	1.4	1, 2, 3, 4
Type: Supervised			
Ethnographic Lab	20	0.8	2, 3, 4

The methodology of this subject combines different didactic strategies to favor meaningful and participatory learning about the management of religious diversity.

Methodological strategies

- (a) Master classes taught by the faculty responsible for the subject and specialized international speakers, oriented to the presentation of the central concepts of religious diversity management and international comparative cases. Two master conferences by international experts in religious diversity policies and institutional management will be given.
- (b) Participatory workshops that combine theoretical learning with analysis of institutional practical cases. In this area, Theater of the Oppressed (A. Boal) will be deployed in a prominent way as an innovative teaching methodology, a transformative pedagogical strategy that allows students to explore situations of conflict and negotiation in the management of religious diversity through critical theatrical practice and institutional role-playing.
- (c) Ethnographic fieldwork with three programmed outings: (1) a participant observation of a procession in public space to analyze religious visibility and municipal management; (2) a visit to the Office of Religious Affairs of the Barcelona City Council and diverse worship centers to learn about local management policies; and (3) a visit to the Poblenou cemetery to examine the management of religious diversity in funeral services and memory spaces.
- (d) Practical exercises based on the lessons taught and on the assigned readings (they will be given during the course and will be mandatory reading), which consolidate theoretical learning through the analysis of study cases.

Development of formative activities

Temporal distribution (8 sessions of 4 hours)

Session 1: Theoretical foundations on religious diversity Session 2: First field outing - Procession in public space Sessions 3-4: Transformations of the religious landscape and normative frameworks Session 5: Second field outing - Office of Religious Affairs and worship centers Session 6: Institutional management models and international conferences Session 7: Third field outing - Poblenou Cemetery Session 8: Synthesis, evaluation and final presentations.

*The dates of the outings may suffer variations that will be communicated with sufficient advance notice.

Master classes and conferences

The theoretical sessions actively promote student participation through questions for debate and critical discussion about ethical and practical dilemmas in institutional management. Visual thinking will be implemented as a learning tool through:

- Elaboration of mental maps to structure religious diversity management models
- Creation of type cases as a strategy for understanding complex institutional situations
- Visual analysis of existing institutional protocols

Participatory workshops

The workshops constitute collaborative work spaces on real situations of religious diversity management, starting from the theoretical classes, field outings and assigned readings. They are structured in three specific dynamics:

1. Debates in "Professional round table" format, if possible with a guest teacher.
2. Institutional simulations through Theater Forum pieces (approximately 10 minutes) that recreate conflict situations in public institutions, allowing active participation of the group in the search for solutions and management alternatives.
3. Integrative group work that develops:
 - o Management protocol proposal for a specific institution
 - o Critical reflection around theatrical and field experiences

Ethnographic fieldwork

First outing - Procession in public space: Participant observation of a religious procession (The Lord of Miracles in L'Hospitalet) to analyze the occupation of public space, municipal management of the event, citizen participation dynamics and negotiation processes between religious communities and local administration.

Second outing - Office of Religious Affairs and worship centers: Visit to the Office of Religious Affairs of the Barcelona City Council to learn firsthand about municipal policies for managing religious diversity, followed by visits to different worship centers (to choose between: mosque, Buddhist temple, evangelical church) to observe the diversity of religious spaces and their urban integration strategies.

Third outing - Poblenou Cemetery: Exploration of the cemetery as a space for managing post-mortem religious diversity, analyzing the organization of confessional spaces, diverse funeral protocols, management of differentiated rituals and challenges of interreligious coexistence in the field of death and mourning.

Annotation: Within the schedule set by the centre or degree programme, 15 minutes of one class will be reserved for students to evaluate their lecturers and their courses or modules through questionnaires.

Assessment

Continuous Assessment Activities

Title	Weighting	Hours	ECTS	Learning Outcomes
Ethnography Lab	50	20	0.8	2, 3, 4
Exam	40	30	1.2	1, 2, 3
Oral Presentation	10	10	0.4	1, 2, 3, 4

Evaluation System

The evaluation of the subject is structured around three learning evidences that integrate theoretical knowledge, practical competencies and critical reflection skills developed throughout the course:

Evidence 1: Individual (40% of final grade)

Reflective ethnographic diary: Elaboration of a personal field diary that documents two of the three field outings carried out, integrating ethnographic observations, theoretical analysis and personal critical reflection. The

diary must include photographs, visual schemes, informal interviews and a comparative synthesis of the three contexts observed from a religious diversity management perspective. Extension: 3,000-4,000 words.

Evidence 2: Group (50% of final grade)

Institutional protocol proposal: Collaborative design of a religious diversity management protocol for a specific public institution (hospital, educational center, prison or funeral home), based on the theoretical contents of the course, field observations and international good practices presented by invited speakers. The proposal must include: needs diagnosis, reference normative framework, specific procedures, staff training and evaluation mechanisms.

Evidence 3: Mixed (10% of final grade): Oral presentation of 8 minutes through Theater Forum representation.

Active participation and co-evaluation: Continuous evaluation of participation in debates and classroom activities, including the quality of interventions in debates, involvement in theatrical dynamics and collaborative work capacity.

Transversal evaluation criteria:

- Capacity for critical analysis and application of theoretical frameworks
- Ethnographic observation competencies and contextual analysis
- Collaborative work skills and effective communication
- Sensitivity towards religious diversity and gender perspective
- Creativity in the application of participatory methodologies
- Academic rigor and synthesis capacity

Bibliography

Reference Bibliography

Open Access Articles

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Burchardt, Marian. (2019). Religion in urban assemblages: space, law, and power. *Religion, State and Society*, 47(4-5): 374-389. [Open Access]

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Khan, Rabea M. (2022). Speaking "religion" through a gender code: The discursive power and gendered-racial implications of the religious label. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 15(2). [Open Access]

Knott, Kim et al. (2016). Iconic Religion in Urban Space. *Culture and Religion*, 17(2): 123-145. [Open Access]

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Urciuoli, Emiliano R. (2023). Urban religion beyond the city: theory and practice of a specific constellation of religious geography-making. *Social & Cultural Geography*. [Open Access]

Verkaaik, Oskar. (2023). Designing Interreligious Encounters: Space, Materiality, and Media in Berlin's House of One. *Culture and Religion*, 24(2). [Open Access]

Complementary Bibliography

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Griera, Mar; Martínez-Ariño, Julia; Clot-Garrell, Anna, & Garcia-Romeral, Gloria. (2015). Religión e instituciones públicas en España. Hospitales y prisiones en perspectiva comparada. *Revista internacional de sociología*, 73(3).

Griera, Mar. (2017). Yoga in penitentiary settings: Transcendence, spirituality, and self-improvement. *Human Studies*, 40(1): 77-100.

Levitt, Peggy. (2003). "You know, Abraham was really the first immigrant": Religion and transnational migration. *International Migration Review*, 37(3): 847-873.

Mahmood, S. (2011). *Politics of piety: The Islamic revival and the feminist subject*. Princeton University Press.

Martínez-Ariño, Julia. (2017). Conceptualising the role of cities in the governance of religious diversity in Europe. *Current Sociology*: 1-18.

Specific (digital) ad hoc bibliography will be provided to develop the course work, once students have participated in the Laboratories and chosen the topic.

Software

There is no specific one.

Groups and Languages

Please note that this information is provisional until 30 November 2025. You can check it through this [link](#). To consult the language you will need to enter the CODE of the subject.

Name	Group	Language	Semester	Turn
(TEM) Theory (master)	1	Spanish	first semester	afternoon