

RELIGION AND THE PRODUCTION OF DIFFERENCE

ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE DUTCH ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION, 30 OCTOBER TO 1 NOVEMBER, 2019, GRONINGEN

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- Deadline Call for panels: 1st of April. Notification to the applicants: around April 15th.
- Deadline calls for papers: June 1st. Notification around June 15th.
- Submit to ngg2019@rug.nl

It is well established within the field of religious studies that what is studied as “religion” today may not have been labeled as such in the past. Additionally, phenomena that contemporary scholars of religion study may not self-identify as religious. Despite these contested categories, “religion” has become an accepted category in societies around the world. It is a label to be claimed or rejected, or otherwise related to (for example, by those who call themselves ‘spiritual but not religious’); a phenomenon to be fought against or fought for; a societal actor that can claim rights within particular legal frameworks, regulated by various forms and levels of governance, or a superstitious holdover that should be argued out of existence.

Reflecting these tensions in the identification of religion, this conference calls for panels that examine religion in relation to the production of difference at various levels of society (e.g. religious-non-religious, but also in relation to ethnicity and gender, national identity etc..). In highlighting the role of religion in the production of difference, we aim also to draw attention to the ways that religious practices, identifications, and alliances establish 'same-ness' through the fixing of meaning (e.g. “normative” practices or textual interpretations) and the delineation and legitimation of authority. Towards this end, we are interested in the lexicon of “religion” in various traditions, times and places (e.g. “Islam” as *dīn* but also *umma*). But also those practices, identifications and forms of authority that selectively use the category of “religion” (such as evangelical and Pentecostal Christians, who reject the term for themselves but apply it to others), and those which have been defined in an oppositional or other relationship to “religion” (such as secularist or spiritual actors).

We aim to have a representation of scholarship on different historical periods, regions in the world and theoretical perspectives. Through the invited plenary sessions and keynotes, we will bring different strands of scholarship in conversation with each other around the conference theme.

The following is an indication of the topics we are interested in, but of course, they are not exhaustive and we are very much open to panels that address the theme in a different way.

HISTORICIZING SOCIAL DYNAMICS

- How salient has the category of “religion” been, when set against the bonds of kinship, descent, or other forms of identity, and how might it trouble those ostensible bonds? How have individuals and communities acquiesced or succumbed to the politics of religious difference?
- How have religious identifications helped to forge networks and communities that crosscut and transcend other boundaries? In what ways can religion interact with or become mobilized in relation to categories such as gender, ethnicity, and/or political persuasion?
- How is religion delineated and managed within a secular frame

Historicizing conceptual dynamics

- In recent years, scholarship in the study of Religion has turned to the ways this field is complicit in producing the subject it aims to study. How is knowledge in the study of 'religion' produced, authenticated and disseminated? Critical perspectives on the roles of colonial enterprises and the discipline of religious studies itself in the production of “knowledge” are particularly encouraged.
- What implications does this knowledge have for the production of difference, and how religious practices, identifications, and alliances establish 'same-ness' through the fixing of meaning and the delineating and legitimation of authority?

Theorizing Lived Religion

- How are difference and sameness produced, authenticated and legitimized in everyday religious and ritual practice?
- What insights do the various approaches to lived religion bring to the table in studying religion and the production of difference? (e.g. material religion, gender/feminist/queer studies perspectives, post-colonial and decolonial perspectives).

The opening keynote will be by dr. Charles Hirschkind, University of California, Berkeley. More details to follow!