

Call for Papers: Conceptualising Religion

33rd biannual conference of the German Association for the Study of Religion
(*Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionswissenschaft*, DVRW)
special conference of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR)

3 – 6 September 2019, Hannover

Religion as a term and a concept is inherently linked to the formation of modern societies and evolved in a spatially and temporally specific context. "Religion" has become part of everyday language and is widely used in the endeavour to produce meaning and orientation in the world. Simultaneously, "religion" is employed as a descriptor and category within academia in order to describe, classify and analyse objects. In recent decades, the contingency of definitions of religion and their context-dependency has led to controversies about the viability of religion as a concept. It is, therefore, no surprise that publications deconstructing religion as a natural and given category have increased.

The next biannual conference of the German Association for the Study of Religion (DVRW) in Hannover, which has been granted the status of a special conference of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), aims to build on these discussions by looking into the implications of diverse definitions of religion and the dynamics of conceptualisations within and outside academia. On the one hand, we want to focus on conceptualisations through which the object of the Study of Religion is constituted and delimited. On the other hand, we aim to discuss the diversity of concepts moulding the perception and the meaning of religion in different regional and socio-cultural settings. Possible areas to be examined include historical transformations of concepts of religion, effects of specific concepts of religion on socio-cultural fields, conflicts about the appropriate and legitimate conceptualisation of religion or the interdependence of religion and other constitutive concepts of contemporary societies, such as "secularity", "the individual" or "freedom".

The section on **academic concepts of religion** invites papers on the conceptualisation of religion in different academic disciplines, including the social and cultural sciences, natural sciences and theological approaches. A focus on concepts of religion in the academic Study of Religion (*Religionswissenschaft*) is of particular interest in relation to their effects on research and teaching. With regard to research, we aim to look, for example, at the construction of objects of study, the selection of topics, theories and methodologies. With respect to teaching, programmes in the Study of Religion at universities and teacher training colleges are potential areas to be analysed and discussed.

The section on **concepts of religion in various social and cultural contexts** invites contributions relating to diverse aspects of past and present societies. The discussion may be geared towards the analysis of processes and expressions through which hegemonic concepts of religion are formulated and established or through which established concepts are challenged. Contributions may, for example, investigate the place of „religion“ in different educational fields, specific concepts of religion shaping political strategies and jurisdiction or dominant concepts of religion in the media and popular culture. How specific notions of religion are embedded in everyday practices and how public debates influence the academic Study of Religion are further questions open for investigation.

We invite contributions in different formats:

1. *Individual papers*
The organizers will aggregate individual papers into panel sessions.
2. *Closed or open panels*
 - a. Chairs can submit closed panels on a specific topic, including paper titles, authors and abstracts of the contributions.
 - b. Chairs can submit open panels for which potential participants can apply.
3. *Roundtable sessions*
Organisers and discussants agree on a topic or, alternatively, a publication that is to be discussed in the presence of its author.
4. *Posters*
Posters visualise individual projects and aim at raising questions and initiating a discussion. They will be exhibited and discussed during the conference.

Furthermore, we will organise an "ad-hoc unconference" on one of the afternoons. This event will not be planned in advance. Instead, all participants will have the opportunity to put topics on the agenda during the conference itself. No preparation is necessary. More information about this format will be given in due course on the conference website and during the conference.

Registration for the conference will open on our website on February 1, 2019. Additional information for the registration procedure can be found online.

Please note the following time frames for the submission of contributions:

01 Dec 2018 – 31 Jan 2019 Open panels

01 Dec 2018 – 15 Feb 2019 Roundtable sessions, closed panels and contributions to open panels

15 Jan 2019 – 15 Mar 2019 Individual papers and posters

Open panels will continuously be reviewed and activated. Those interested in presenting in one of the open panels may assign their contribution accordingly during the online submission procedure. Participants may present up to two papers or other contributions during the conference.

The Institute for the Study of Religion of the Leibniz Universität Hannover and the organising committee, led by Prof. Wanda Alberts, are looking forward to hosting the conference. Further information may be found on the conference website (www.dvrw2019.uni-hannover.de). Inquiries may be sent to dvrw2019@conference.uni-hannover.de.