Religious Studies 726  
*Topics in Chinese Religions: Chinese Religions in Literature and Performance*  
McMaster University, Term II 2017–18  
[last revised: December 18, 2018]

Wilson Hall 1013  
Tuesdays 1:30–3:30pm

**Instructor—Dr. James A. Benn**  
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*Office hours*—Tuesdays, 12:00–1:00, or by appointment

**Course Description**  
In this seminar we shall explore representations of Chinese religions, both institutional (e.g. Buddhism and Daoism) and informal, in Chinese literature and performance (theatre, Chinese opera, etc.) We will read recent scholarship on the topic as well as representative examples of the literature in translation. The focus will mostly be on premodern times, although we will look at some contemporary examples. All readings are in English.

This course was designed in consultation with Dr. Katherine Alexander of University of Colorado Boulder. I acknowledge her generous sharing of her expertise and her kind assistance.

Students will be introduced to the use of specialised research tools for the study of Chinese religions, such as dictionaries, concordances, indices and databases.

**Course Requirements**  
You should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. I will assign students to lead the discussion of each reading (NB. “discussion” does not mean “summary”). The other requirement is a 20–25 page research paper which will be due on Friday April 20. You must turn in a proposal and annotated bibliography for that paper on February 13. A first draft of the paper is due on March 27. You will give an oral presentation of your research on Tuesday April 10.

Class presentations and participation: 20%  
Seminar Paper: 80%

**Books and other resources**  
I have ordered copies of the following books from *The Campus Store* and/or placed them on reserve in the library:


In addition to these books we shall also read articles and book chapters that I may distribute to you electronically, or which I may ask you to photocopy.

**NB.** You should also know that you have unlimited access through McMaster’s libraries to important online dictionaries for East Asian and Buddhist terms: http://www.buddhism-dict.net/

1. January 9
   Introduction and Organisation

2. January 16
   Thinking about Chinese Religions in Literature and Performance


3. January 23
   Baojuan I
   *Personal Salvation and Filial Piety: Two Precious Scroll Narratives of Guanyin and Her Acolytes.*
4. January 30
   Baojuan II
   Escape from Blood Pond Hell

5. February 6
   Baojuan and Religion


6. February 13
   ***Proposal and annotated bibliography due***
   Social Context of Ritual Opera
   *Ritual Opera and Mercantile Lineage*

7. February 20
   Reading Week
   No class meeting

8. February 27
   Gods and their Stories
   *Oedipal God* Part I

9. March 6
   Gods and their stories II
   *Oedipal God* Part II

10. March 13
    Daoism, demons, the novel I
    *Demonic Warfare* Part I

11. March 20
    Daoism, demons, the novel II
    *Demonic Warfare* Part II
12. March 27
***First Draft of Paper due***
Performance today
*Daoist Priests of the Li Family Part I*

13. April 3
Performance today
*Daoist Priests of the Li Family Part II*

14. April 10

Research Presentations