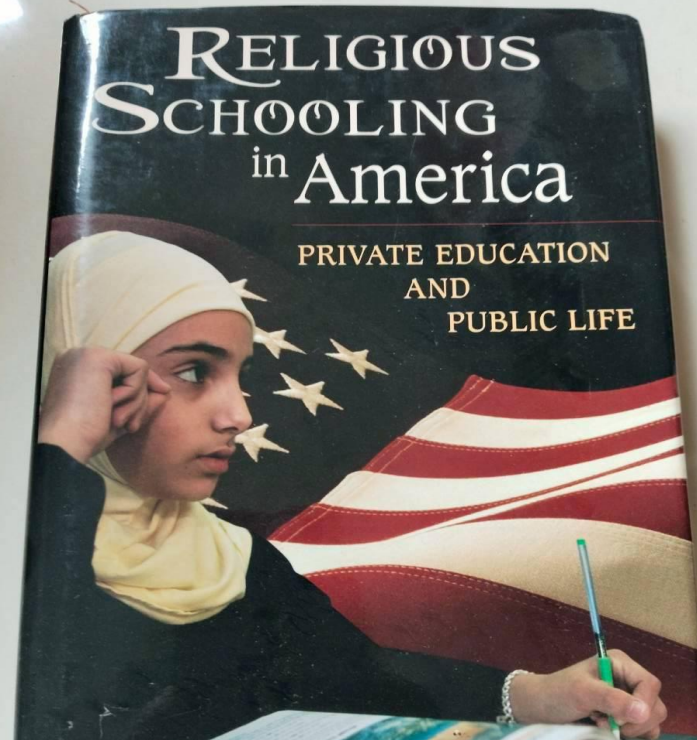
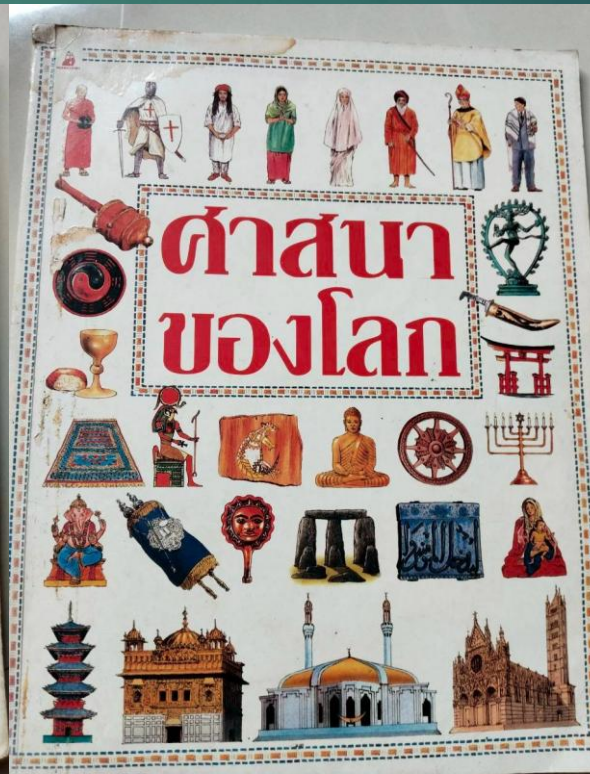
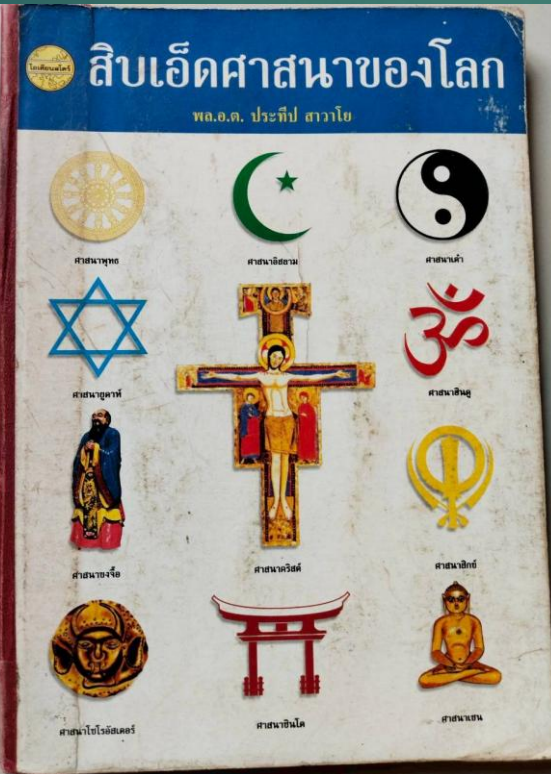
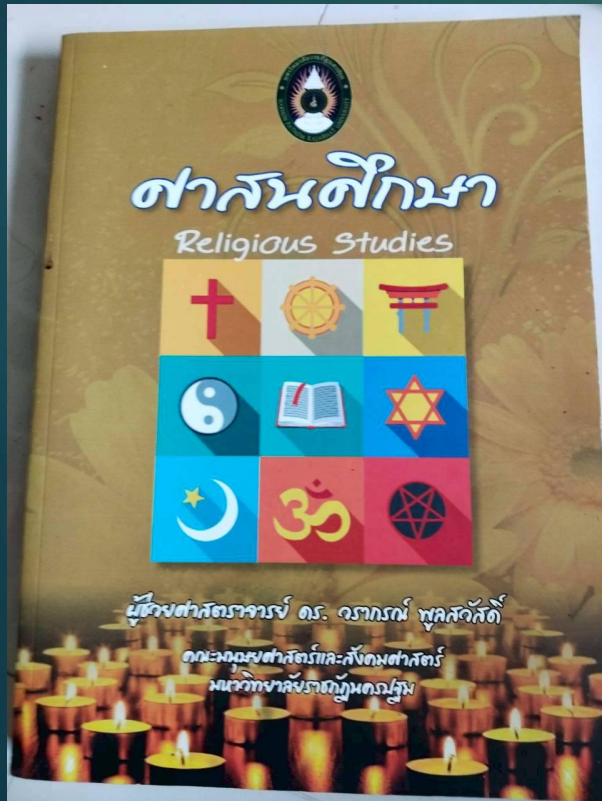




รายวิชา: ศาสนาสากล (World Religion)

ผู้สอน: ผศ.ดร.วรากรณ์ พูลสวัสดิ์

สังกัด: สาขาวิชาสังคมศึกษา คณะมนุษยศาสตร์และสังคมศาสตร์
มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏนครปฐม



Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study of Religion and World Religions

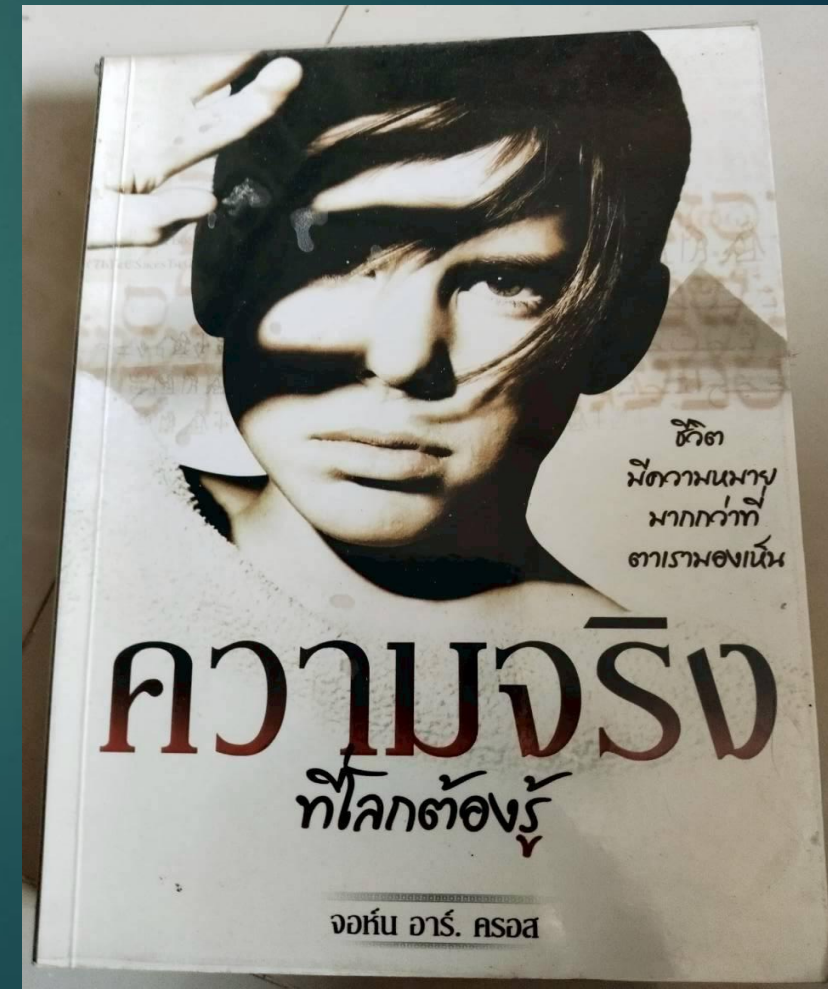


- ▶ **Learning Objectives**
- ▶ Understand the meaning of **Religious Studies** and **World Religions**.
- ▶ Explain the **development of religious studies** in both the **Western and Eastern** traditions.
- ▶ Recognize the **importance of academic approaches to the study of religion** in the present era.



Introduction to Religious Studies

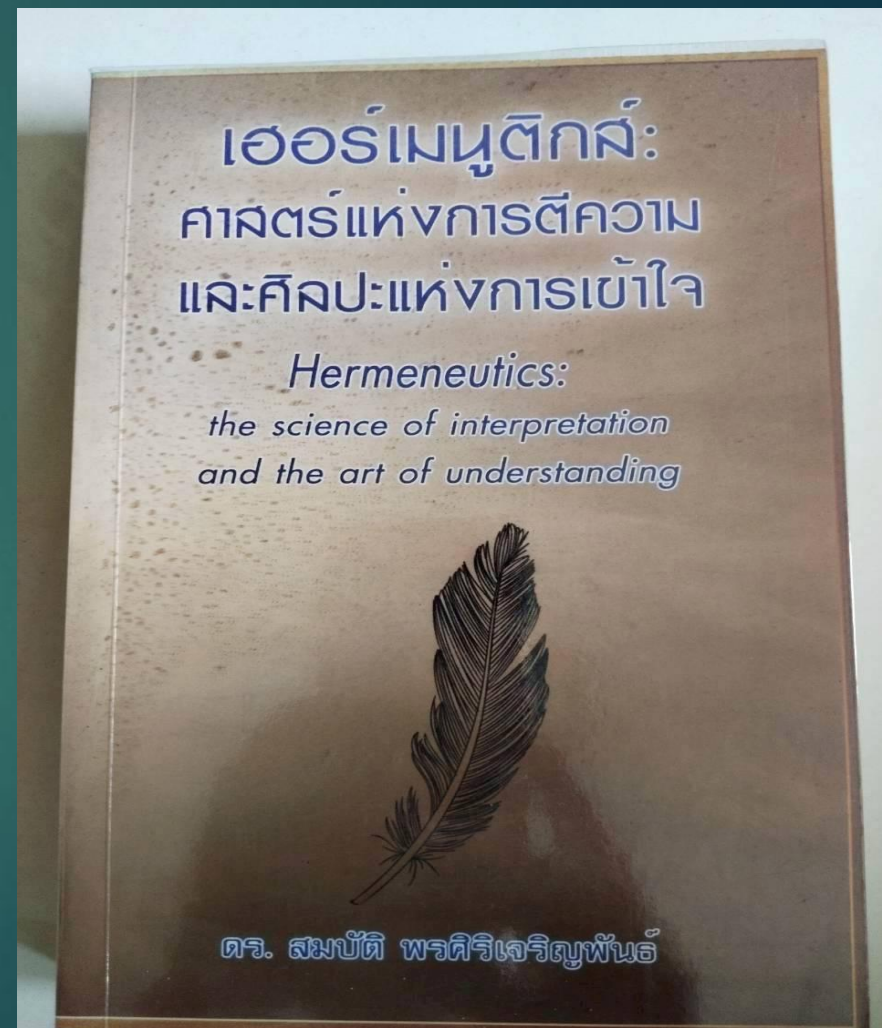
1. "Religious teachings originate from the founders who discovered the truths."
2. Their disciples compiled these teachings into scriptures.
3. Interpretations and adaptations were made according to the times.
4. When entering university, religion begins to be studied as an academic discipline.



Meaning of “Religious Studies”

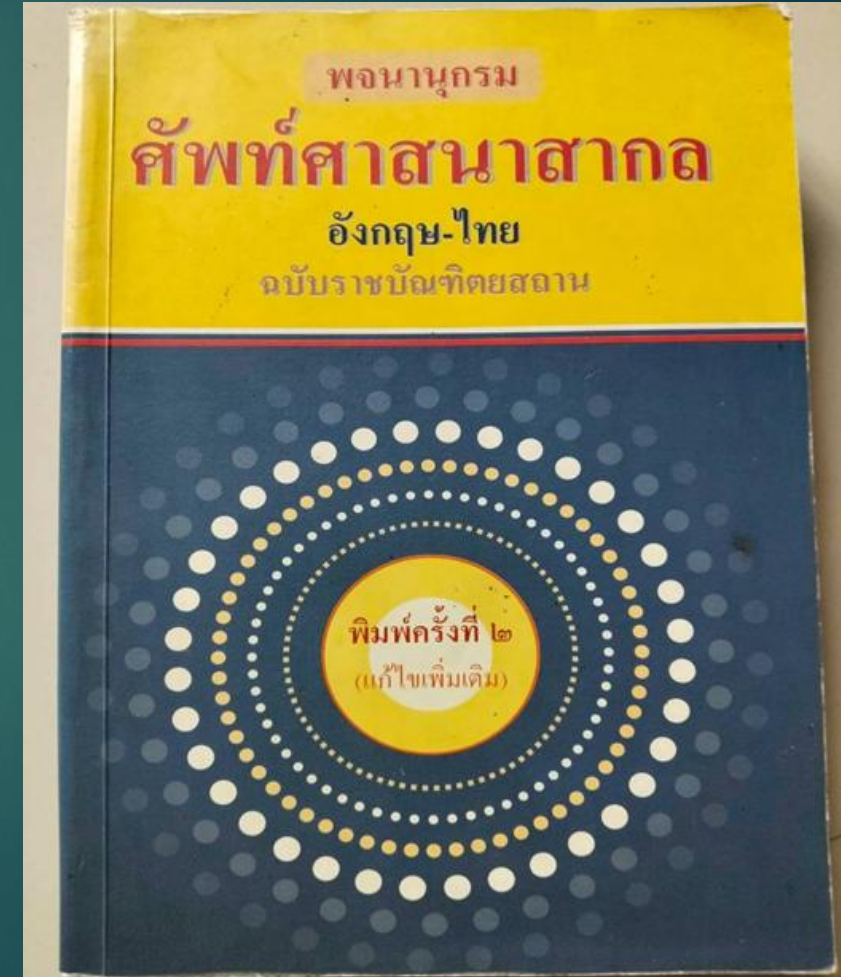


- ▶ “Religion” + “Study” = the systematic pursuit of knowledge about religion. It involves learning, training, and academic practice. Religious studies focus on religions that have influenced Thai society, including:
→ Brahmanism-Hinduism / Buddhism / Christianity / Islam / Confucianism / Sikhism



Meaning of “Universal Religion”

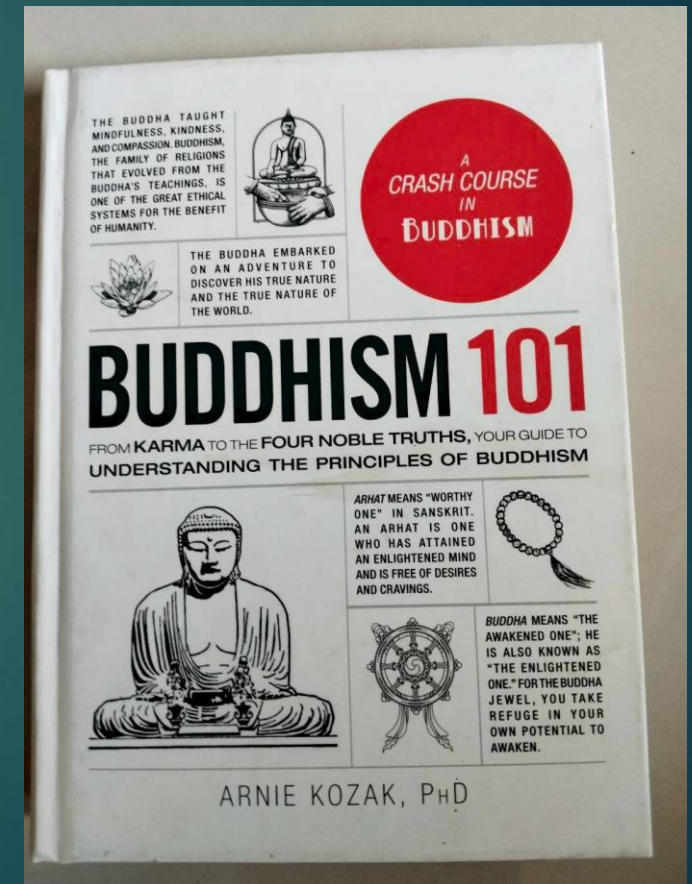
- ▶ A universal religion is a religion that spreads worldwide, with followers in multiple regions, and is not limited by race, language, or territory.
- ▶ **Examples of universal religions:**
- ▶ Buddhism
- ▶ Christianity
- ▶ Islam



Key Characteristics of Universal Religions

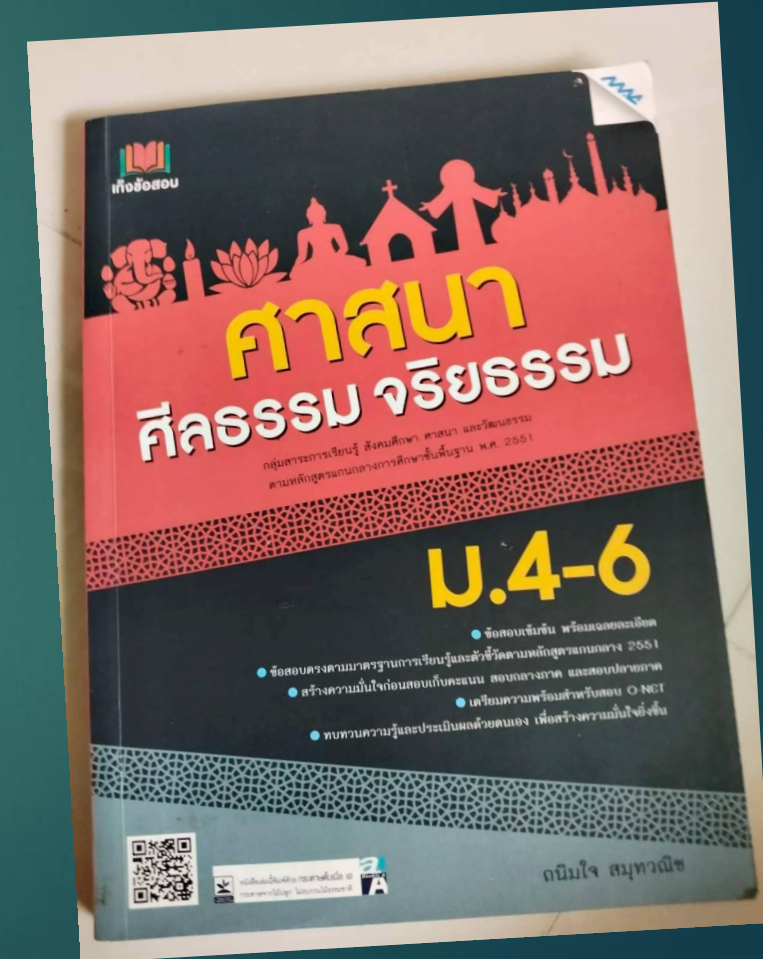


- ▶ **Universalism** – Open to everyone, regardless of ethnicity or culture.
- ▶ **Teachings on salvation or liberation** – e.g., Heaven, Nirvana, or life after death.
- ▶ **Sacred scriptures and clear doctrines** – Guiding principles are well-defined.
- ▶ **Religious organizations and systematic propagation** – Structured institutions for spreading the faith.
- ▶ **Promotion of peace, goodness, and shared humanity** – Encouraging ethical and harmonious living.



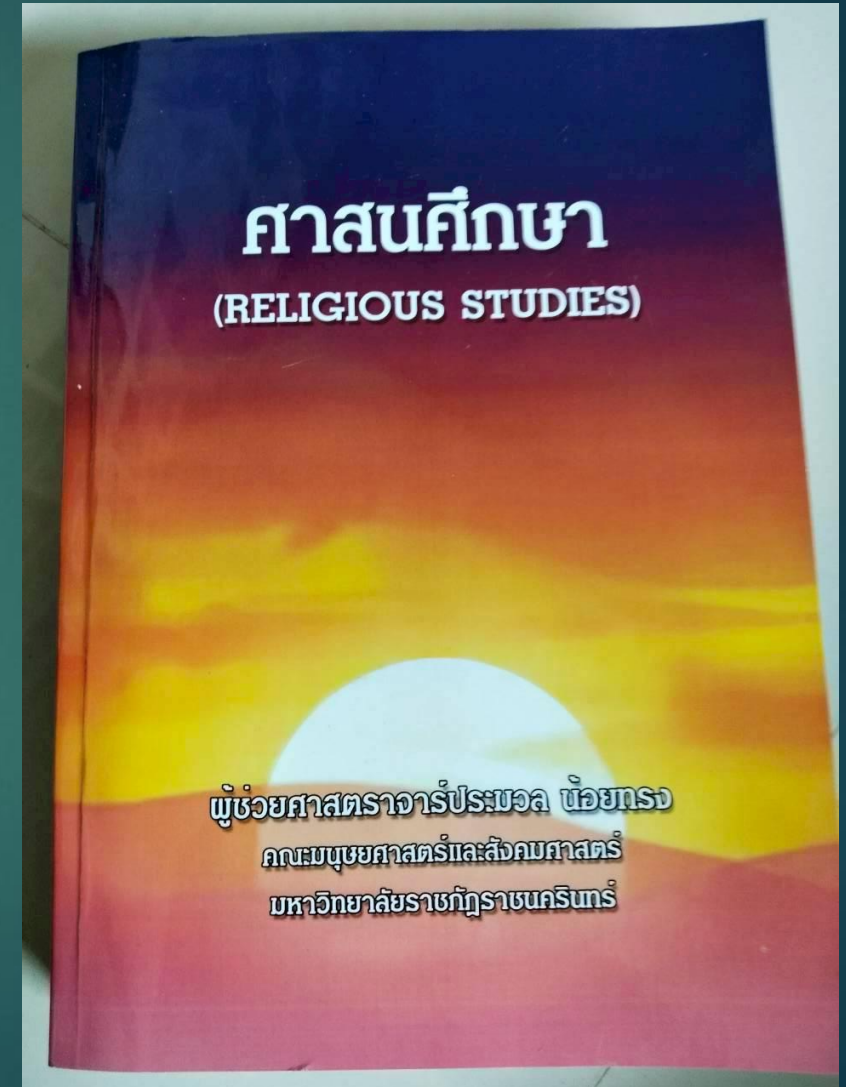
Definition from the Curriculum:

- ▶ The course provides a foundational understanding of philosophy, religion, belief systems, and universal religions. It covers:
- ▶ Denominations and new religious movements
- ▶ Religious propagation
- ▶ The development of religion in Thai society
- ▶ Organization and structure of religious institutions in Thailand
- ▶ The influence of religions and belief systems on social and cultural institutions
- ▶ The role of religion in modern global society



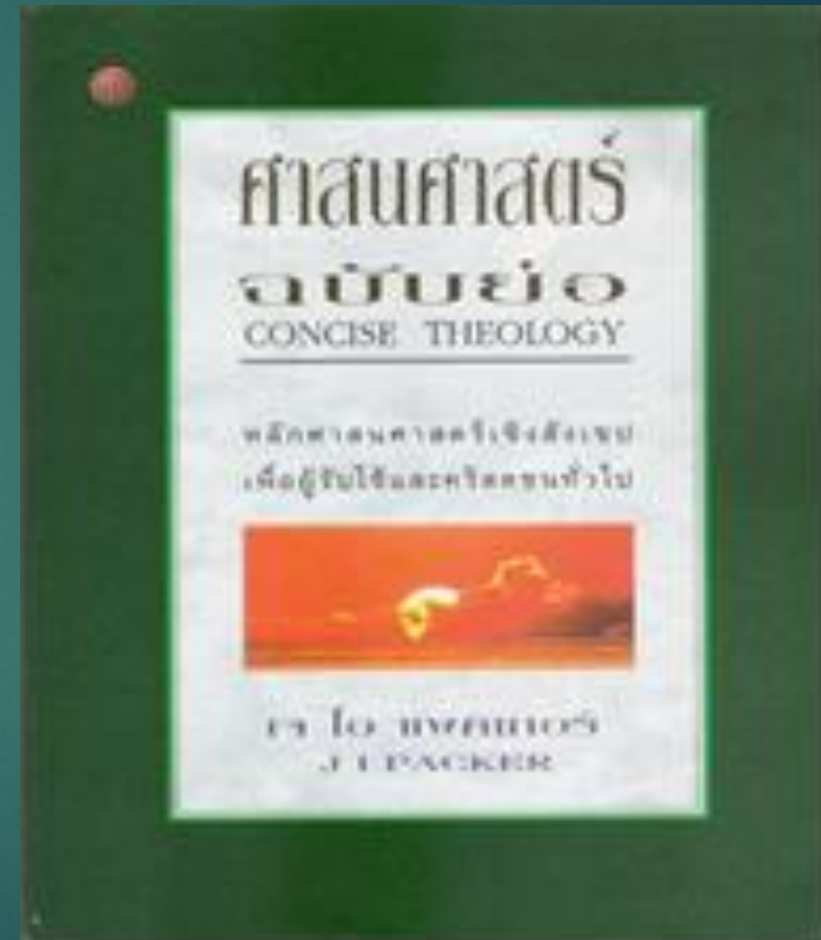
History of Religious Studies

- ▶ Originally, religion was a matter of personal teaching and moral training between individuals. Later, it developed into a social institution. It was not considered an academic discipline until the modern era. Religious studies can be broadly divided into two major streams:
 1. Western religious studies
 2. Eastern religious studies



Religious Studies in the West

- ▶ **Origins:** Began in the **Middle Ages**
- ▶ Focused on explaining the Bible → the study of **Theology**
- ▶ **Theology** = the discipline concerning God, His will, and the relationship between God and humans
 - ♀ **Key centers:** Paris, Bologna, Oxford



“Theology” – The Crown of Religious Studies

- ▶ Considered the highest academic discipline of the era
- ▶ **Philosophy** was regarded as the “handmaiden of theology”
- ▶ **Examples of Thinkers:**
- ▶ **Saint Augustine** → Explained Christianity using Plato
- ▶ **Saint Thomas Aquinas** → Explained Christian beliefs using Aristotle



The Transition: The Reformation Era



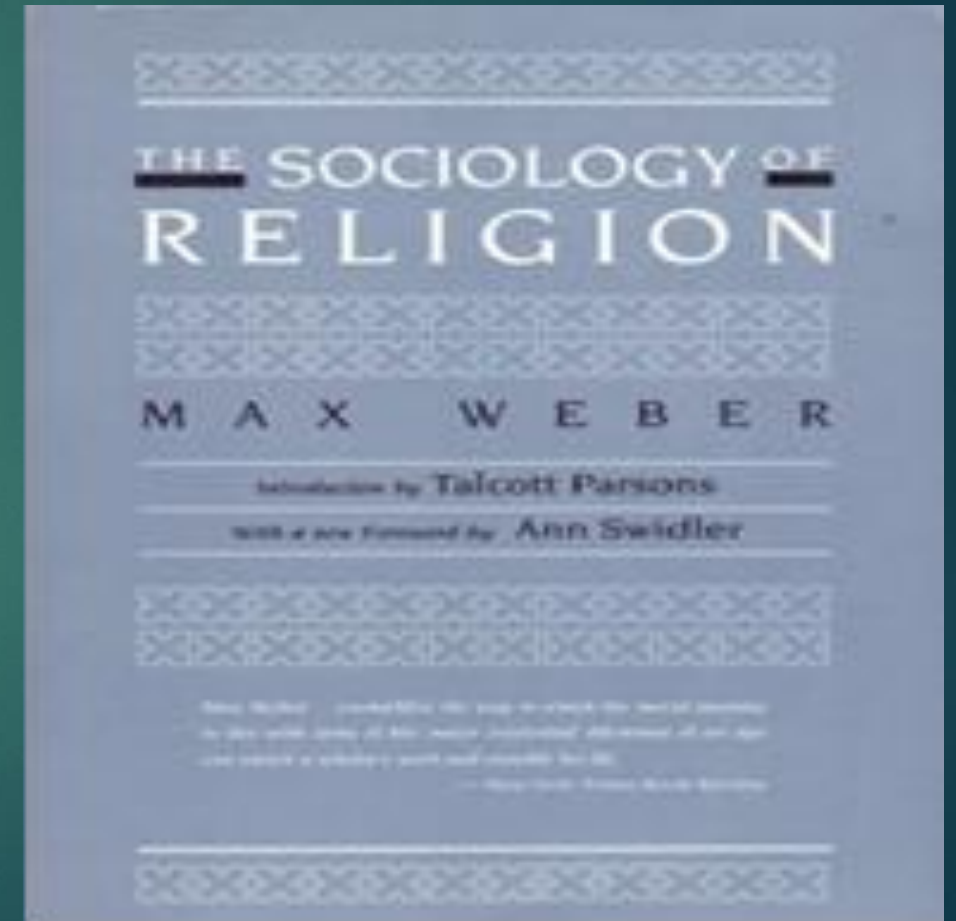
- ▶ **Martin Luther** protested against the Church → leading to the **Protestant Reformation**
- ▶ Religious conflicts + the Industrial Revolution → religious studies began to decline
- ▶ Religion started to separate from both state authority and science



Religion and Social Science (19th Century)



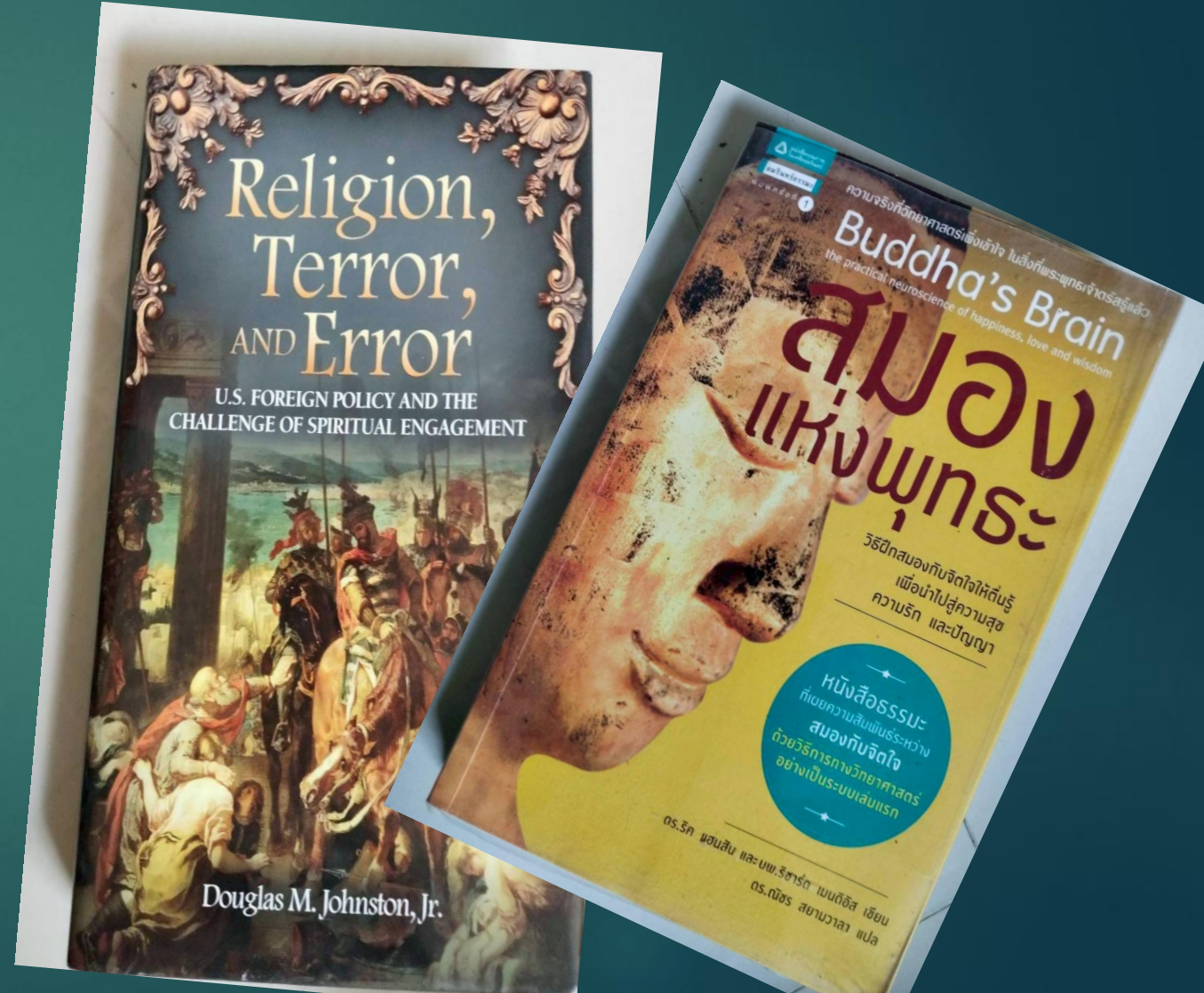
- ▶ Max Weber → Sociology of Religion
Viewed religion as a social institution
Used scientific methods to analyze the role of religion
Key work: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism



Modern Western Religious Studies



- ▶ Focused on **spiritual understanding and ethics**
- ▶ **Examples:**
- ▶ **England** → Religious education in schools to help children understand moral values
- ▶ **America** → Religious studies became popular at universities such as Harvard



Religious Studies in the East



- ▶ Origin: India
Centers of learning: Taxila and Nalanda
Offered instruction in both secular subjects and spiritual teachings
Nalanda → Over 10,000 monks and students
Taught Buddhism, Mahayana, and various other disciplines



Xuanzang and Studies at Nalanda

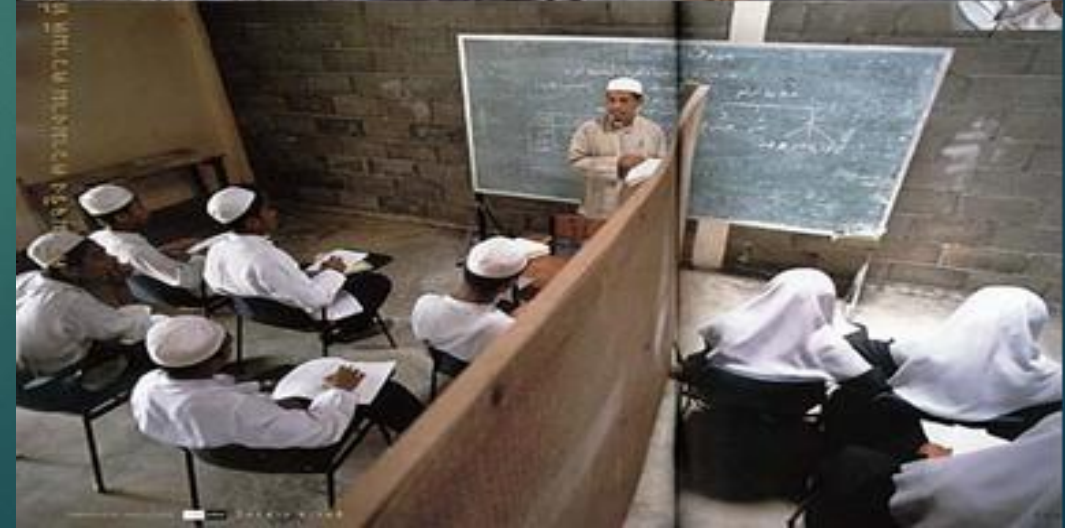


- ▶ Xuanzang (Chinese monk) traveled to study at Nalanda during AD 629–645 (B.E. 1172–1187) Documented the prosperity of Nalanda Example of systematic religious studies in the East



Types of Religious Education Institutions

- Pali Schools (Pariyatti Schools)
- Pesantren (Islamic Boarding Schools / Ponohes)
- Monastic Universities
- Colleges of Religious Studies



Comparison: Western vs. Eastern Religious Studies



Aspect	Western	Eastern
Origin	Middle Ages, Europe	India
Focus	Theology → God, scripture, moral values	Both secular and spiritual teachings
Key Centers	Paris, Bologna, OxfordTaxila	Nalanda

Comparison: Western vs. Eastern Religious Studies

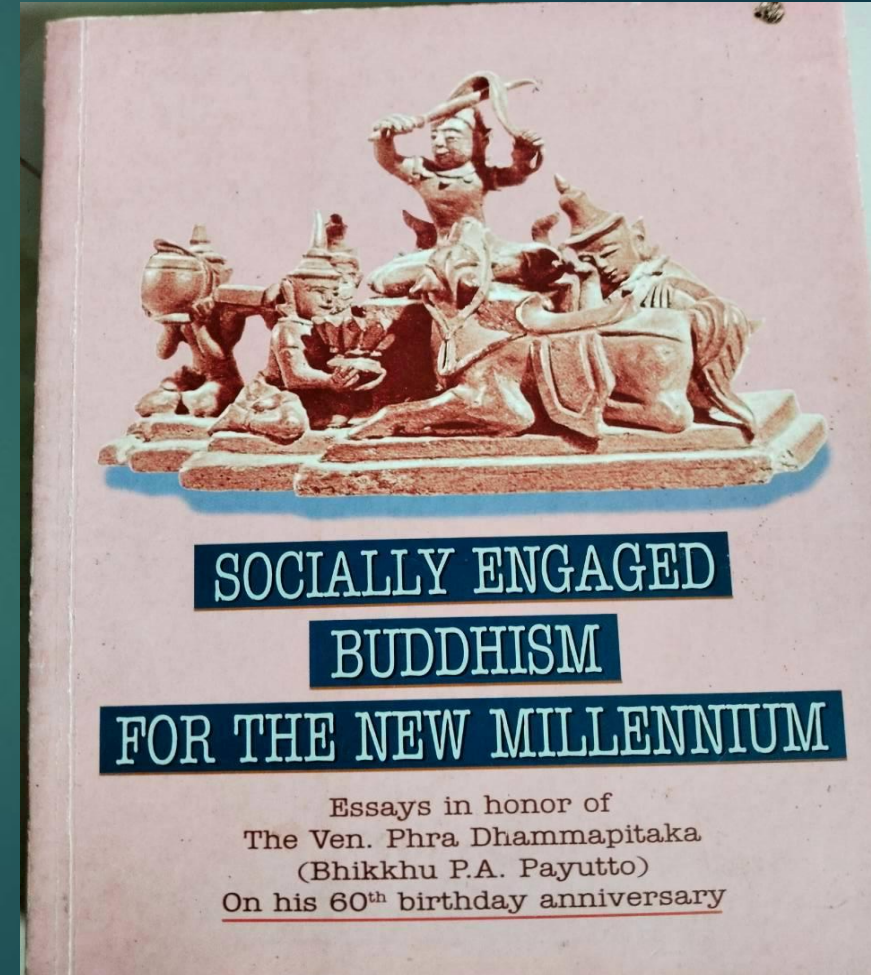


Aspect	Western	Eastern
Approach	Scientific analysis, academic discipline	Systematic monastic education
Notable Figure	Saint Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Max Weber	Xuanzang
Modern Emphasis	Spiritual understanding, ethics; education in schools and universities	Monastic universities, religious colleges, Pali schools, pesantren

The Importance of Religious Studies Today



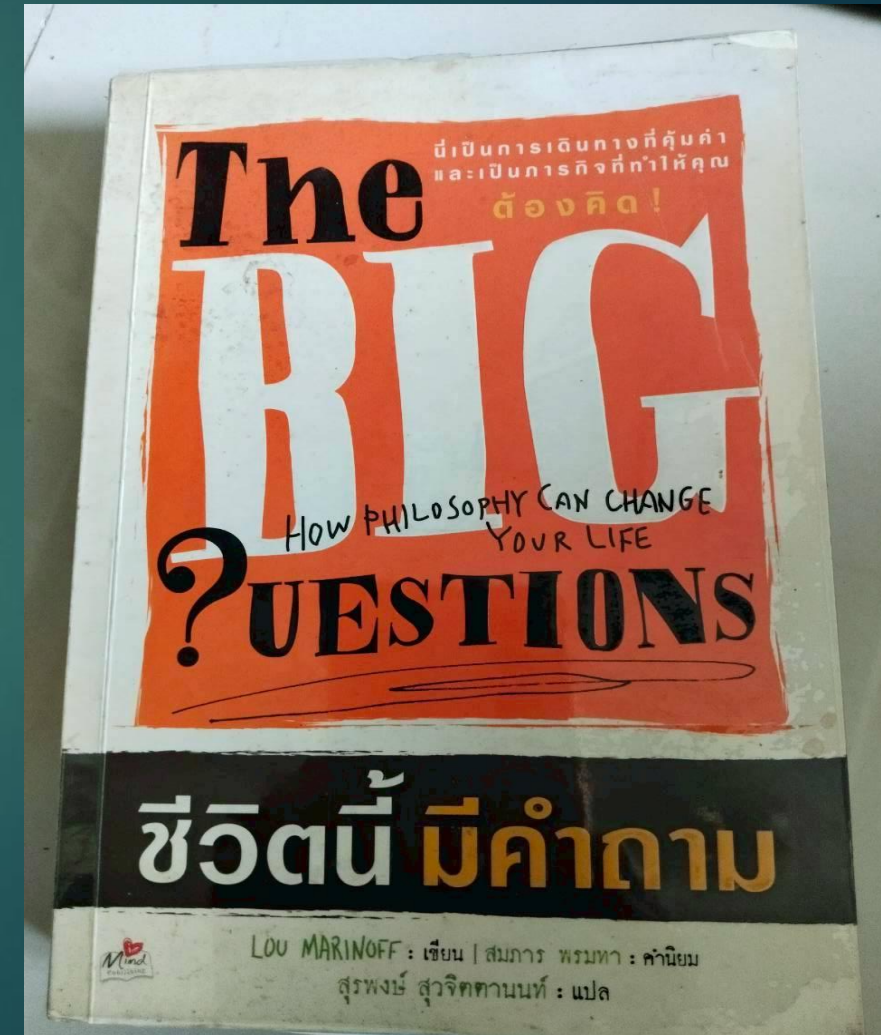
- ▶ Promotes interreligious understanding
- Develops spiritual and ethical perspectives
- Supports peaceful coexistence in a multicultural society



Conclusion



- ▶ Religious Studies = the academic discipline of understanding religion
Universal religions = religions that spread worldwide, with followers across multiple regions, regardless of ethnicity
Evolved from “teaching for faith” → “studying for understanding and coexistence”
Reflects the integration of belief, reason, and culture



Discussion Questions

- ▶ How does Religious Studies differ from Theology
- ▶ How do Western and Eastern approaches to religious studies differ in their focus
- ▶ What role do universal religions play in today's multi-religious society

