



SEMINAR

The Challenges of Religion and Human Rights in a Post-Modern Secular Age

Professor John Witte Jr

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T6, Meng Wah Complex,
The University of Hong Kong**

The main argument of this lecture is that religion and human rights need each other. On the one hand, abstract human rights ideals of the good life and the good society depend on the religious visions and moral values of human communities and institutions to give them content and coherence. Religions help to define the meanings and measures of shame and regret, restraint and respect, responsibility and restitution that a human rights regime presupposes. Religions also help to provide foundational insights into human dignity and equality, social responsibility and community that a healthy human rights regime needs to remain grounded. On other hand, religious communities need the special protections of religious rights claims to survive and flourish. Human rights are neither new nor secular in origin, but are the modern political fruits of ancient religious beliefs and practices. Religious communities must reclaim their essential roots and roles in the cultivation of human rights, and insist on special human rights protection for religion.

Professor John Witte Jr is the Jonas Robitscher Professor of Law, the Alonzo L. McDonald Family Distinguished Professor and the Director of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory Law School. He has made enormous contributions to the literature on law and religion, with 200 articles and 25 books, published in ten languages. He is the recipient of several major research grants and awards for scholarship and teaching.

Please email Flora Leung at fkleung@hku.hk to reserve a place.