TRANSLATING GOD(S): ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY IN SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Lecturers & Abstracts

Thematic Element 1: The Study of Religions in a Changing Europe

Tuesday, April 26th

Session 1

Chair: Rahim Acar (Istanbul)
(Please see p.13 below)

Mehmet Aydin (Istanbul)
Intercultural and Interreligious relations- the Istanbul experience

Mehmet Aydin is professor of philosophy of religion. He graduated from Ankara University Divinity School, got his Ph.D. at University of Edinburgh, in a philosophy program. He taught philosophy, especially philosophy of religion in various Turkish Universities. He is currently a member of Turkish parliament and works as a Ministry of State. His publications include Philosophy of Religion, Religion and Morality, Kant's Moral Argument and Its Influence on Modern British Philosophy, God - World Relationship in Light of Process Philosophy, Critical Self Reflections, Why? (all in Turkish), Turkish Contribution to Philosophical Culture (in English), Islam en Dialog (partly in English, partly in Dutch).

Wednesday, April 27th

Session 2

Chair: Kajsa Ahlstrand (Uppsala)
(Please see p.2 below)

Thomas Bremer (Münster)
Historical narratives of religious diversity in Western and South Eastern Europe

Abstract: The lecture takes its points of departure in two defining European narratives of politico-religious history: the Holy Roman Empire (Western Europe) and the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, with its successor the Ottoman Empire. The histories of religious minorities in Western Europe after the Westphalian Peace treaty are very different from those of the religious minorities in the Ottoman Empire. The lecture compares the respective confessional legacies in political and religious life in Western and South Eastern Europe.

Thomas Bremer, born in 1957, is Professor of Ecumenics and Peace Studies at the Ecumenical Institute, Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Münster, Germany (since 1999). His main research interests are ecumenical relations between Eastern (Orthodox) and Western Churches, Churches and religious communities in situations of conflict (especially in former Yugoslavia), and the relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and Western Churches. After having studied Theology and Slavonic languages, he worked as a teaching assistant in Münster and as Executive Director for the German Association for Eastern European Studies. Thomas Bremer’s recent publications include: Thomas Bremer (ed): Religion and Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe, Palgrave Macmillan 2008; Kreuz und Kreml: Kleine Geschichte der orthodoxen Kirche in Russland, Herder 2007 (Italian translation 2008); “Nationalismus und Konfessionalität in den Kriegen auf dem Balkan” in Südosteuropa:

Önver A. Cetrez (Uppsala)
Assyrian View on Turkey from the Perspective of Immigration: The Construction of the Other

Abstract: Throughout history migration has been a major source of human survival, adaptation, and growth. Today as a result of migration cultural identity is a central concern for many people, both on individual and collective levels, and as being in a constant state of change. It is thus important to understand both the historical experiences and contemporary acculturation issues in order to understand the process of identity formation among minorities affected by migration. The population in focus in this presentation is the Assyrian (also known as Süryani in Turkish) minority in Sweden, originated in south-east Turkey and neighbouring countries. By way of a historical background to Assyrian culture this presentation will focus on empirical results highlighting the Assyrian self-identification and view of their countries of origin such as Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. The key questions guiding the presentation are: What memories of the past are central in the construction of Assyrian identity? What are the experiences of discrimination in country of origin? What is the view among the Assyrians on re-migrating to their country of origin?

Dr Önver Cetrez is Lecturer in Psychology of Religion, Uppsala University. His research interests include Assyrian / Syrian identity-formation and religious values and behaviours; psychology of migration; psychology of dependency; multi-generational studies. His research competence spans both quantitative and qualitative methods. He has received a STINT Stipend for advanced studies in the psycho-logy of migration at Festschrift für Edgar Hösch, Oldenbourg Verlag 2005; Kleine Geschichte der Religionen in Jugoslawien: Königreich - Kommunismus – Krieg, Herder 2003; Religion und Nation. Die Situation der Kirchen in der Ukraine Harrassowitz Verlag 2003.
the University of Hawaii, USA. He teaches Psychology of religion, focusing on themes such as identity, youth, conflicts and culture. Cetrez is part of a multi-disciplinary Linné project: The Impact of Religion, funded by Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet). He has also been granted a Swedish Research Council project on Iraqi refugees, mental health, and acculturation, during 2010-2013.


Angeliki Ziaka (Thessaloniki)

Muslim minorities in Greece

Abstract: The lecture gives a historical overview of the Muslim presence in Greece with a special focus on present day experiences of Muslim existence in Greece.

Angeliki Ziaka is a History of Religions lecturer at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Theology and a Doctor of the Marc Bloch University of Strasbourg. Dr. Ziaka specialises in Islam and the Arabic and Islamic civilisation and interreligious dialogue, which she has extensively researched at Strasbourg University, the Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies (PISAI, Roma) and the University of Amman (Jordan). Her research interests focus on Muslim theology and history as well as the social, religious and political dimensions of Islam in the Middle East, interreligious dialogue, and the religions of our days. Angeliki Ziaka is also a lecturer at the Demokritos University of Thrace since 2003, where she teaches “History of the Islamic World” at the university’s department of History and Ethnology. She is a founding member of the Greek Society for the Study of Culture & Religion (GSSCR) and the Greek Scientific Society of Middle East Studies. Her publications include: La recherche grecque contemporaine et l’Islam (diss. 2004); Religion and Conflict: Essays on the Origins of Religious Conflicts and on Resolution Approaches (ed.) Harptree 2010.

Session 4

Chair: Ulrich Winkler (Salzburg)

Co-director of the Centre for Inter-cultural Theology and Study of Religions, Department of Systematic Theology, Paris Lodron University Salzburg, Director of the Program Spiritual Theology in the Process of Interreligious Dialogue and Encounter; Researcher in Theology of Religions and Comparative Theology.

Kajsa Ahlstrand (Uppsala)

“Something that feels this good to me just can’t be wrong”: Religious Authority and the Subjective Turn

Abstract: Religious authorities in Europe can no longer command their communities and expect to be obeyed. The very notion of obedience is often rejected on moral grounds. How can religion be taught in non-authoritarian societies?

Kajsa Ahlstrand is Professor of World Christianity and Interreligious Studies, Uppsala University since 2006. Her research focuses on religion and modernity. She has researched Hindu-Christian and Buddhist-Christian relations in Christianity. Her published works include: “The Crisis of Authority: From Holy Obedience to Bold Moral Imagination in European Christianity” Buddhist-Christian Studies Vol 30, 2010, pp.49-57; “We are not just our Religion: Identity and Theology” (pp 25-32); “Strategies for Christians Under Threat” (pp 103-108) in Identity, Survival, Witness: Reconfiguring Theological Agendas, Ed. Bloomquist, K. L., (The Lutheran W F); “Boundaries of religious identity: Baptised Buddhists in Enköping” in Converging Ways?: Conversion and Belonging in Buddhism and Christianity Ed. D’Arcy May, John (OS Klosterverlag, Sankt Ottilien) and other works.

Hans-Joachim Sander (Salzburg)

Globalized Powerlessness of Heterotopic Citizen: A Locus for Secular Authority of Public Religions

Abstract: Religions claim authority using it as power over people, while political structures claim power to use it as authority in favor of people. In modern times this resulted in different approaches to the political-theological problem (Spinoza, Cortes, Strauss). Religions issued strict moral order while politics became sustained by public discourse. The religious strategy fails in modernity as it needs religious singularity enforced by politics, culture and legal means. Its moral power claims are replaced by secular moral ideas, differentiated through religious plurality and by fundamentalist enterprises to capture public discourse by means of politics and mass media: thus, it appears that the secular sphere is growing at the cost of the religious one. Yet, authority is not power but a public process of overcoming speechlessness. Authority’s nucleus is powerlessness resisted - a phenomenon of plurality that grows at heterotopic places where marginalized people struggle for their dignity. Globalization increases powerlessness and this reopens the public for religious authorities in Europe can no longer command their communities and expect to be obeyed. The very notion of obedience is often rejected on moral grounds. How can religion be taught in non-authoritarian societies?
Hans-Joachim Sander is professor for dogmatics at Theological Faculty, University of Salzburg. His major fields are Vatican II, the signs of the times and the power-authority constellations related to them. On a Foucaultian basis, and in the tradition of loci theologici, his theology is shifting from subjectivity to topology. His publications include *Einführung in die Gotteslehre*, Darmstadt 2006; *Europa’s Heterotopias. Pastoral Power within the Signs of the Times* (in: Wyller, Trygve (eds.), *Heterotopic Citizen*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009, 172-190).

Zilka Spahić-Šiljak (Sarajevo)

*Negotiating Power Relations: Multi-religious dialogue between academia and civil society organizations in BiH*

Abstract: Multireligious dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina was mostly initiated by secular women's non-governmental organizations aimed at peace-building and reconciliation in the post-war context. Such women's efforts were not recorded properly and did not become socially recognized and valued. Power for negotiation and translation of peace remained at the local level until multireligious dialogue was established in academic institutions. Women's NGOs used their local capacities to pursue peace-building programs in the academy. Conversely, power of negotiations and translation of peace-building and reconciliation in the academy was used to strengthen local initiatives; and, by using their networks to encourage more women and men to actively participate in these processes. The resulting Positive symbiosis between the academia and non-governmental organizations (particularly with the Religious and Gender Studies program at the University of Sarajevo) created a new foundation for pursuing multireligious dialogue on the grass-root level. This paper discusses negotiations between non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, with particular interest in gender perspective on peace-building and reconciliation.

Zilka Spahić-Šiljak, born in Zenica, BiH, is director of the Centre for Interdisciplinary Postgraduate Studies of the University of Sarajevo (where she teaches in gender, religion and human rights); research scholar; and public intellectual concerned with human rights, religion, politics, education and gender, and peace-building with over ten years experience of working in the academy, and non-governmental sectors. She holds a PhD in Gender Studies; an MA in Human Rights. Her major research projects are published as these studies: Women, Religion and Politics (Sarajevo, 2010). Multiauthored books Women Believers and Citizens (Sarajevo, 2009); Three Monotheistic Voices: Introduction to Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Sarajevo, 2009).

Thursday, April 28th

Session 5

Chair: Jorge Castillo Guerra (Nijmegen)

Jorge E. Castillo Guerra studied Theology at the Karl-Eberhard University Tübingen (Germany) and Catholic University of Nijmegen (the Netherlands), obtained his MA Theology at the Theological Faculty of Chur (Switzerland) and his PhD in Sociology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen. He is lecturer and researcher for World Christianity and Interreligious Relations in the Faculty of Theology and in the Faculty of Religion studies at the Radboud University of Nijmegen and at the Nijmegen Institute of Mission Studies. His research deals with migrations, interculturality and religion, and interreligious relations in Latin America.

David Cheetham (Birmingham)

Teaching and researching theology and religion in the UK with reference to the Birmingham experience

Abstract: This presentation will be divided into three parts. In the first part it will offer a brief survey of the state of theology and religious studies in higher education in the UK offering an account of recent history and perceived trends. In the second part it will offer a more critical discussion, particularly reviewing recent literature that has been produced by (mostly) UK-based scholars and considering the various possible ‘models’ that have been suggested for teaching and researching theology and religion in a UK university. In the final part, a specific account will be offered of the Birmingham Department of Theology and Religion. Attention will be given to how the Department has developed, the directions it has taken and the possible challenges it (and all UK departments) face in the future.


Ina Merdjanova (Dublin)

The Teaching of Religion in Southeast Europe

Abstract: The teaching of religion, introduced in public schools almost everywhere in Southeast Europe after the fall of communism, has been a source of heated and ongoing debates. The advocacy for a confessional instruction has clashed with the promotion of a more
Recep Kaymakcan (Sakarya)

Is it possible to teach religion in a pluralistic manner in Turkish Higher Education?

Abstract: Turkey is a secular democratic country with a Muslim majority population. A so-called ‘Faculty of Theology’ is part of state university. During the Republican period the issue of religion in higher education was debated: the name, aims and curriculum of religious education in institutions of higher education have changed in line with demands of society, and along ideological lines. The main parts of the curricula of the faculty of theology consist of Islamic sciences. Up to recently, the issue of pluralism of religion was not a genuine concern among Faculties of Theology at different levels. This presentation deals with the following issues in Turkish higher education: 1. The historical mission of Islamic higher education, 2. Teaching of non-Islamic religions (content and approaches), and plurality in Islam, 3. Debate on the necessity of plurality of religions at university level, 4. Some key empirical data regarding religious pluralism.

Dr. Kaymakcan is full professor of religious education at Sakarya University, Turkey; advisor to Ministry of National Education; editor of Turkish Journal of Values Education. He earned his Ph.D from the University of Leeds (UK) in 1998. He has contributed at meetings organised by UN Alliance of Civilizations, Council of Europe, OSCE, UNESCO. In 2007, he contributed to OSCE report entitled: “Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools”. Kaymakcan has managed the international project on “Religion and Life Perspectives Among Adolescents” in Turkey (co-ordinated by University of Wuezburg, Germany). Recent publications: Teaching for Tolerance in Muslim Majority Societies (2007) co-edited with O. Leirvik; Gençlerin Dine Bakışı: Karşılaştırmalı Türkiye ve Avrupa Araştırması (Perception of Religion Among Adolescents: A Comparative Study of Turkey and Europe). (2007). Main research interests: curriculum evaluation, development, policy analysis, and teacher training for RE; teaching of Islam and Christianity, human rights, pluralism and religions in schools; religion, youth and values.

Oddbjørn Leirvik (Oslo)

Interreligious Studies and Multireligious Faculties of Theology

Abstract: Since 2000, “interreligious studies” has been an area of priority at the University of Oslo’s Faculty of Theology. Studies and research in this field focus on “the space between” living religious traditions – as a realm of interaction, translation and change. Since 2007, the Faculty offers courses in continuing education for religious leaders (mostly Muslim and Christian). The question has been raised of whether a traditionally Christian (Lutheran) faculty of theology may eventually become a multireligious faculty: for instance by offering regular studies in Islamic theology on a par with Christian theology. Similar developments and discussions are taking place in some other European countries. With reference to these developments, the author will discuss premises and prospects for a multi-faith broadening of the European tradition of “university theology”.

Session 6

Chair: Willem Van der Merwe (Amsterdam)

W.L. (Willie) van der Merwe (1957) studied literature, philosophy and theology at the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, where he became professor of philosophy in 1998 and served as chair of the department. His publications cover topics ranging from philosophy of language and hermeneutics to philosophy of religion, African philosophy and multiculturalism. His current research focuses on the revaluation of Christian faith in contemporary continental philosophy of culture and religion. He has been a fellow and/or visiting professor at the KU Leuven; University of Antwerp (Belgium), Nijmegen and Tilburg (the Netherlands) and Salzburg (Austria) and is currently a distinguished professor of the department of philosophy, University of Stellenbosch. He serves on the editorial boards of Polylog. Zeitsschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren, the Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift and the series Currents of Encounter (Rodopi). Since August 2008 he holds the chair in philosophy of religion, apologetics and encyclopaedia of theology in the faculties of theology and philosophy of the VU University Amsterdam, where he is head of the department of philosophy of religion and comparative study of religions and director of ACCORD (Amsterdam Centre for the Study of Cultural and Religious Diversity).

Ina Merdjanova is a Marie Curie Fellow at the Irish School of Ecumenics/Trinity College Dublin. She previously served as director of the Center for Interreligious Dialogue and Conflict Prevention at the Scientific Research Department of Sofia University, Bulgaria (2004-2010). She received her PhD from Sofia University, and has held visiting fellowships at Oxford University and other institutions in the UK, the Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, and the USA. She is the author and editor of six books in Bulgarian as well as of a monograph in English entitled Religion, Nationalism, and Civil Society in Eastern Europe—The Postcommunist Palimpsest (Edwin Mellen Press, 2002). Dr. Merdjanova has recently published a co-authored manuscript with Patrice Brodeur of Montreal University Religion as a Conversation Starter: Intercultural dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans (Continuum, 2009) and is currently completing a book on Islam in the Balkans.
Oddbjørn Leirvik is a professor of Interreligious Studies at the Faculty of Theology, University of Oslo. His academic interests include Christian-Muslim Relations, Islamic ethics, interreligious education, philosophy of dialogue, relational theology, and religion and secularity. His publications in English include, among others, Images of Jesus Christ in Islam (London: Continuum 2010), and Human Conscience and Muslim-Christian Relation. Modern Egyptian writers on al-damir (London: Routledge 2010/2006) and Teaching for Tolerance in Muslim Majority Societies (ed. with Recep Kaymakcan, Istanbul: Centre for Values Education 2007).

Nicolae Dură (Constantia)
Religious and Judiciary-Canonical Studies and Research Centre of the Three Monotheistic Religions (Mosaic, Christian, and Islamic)

Abstract: As an institution for scientific studies, research and professional training within “Ovidius” University, the Centre promotes the diversity of religious identity, religious freedom, as well as inter-and pluri-disciplinary scientific research. The Centre’s absolute priority is dialogue with the person next to us, regardless of his or her religious faith. Therefore, its field of activity covers the study of the Holy Books of the three monotheistic faiths, and as their respective legislation, in order to prepare common action for fighting against the religious intolerance, proselytising attitude, xenophobia, terrorism, fundamentalism, and anti-Semitism of any kind. This paper delves into the main Thematic Guidelines promoted by the Centre, and its aims at developing active scientific research in the field of comparative religious law; promoting in turn the juridical protection of religious freedom, as well as the prevention of religious intolerance, xenophobia, proselytism, and terrorism generated by religious conflicts.

Nicolae V. Dura is a Professor and Vice-Rector of the “Ovidius” University of Constanta, and the director of the Religious and Judiciary-Canonical Studies and Research Centre of the three Monotheistic Religions. He specialises in the area of Canon Law and is an active member of numerous associations including the International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies, Faculty of Law, University of Milan; editor-in-chief of Annals of the “Ovidius” University series “Theology”, and “Law and Administrative Sciences” among others.

Session 8

Chair: Peter Lodberg (Aarhus)

Peter Lodberg is professor of Ecumenism and Missiology at the Theological Faculty, University of Aarhus, Denmark. Currently, he serves as Dean of Studies and Head of the Department of Systematic Theology. He has written numerous books and articles about church, politics, and state. His latest book is called: Faith and Power in the Holy Land. Palestinian Church and Theology in a Society in Transformation after 1967 (Copenhagen: Denmark, 2010).

Norbert Hintersteiner (Dublin)
Religions in Translation

Abstract: Scholarly debates have argued for a difference in the relation of Christianity and Islam to translation. While in Islam there is a strong claim for the “untranslatability” of the Qur’an, the history of Christianity shows that it has exercised an enormous cultural translatability. This presentation explores, on the one hand, examples of the manifold cultural translations of Christianity, ranging from the literal translation of texts to inter-cultural processes of translation, when taking root among peoples already bound to rich religious texts and traditions of other faiths, e.g. of the Muslim or Indic or East-Asian cultural-religious worlds. On the other hand, it offers to moderate the concept of the “untranslatability” of Qur’an in light of, for example, Persian practice of translating the Qur’an between the 10th and 12th centuries and the many cultural translations Islam has taken from early on. Despite the difference in attitudes to translation, will both religions in the context of a newly plural religious scene enter upon paths of interreligious translation?

Norbert Hintersteiner is a lecturer in World Christianity and Interfaith Studies; and director of research at the School of Religions, Theology, and Ecumenics at Trinity College Dublin. He specialises in World Christianity and mission studies; cross-cultural theology; comparative theology (with Hinduism and Islam); and the study of religions. His book publications include: Traditionen überschreiten: Angloamerikanische Beiträge zur interkulturellen Traditionshermeneutik (2001); Naming and Thinking God in Europe Today: Theology in Global Dialogue (2007, editor); Postcolial Europe in the Crucible of Cultures (2007, co-editor); Thinking the Divine in Interreligious Encounter (2011, editor).
Maureen Junker-Kenny (Dublin)
Translation as a requirement of public reason and of traditions of ‘faith seeking understanding’

Abstract: The willingness and ability to ‘translate’ is a demand put to religions by current approaches to social and political ethics, in order to safeguard the stability of a just and democratic pluralist society (J. Rawls), or to assist a non-defeatist reason in keeping the project of modernity on track (J. Habermas). Religions themselves have articulated the core of their messages anew in different cultures, engaging with the general consciousness of truth of subsequent eras. After comparing the different understandings of ‘translation’ of J. Rawls, J. Habermas and P. Ricoeur, a key example of translation from monotheistic traditions into philosophy to be investigated is the creation of the human person as imago Dei.

Maureen Junker-Kenny is Associate Professor of Theology at Trinity College Dublin where she teaches Theological Ethics in the School of Religions and Theology. Her research interests are in foundational and applied ethics, religion and public reason, and in the role of monotheism in the formation of European values. She has written on Schleiermacher’s Christology and theory of religion (Berlin 1990), on Designing Life? Genetics, Procreation, and Ethics (Aldershot, 1999), on Ricoeur’s ethics of remembering (Münster, 2004), and on Habermas and Theology (London/New York, 2011).

Friday, April 29th
Session 9

Chairs: Ina Merdjanova (Dublin) (see p. 4)
Rahim Acar (Istanbul) (see p.13)

Safet Bektovic (Copenhagen)
European Islam or Islam in Europe: A Danish-Bosnian Perspective

Abstract: There are significant cultural differences between Muslims in different geographical areas and there are also different ways of practicing Islam. This fact is recognized even by those who emphasize theological and normative unity of Islam as a main determinant of Islamic identity. Muslims in Europe are very heterogeneous in their ethnic origin and cultural practices. Many of them do not have a settled relationship with Europe and look skeptically at the concept of European Islam. This is connected both with their experience and their (future) expectations in relation to Europe. This paper tries to shed light on some of the factors (historical, cultural, and mentality-related) which could help understand Muslim approaches to European Islam. In this sense, it is interesting to draw some parallels and look at the differences between for example Muslims from Bosnia / Balkans who have always lived in Europe and Muslim migrants in Denmark / Europe who are still struggling to become integrated and accepted as a part of Europe.

Safet Bektovic is Associate professor at Faculty of Theology in Copenhagen, at the Centre for European Islamic Thought. His research focus includes modern Islamic philosophy and theology, Muslim identity in Europe, interfaith and inter-philosophical dialogue. He has written Kultur-møder og religion (Cultural Encounters and Religion), 2004, and has contributed to following books: Kierkegaard en het moderne denken in én Bevrijde Stad (Kierkegaard a modern thinker in a free city), 1994., Muslimer og kristne ansigt til ansigt (Muslims and Christians face to face), 2001., At være muslim i Danmark (To be a Muslim in Denmark) 2003., Islam, kristendom og det moderne (Islam, Christianity and Modernity), 2004., Gudstro i Danmark (Belief in God in Denmark), 2005., Kierkegaard’s International Reception 2009., World Christianity in Muslim En-counter (2009), Muslimernes Islam (Islam of Muslims) 2010, and has also published numerous articles.

Tahir Abbas (Istanbul)

Muslim Minorities and the Development of British Islam in the Post-9/11 Context

Abstract: In the post-9/11 period, concerns around the integration of Muslim minorities into multicultural British society have been compounded by a focus on terrorism and extremism. Both sets of debates have been conflated by a sense that the prevailing problems are one of ‘Muslimness’ or Islam itself, rather than the workings of the social structures and institutions of the majority society at large. This presentation addresses the complex issues of migration and integration of Muslims in the post-war period, especially in the last decade since the onset of the ‘global war on terror’, and its implications for a sociological appreciation of questions of radicalism, multiculturalism and cohesion in the context of debates on identity and conflict. It is argued that the current generations of around 2.2 million Muslims in Britain are at a critical juncture in their historical development as communities, and while the challenges in relation to socio-economic mobility, education and participation in society are acute, there are genuine opportunities of a Muslim civil civil society development into community engagement and representation that provides real hope for the future. Although there are genuinely difficult issues impacting on the lived experience, this very same ‘Muslimness’, which is seen as the essential problem in local, national and global contexts, can indeed be a solution to a range of issues affecting individuals, groups and communities. This UK experience, therefore offers lessons for the wider Europe or ‘Euro-land’ in relation to its own experience of variously differentiated Muslim minority groups in recent periods.
Tahir Abbas is Associate Professor of Sociology at Fatih University in Istanbul, Turkey. He has a BSc (Econ) in Economics with Mathematics from Queen Mary, University of London; a MSocSc in Economic Development and Policy from the University of Birmingham; and a PhD in Ethnic Relations from the University of Warwick. He was the Founding Director of the University of Birmingham Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Culture and Reader in Sociology; Senior Research Officer at the Home Office, as well as the Department for Constitutional Affairs, in London; Director of Race Equality West Midlands; ESRC Research Fellow at the Birmingham City University Business School; and PhD Research Assistant at the University of Warwick Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations. He has written and edited numerous books, journal articles, book chapters reviews and opinion-editorials in internationally respected publications including Islamic Radicalism and Multicultural Politics (Routledge, 2011); The Education of British South Asians (Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004); editor of Islam and Education (Routledge, 4-volumes, 2010), Muslim Britain (Zed, 2005), Islamic Political Radicalism (Edinburgh UP, 2007); and co-editor, Immigration and Race Relations (with F Reeves, IB Tauris, 2007) and Honour, Violence, Women and Islam (with MM Idriss, Routledge, 2010). His current interests are in Ethno-Religious Identities of Muslims in Britain and Western Europe; ‘Islamism’; and Historical and Political Sociology. He is also Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts; a Member of the Lunar Society; and Member of the Muslim Institute.

Riem Spielhaus (Copenhagen)

Future Challenges of Islam in Europe and Turkey

Abstract: During the last two decades complex debates about Islam in Europe and Turkey have unfolded engaging a variety of actors and interest groups. Within these, leading questions address the presence, the visibility and the shapes Islam takes in the different national contexts. In this lecture Riem Spielhaus revisits some ideas about Euro-Islam from the 1990s; and with reference to new discussions about different initiatives to train religious leaders she considers the challenges and opportunities for a future of multi-religious and ethnically plural societies.

Riem Spielhaus is a Research Fellow at the Centre for European Islamic Thought where she is pursuing a comparison of quantitative polls among Muslim in Western European countries since 2000. Research interests include Muslim minority studies with a focus on production and dissemination of Islamic knowledge, identity politics, and the institutionalization of Islam in Europe. Her dissertation at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin on the Emerging Islamic Consciousness in Germany focused on processes leading to the emergence of a Muslim consciousness in Germany between ascription and self-identification (receiving the Augsburg Science Award for Intercultural Studies 2010). After completing Magister Artium in Islamic Studies Riem has been working as advisor for the commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration of the German Federal Government; was member of several working groups set up by the German government and civic organizations (ie. the 1st phase of the “German Islam Conference” (06-09). Publications include, Islamisches Gemeindeleben in Berlin (2006, ed. With Alexa Färber), Zwischen Orient und Okzident Studien zu Mobilität von Wissen, Konzepten und Praktiken (2010, ed. with Betzin, Krüppner & Fürtig), Media making Muslims: the construction of a Muslim community in Germany through media debate, in: Contemporary Islam (2010) 11-27. Due to appear, Wer ist hier Muslim. Die Entwicklung eines islamischen

Bewusstseins in Deutschland zwischen Selbstidentifikation und Fremdzuschreibung (2011).

Angeliki Ziaka (Thessaloniki)

Ina Merdjanova (Dublin)

Nicolae Dură (Constantia)

Tahir Abbas (Istanbul)

Safet Bektovic (Copenhagen)

Riem Spielhaus (Copenhagen)

(Please see above for the profiles of these panellists)
Marco Dogo is Professor of History of Eastern Europe at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Trieste, Italy. His main research interest focuses on migrant groups between the Balkans and the Adriatic, their traditional identities and their role in Mediterranean trade, XVIII-XIX c.; modernization processes in the nation-states of Southeast Europe; and Jews and the nation-state in Southeast Europe. Among his more recent publications are Disrupting and reshaping. Early stages of nation-building in the Balkans (M. D. and G. Franzinetti eds., Ravenna, 2002), Orthodox merchants in the North-Eastern Adriatic sea: Their nation, their business (in D. Roksandić, D. Agić, eds., Spomenica Josipa Adamčeka, Zagreb, 2009), Čitajte: Hrvatski, crnogorski, bosanski, makedonski i srpski jezik (in D. Ročić, T. J. Šćepan, eds., Savremeni hrvatski jezik, Ljubljana, 2007, see p. 11).

Mato Zovkić was born in 1937 in Bosnia. In 1968 he got doctorate in theology from Catholic Theological Faculty in Sarajevo. From 1969 to 1972 he studied Holy Scriptures at Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome where he got his degree S. S. L. Ordained priest of Sarajevo Archdiocese in 1963. From October 1972 to July 2009 professor of New Testament exegesis at Catholic School of Theology in Sarajevo. Since 1997 he has been member of Interreligious Council in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In July 2008 he was nominated by Cardinal Vinko Puljić vicar of Sarajevo Archdiocese for relations with other faith communities. Since 1969 he has been writing theological books, articles and other publications, most of which deal with ecclesiology of Vatican II and of the New Testament. For instance, Medureligijski dijalog iz katoličke perspektive u Bosni i Hercegovini, Vrhbosanska katolička teologija, Sarajevo 1998).
Session 11
Chair: Pim Valkenberg (Baltimore)

Dr. Pim Valkenberg (Tilburg, the Netherlands, 1954) wrote his PhD on Thomas Aquinas and the use of Scripture in his theology. He worked as assistant and associate professor of theology in the Netherlands (Nijmegen, Utrecht), Belgium (Leuven), South Africa (Johannesburg) and the United States (University of Notre Dame, Loyola University Maryland). His research interests are Medieval theology; interreligious dialogue, polemics and apologetics, Christian-Muslim relations in Abrahamic context, and comparative theology. He wrote a number of books and articles in Dutch, German and English.

Bilal Baş (Istanbul)
What does the Qur'an Say to Christians: the Case of the Chapter of the Table

Abstract: Reading Qur'an to the People of the Book: What does Qur'an Say to Christians? Qur'an extends a certain privileged status to Christians among the followers of other religions as the holders of a revealed book: the Gospel. Yet it also blames them for misunderstanding the Gospel and failing to judge according to what God revealed in it. The Qur'anic critique of Christians finds one of its most succinct expressions in the Sura al-Ma'ida (the Table). This paper aims first to reconstruct the main lines of this critique, analyzing this particular chapter; and then to attempt a Christian response to such a critique.

Bilal Baş is a Research Fellow at the Faculty of Theology at Marmara University in Istanbul. He received his undergraduate degree at the same faculty in 1997. After the completion of his masters' degree in History of Religions in 1999 with the thesis “Arianism as a Christian Sect”, he pursued his academic interest in Church history at McGill University, Faculty of Religious Studies. Under the super-vision of W.J. Torrance Kirby, Dr Bas has completed his PhD with a thesis titled “Eusebius of Caesarea and the Iconoclastic Controversy: the Impact of Eusebian “Imperial Theology” on the justification of Imperial Theologies” which is now in the process of publication.

Daniel Madigan (Washington DC)
John the Baptist and Yahya b. Zakariya: the end and ends of prophecy

Abstract: This paper proposes that a comparative reading of the figure of John/Yahya in our two traditions offers more important insights into the particularity of each tradition rather than their similarity. The differences are seen not just in the relatively unimportant details of this character’s biography but, more significantly, in the central tenets of the two traditions and their respective understandings of the role of prophecy in divine-human relations. At the same time one can see in each tradition as it is practiced a tendency to move away from its particular position towards that of the other.

Daniel Madigan S.J. is an Australian Jesuit priest who joined Georgetown’s Department of Theology in 2008. He is also a Senior Fellow of The Al-Waleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding. In 2007-8 he was International Visiting Fellow at the Woodstock Theological Centre at Georgetown, and continues there as a Senior Fellow directing a project on Christian theologies that are responsive to Islam. Before moving to Georgetown he taught in Rome (2000-7), where he was the founder and director (2002-7) of the Institute for the Study of Religions and Cultures at the Pontifical Gregorian University. His main fields of teaching and research are Qur'anic Studies, Interreligious Dialogue (particularly Muslim-Christian relations). He has also taught as a visiting professor at Columbia University, Ankara University, Boston College and Central European University.

İsmail Taspınar (İstanbul)
Revisiting the Quranic Approach to the People of the Book

Abstract: İsmail Taspınar graduated from Marmara University, Faculty of Divinity in 1994. His master thesis concerned “Rudolf Bultmann and His Contribution to the Research of the History of Religions” (in 1997) and his doctoral thesis was about “Belief in Hereafter in Judaism according to Jewish Sources” (in 2003). In 2003-2004 he carried out post-doctoral research in Interreligious Dialogue in Italy, Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, Istituto di Religione e Culture. His publications include The Other Side of the Wall: Belief in Hereafter in Judaism according to Jewish Sources (İstanbul, 2003), Hacı Abdullah Petri’nin Hıristiyanlık Eleştirisi (İstanbul, 2008).
Tuesday, May 3rd

Session 12 (Parallel - Group 1)

Chair: H. Murre-van den Berg (Leiden)
(please see p.10 below)

Martin Tamcke (Göttingen)

Christians in dispute with Muslims: German Missions to the Muslims in Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire

Abstract: German missions became very active in the Ottoman Empire especially after the first pogroms in Syria and later against the Armenians (1890s) in the Turkish regions. One of the most prominent missions with a main station in Bulgaria was the "Deutsche Orientmission", and one of its main missionaries was Awetaranian, a convert from Islam to Christianity carrying an Armenian name. Through newspapers, he engaged in the public discussion with Muslim thinkers, who took the first step towards interaction. The paper will re-examine the process of understanding and misunderstanding during this "dialogue" on religious topics.

Martin Tamcke, born in 1955, studied theology, philosophy and Oriental Studies getting his Ph.D. in 1985 and habilitation in 1993 at Philipps-Universitaet Marburg. Since 1999, he is professor for ecumenical theology at Georg-August-Universitaet Goettingen and director of the institute for ecumenical theology, oriental church and missionary studies. He received an honorary doctorate from the faculty of theology at Joensuu University (Finland) in 2009 and is a visiting Professor at Chennai/Madras, Kottayam (India), Joensuu and Bucharest.

Ertuğrul Ökten (Istanbul)

Intercommunal Religious Encounters in Sufi Context

Abstract: Religious encounters were a fact of daily life in the Ottoman Empire under the stimulus of which people developed new ways. One social medium in which these type of encounters took place were the Sufi orders- particularly the two orders of Bektashiyeye and Mawlawiya which indicate a considerable degree of awareness of these encounters. With Bektashiyeye, it has been argued that, the fact that this order was especially widespread in the Balkans made them open to Christian influences and traces of this can be found in their rituals and basic manners. With Mawlawiya, recent research has shown that significant interaction in the area of music took place between it and the Orthodox Church. First, I will look into these fields with the Bektashiyeye and Mawlawiya, then I will explore whether these kinds of interactions had further implications for the perception of the divine realm in Muslim and Christian communities.

Ertuğrul Ökten was born in Istanbul in 1971. He did his undergraduate studies at Bosphorus University, completed his M.A. degree in Ottoman history at Bilkent University in 1996, and his Ph.d. at the University of Chicago 2007. His M.A. paper was about Ottoman social life under the light of the fatwas of Kemal Pasha-zade (d. 1533); and his dissertation- on Abdurrahman Jami’s biography (d. 1492) and his intellectual influence in Herat. Currently, he teaches Ottoman Turkish at Sabanci University and history of civilizations at Bahcesehir University. His main fields of interest can be summarized as 14th.-16th century socio-cultural and intellectual history.

Session 13 (Parallel – Group 2)

Chair: Pim Valkenberg (Baltimore) (see p. 8 above)

David Thomas (Birmingham)

Christian Doctrines in Islamic Theology

Abstract: Encounters between Islam and Christianity in the first few centuries of the Islamic era took many forms, though Muslim attitudes gradually settled into the general view that Christian beliefs and doctrines were seriously flawed because they derived from corrupt versions of scripture. This Qur’an-inspired verdict removed any sense of threat from Christianity, and turned it into an object lesson for Muslims. The earliest surviving Islamic treatises of systematic theology graphically portray this attitude by incorporating refutations of Christianity that enabled Muslims to confirm the soundness of their own faith by witnessing the confusion of the other.

David Thomas is Professor of Christianity and Islam at the University of Birmingham, where he specializes in the history of Islamic religious thought and Christian-Muslim relations. He edits the journal Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, and is managing editor of the text and studies series The History of Christian-Muslim Relations. Two recent publications in this series are Christian-Muslim Relations, a bibliographical history vol 1 (600-900), and vol 2 (900-1050), the first outcomes of a project he is leading to trace the surviving records of encounters between the two faiths throughout their history. Further volumes will follow in the next few years.
Süleyman Derin (Istanbul)

Personality of Jesus in the Sufi Though

Abstract: Islam accepts all biblical prophets and reveres them as holy messengers of God. However, among all the prophets Jesus (peace be upon him) occupies a special place for Sufis. His otherworldliness and ascetic life-style makes him a perfect example of how a Sufi master should be. Sufi classical works are full of the stories of Jesus’ life and his parables are mentioned to give spiritual lessons to the Sufi disciples. The aim of this paper will be to illuminate the figure of Jesus as depicted by Sufis, and the important characteristics Jesus (peace be upon him) possesses for Sufi thought. It will further investigate the cultural links between the Sufis and monastic life-styles in southeast Europe as well.


Session 15 (Parallel – Group 1)

Chair: David Thomas (Birmingham)

Zrinka Štimac (Bielefeld)

From diversity to pluralism? Interactions of Abrahamic religions in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Abstract: The religious history of Bosnia and Herzegovina is coined by the fact that Abrahamic religions and local religious institutions exist since hundreds of years. For the longest period of the history that diversity can be described as a parallel existence of religious institutions with weak mutual reception. During the latest war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and afterwards interaction and interferences were intensified. The focus of the presentation lays on the specific challenges the Islamic Community, Catholic Church, Serbian Orthodox Church and Jewish Community as well as the NGO Inter-Religious Council of BiH (Medjureligijsko vijeće) cope with under current post-communist and the post-Dayton circumstances.

Zrinka Štimac, Study of Religion, is a research assistant and a lecturer at the Bielefeld University, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research on Religion and Society (CIRRUeS). She is also a lecturer at the University of Sarajevo. She studied in Sarajevo, hold her M.A. at the University of Hannover and her PhD at the University of Jena. Her academic interests include religious education in Europe, transnational politics and religion, religion and social inequality and religious history of the SEE. Her recent publications include: Religious peace builders, their public recognition and their convictions. Some intermediate results from a research project on religion and post-conflict peace building in Bosnia and Herzegovina. (With H. W. Schäfer und L. H. Seibert), „Forum Bosna“, Sarajevo, forthcoming, Auseinandersetzungen um den Religionsunterricht und die Bildungsreformen in Bosnien und Herzegovina. In: ”Land-Bericht.


Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Leiden)

Language, Religion and Identity: Challenges in the Interreligious History of 20th-Century Turkey

Abstract: One of the major challenges of current inter-religious relations in Turkey is how to deal with the conflicting historical perceptions of the First World War. Between 1914 and 1923, Greek, Armenian and Syriac Christians suffered great losses, losses which only slowly and cautiously are being addressed by today’s Muslim majority in Turkey. This paper will sketch a brief history of the Syriac communities in Turkey in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to understand its impact on discussions in present-day Turkey about Christianity and minority rights in general, as well as on ideas about the relationship between religion and language, in the majority Turkish, as much as in the minority Syriac community.

Heleen Murre-van den Berg teaches the modern history of global Christianity at the Institute for Religious Studies at Leiden University, the Netherlands. Within this wide area, her research and postgraduate teaching mostly focuses on the Middle East, with its Oriental and Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianities. She published widely on Syriac Christianity as well as on Missions in the Middle East and was (co)editor to

Prof. Heleen Murre-van den Berg

Session 16 (Parallel – Group 2)

Chair: Dursun Ali Aykkt (Istanbul)

Dursun Ali Aykkt was born in 1976 in Giresun. He graduated from Faculty of Theology at Marmara University in 1999; and became research assistant in Faculty of Theology in 2000 at Cumhuriyet University. He received his MA degree with a thesis entitled “Mission and the Gospels” in the Institute of Social Sciences at Cumhuriyet University in 2004, and his PhD. Degree with a thesis entitled “Philo of Alexandria as a Forerunner of Christianity” at Marmara University in 2010. His main scientific field is comparative history of religions, especially Judaism and Christianity. His publications include: Misyon ve İnciller (Istanbul, 2005); “Hristiyanlıkta Kuzu Hırsızlığı veya Proselytizm” in İslami Araştırmalar Dergisi (2008); “Bir Dini Fenomen Olarak Kendini Kirbaçlama veya Flagellant Movement”, in Uluslararası Kerbela Sempozyumu (Sivas, 2010) and ‘Sağ Yanağın na Tokat Atmayı’ Düşününce Hakli Savas Aç (If Someone Thinks to “Strike on Your Right Cheek” Declare a Just War), Milel ve Nihal, 2010.

Rahim Acar (Istanbul)/ Isabelle Moulin (Paris)

The necessity of Creation and Divine Freedom

Abstract: One of the most striking points of convergence between the Islamic and the Christian conception of God resides in the radical distinction of the Creator from the created World in the act of creation. The “distinction”, articulated by both Islamic authors such as Avicenna as well as Christian authors such as Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas, is fundamental if one wants to understand the absolute freedom of God in creating the world. For the distinction shows us that man’s existence is totally contingent as it ultimately depends upon the free act of God; moreover, not creating the world does not alter the perfection and eminence of God. The necessary dependence of man has for its corollary the divine freedom of the act of creation. The challenge left to the philosophical theological discourse is to understand how human freedom finds itself to be related to divine freedom.

Medieval philosophy offers a truly dialogical place for an interfaith discourse upon the divine act of creation, since Christian philosophers did not hesitate to use conclusions reached by Jewish and Islamic thinkers. In this perspective, we propose to study the appropriation of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas regarding the Liber de causis, an anonymous recast of Proclus’ Elements of Theology in the Islamic milieu, and to show how Albert and Thomas use and modify the Hellenistic and Islamic heritage to articulate their own view of Creation and Freedom.

On the other hand, in interpreting the philosophical heritage of Greek and Hellenistic philosophers, Avicenna played an important role. He attempted to interpret this heritage in a manner consistent with the Islamic religious teachings. He wanted to address both philosophical concerns, as well as religious ones. His position on creation of the universe and the assertion of divine freedom was not quite welcomed by theologians in Islamic milieu and perhaps in the Christian milieu as well. Still, they seem to agree with Avicenna on basic issues and benefit from Avicenna’s ideas in developing their own position. Thus we hope to show how the course of discussions concerning the necessity of creation and divine freedom in the medieval period evolved along the efforts of theologians and philosophers affiliated with the Abrahamic religions.


Isabelle Moulin is a Professor of Medieval Philosophy and Theology at the Faculté Notre-Dame, Collège des Bernardins, Paris. She is also the Executive Secretary of the Institute of Medieval Studies at the Catholic University of Paris. Her main specific areas of interest are ancient and medieval philosophy and the study of the interreligious dimensions of the notion of creation. Her publications include, Albert the Great. Metaphysics XI, 2-3 (Paris: Vin, 2009), and several articles on medieval philosophy in English and French.
**Wednesday, May 4**

**Session 17**

*Chairs: Ina Merdjanova & Norbert Hintersteiner (Dublin)*

**Interreligious History Group**

David Thomas (Birmingham) and Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Leiden)

(Please see above for these speakers)

**Comparative Theology Group**

Pim Valkenberg (Baltimore) and Dursun Ali Aykt (Istanbul)

**Thursday, May 5**

**Thematic Element 3: Shared Religious Spaces**

**Session 18**

*Chair: Frans Wijsen (Nijmegen)*


**Jacob Sifakis** (Thessaloniki)

**Shared Religious Sites in Northern Greece**

*Abstract: This presentation deals with some historical aspects concerning shared religious sites in Northern Greece. In particular it focuses on the case of Thessaloniki and some of the representative religious monuments of the city.*

**Jack Sifakis** is a Civil Engineer of the Polytechnic Faculty of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, with specification in the field of transport planning. He is the writer of the book The Origin of Civilisation and co-writer of two other books. Since 2009 he is a post-graduate student of the Theological Faculty of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, in the field of the study of religions, with especial interest in multiple religious interpretations, ritualised habits in human societies and the dynamics of social networking interaction.

**Şeyma Turan** (Istanbul)

**Greek Orthodox Sacred Places in Istanbul a psycho-sociological research on the Hagiasma of the Vefa Virgin Mary**

*Abstract: The Hagiasmas, are small sacred places built on the springs of water and enshrined by people who believe this water to have healing characteristics. The roots of the Hagiasmas go back beyond the Byzantine era. The Ottomans were tolerant of their founding and existence. There was an increase in the number of Hagiasmas after the second half of the 19th century. According to various sources, in Istanbul today, there are over 150 Hagiasmas which are dedicated to the Virgin Mary or the Saints. Today, it is still believed that the water of Hagiasmas cures diseases etc. Apart from Greek Orthodox Christians, many different adherents like Armenians and religious believers of Islam and Judaism pray in accordance with their beliefs at these sites, performing own rites such as reading from the Quran.*
Session 20
Chair: Ina Merdjanova (Dublin)

Ger Duijzings (London)

Shared Religious Sites in Kosovo

Abstract: This lecture focuses on shared religious sites and mixed pilgrimages in Kosovo, and is primarily based on Ger Duijzings’ anthropological fieldwork in the region during the 1990s. It will look in particular at the fate and demise of some of these sites (such as the Marian shrine in the Catholic Croat village of Letnica) as a result of the recent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia. In more general terms it will engage with issues of religious and cultural hybridity and tolerance (i.e. with forms of mixing and ‘syncretism’) as well as the opposite trends of religious orthodoxy and nationalist intolerance (i.e. forms of ‘anti-syncretism’) which are both part and parcel of religious life in the Balkans.

Ger Duijzings is Director of the Centre for Southeast European Studies and Reader in the Anthropology of Eastern Europe at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies (London). He published extensively on the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, and is author of Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo (2000) and Geschiedenis en herinnering in Oost-Bosnië. De achtergronden van de val van Srebrenica (in Dutch, 2002), as well as co-editor of The new Bosnian mosaic. Identities, memories and moral claims in a post-war society (2007). More recently he has started research on urban transformations in post-socialist cities, Bucharest in particular.

Elizabeta Koneska (Macedonia)

The Shared Shrines in Macedonia

Abstract: It is well known that Macedonia, both in the past and today, demonstrates a relatively high level of reverence and tolerance for religious shrines from various religious communities and groups. However, it is hardly known that some shrines, places, ambiances, and facilities in our country have been used by members of different religious and ethnic groups, both Christian and Muslim. There are several examples of such shrines, and as the most significant ones should be singled out the following: the Holy Mother of God Prechista near Kichevo, Saint Nicholas, that is, the Torube H’d’r Baba in Makedonski Brod, the monastery of Saint Naum, near Ohrid, and the Husamedin Pasha’s Mosque in Ship. Each of these shrines, as well as the relationship of the religious communities and groups towards them has its specifics by means of which it is separated from the rest.

Elizabeta Koneska, ethnologist, curator in Museum of Macedonia, Skopje, was born and lives in Skopje. 1984 - Graduated at the University in Istanbul, Turkey. Since 1985 she works at the National Museum of Macedonia. The topics of research and scientific interests: copper-smith and tin-smith crafts; traditional food; Slavic Orthodox community in Istanbul; Turkish and other Muslims ethnic and religious communities and mixed relationships in R. Macedonia. Since 1994 she works on visual ethnography, and is the author of about ten films. She wrote more than 30 articles and texts for tree photography monographs. Participated at Internationals Conferences, Film Festivals and has two awards for films.
Session 23

Chair: İsmail Safa Üstün (Istanbul)

Prof. Dr. İsmail Safa Üstün was born in Istanbul in 1963. He obtained his B.A. from the University of Marmara, Istanbul, in 1985; and his M.A. (1987) and Ph. D. (1991) from the University of Manchester. He is currently based at Marmara University, Istanbul (since 1992). Publications include Traditional Political Thought of Shia and Khumeini’s Concept of Walayat-i Faqih, (M.A), University of Manchester, 1987; Heresy And Legitimacy In The 16th Century Ottoman Empire, (Ph.D) U. Manchester, 1991; Humeyni’den Hamaney’e İran İslam Cumhuriyeti Yönetim Biçimi, Birleşik Yayınçılık, İstanbul, 1999; Seyyid Mehmet Refi’ Efendi ve Bozkulu Osman Şâkir Efendi’nin Iran Sefâretnâmeleri (1807 – 1810), İstanbul, 2008.

Kürşat Demirci (Istanbul)

Shared Religious Sites in Istanbul: From Zeus to Yusha

Abstract: At the northern end of the Bosphorus lies a religious site called by contemporary Muslims ‘the Hill of Yusha’, where the 6 meters long tomb of Biblical prophet Joshua and mosque welcome hundreds of visitors each day. This same site enjoyed a similar sacredness throughout its known history at least by three religious traditions: pagan, Christian and Islamic. Followers of these three religions kept visiting this site and surrounding area to invoke the divine for their material needs, food, Money, progeny or healing. This communication will try to show how similar patterns of behaviour remained throughout history in people’s relationship to the divine through the paradigm case of this religious site.

Kürşat Demirci is Associate professor of the History of Religions in the Faculty of Theology at Marmara University, Istanbul. His publications include Dînerlerin Dejenerasyonu; Ortodokslogun Teolojisi; Dîner Tarihinin Meseleleri.

Thematic Element 4: Religion, Politics, and Power Struggles

Monday, May 9th

Session 24

Chair: Manuela Kalsky (Nijmegen) (see p. 17)

Talip Küçükcan (Istanbul)

Religion, Modernity and Secularism in Comparative Perspective

Abstract: Modern states developed different mechanisms and state apparatuses to deal with state-religion affairs. Some states adopted a soft approach to religion and its claims, whereas some tried to force religion out of the public sphere. This paper is an attempt to chart the trajectory of state-religion relations with a particular emphasis on modernity and its impact on religion. As we speak of de-secularization, it is time to address how a comparative approach may provide a perspective for understanding the multiplicity of responses to secularism and religion in the modern context.

Talip Küçükcan is Professor of Sociology of Religion and Director of Middle East Institute at Marmara University. He is also an Advisor to the President of Higher Education Council (YÖK) Dr. Küçükcan received an MA from the School of Oriental and African Studies, U. of London, and a PhD in Ethnic Relations from the U. of Warwick. He was a researcher at the Center for Islamic Studies (ISAM) in Istanbul before moving to Marmara University. Dr. Küçükcan works on Turks and Muslims in Europe; comparative secularism and state policies towards religions in the European Union. Publications include Politics of Ethnicity, Identity and Religion: Turkish-Muslims in Britain, (Avebury, 1999); Euro Turks and Turkey-EU Relations: The Dutch Case, co-authored with V. Gungor (Amsterdam, 2006); Turks in Europe: Culture, Identity and Integration, ed. with V. Gungor (Amsterdam: Turkevi Research Centre, 2009).

Caner Taslaman/ Alper Bilgili (Yildiz)

Islam in Turkey in the Process of Globalization

Abstract: This presentation attempts to explain how social and political phenomena related to Islam in Turkey, have developed through the process of globalization, and what the dynamics of these phenomena entail. The focus is on the following issues in order to clarify the subject: (1) The relationship between center/policy and periphery/society and the revision in this structure; (2) The success rate of the state in spreading its ideology through its ideological state apparatuses, and the success of opponent ideologies in “taking position” within these apparatuses; (3) The mentality adopted by the state and the transformations taking place in this mentality; (4) The role of the interpretations and the tactics developed by the people from the “inner circle” of Islamists in the emergence of the aforementioned phenomena.
Caner Taslaman graduated from Sociology Department, Bosphorus University. He received his M. A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy of Religions program from Marmara University, Institute of Social Sciences. His M. A. thesis was on the Big-bang theory and its religious implications, while his Ph. D. dissertation concerned the theory of evolution with respect to its philosophical and theological importance. He received his second Ph. D. degree from Istanbul University, Faculty of Political Sciences with a dissertation on “Islam in Turkey in the Process of Globalization.” Publications include: Big Bang and God (Istanbul: Istanbul, 2003), Theory of Evolution, Philosophy and God (Istanbul: Istanbul, 2007) and Quantum Theory, Philosophy and God (Istanbul: Istanbul, 2008). Post-doctoral research was done at Tokyo, California State and Oxford Universities. Current affiliation is as an Associate Professor of Philosophy with Yildiz Teknik University, Istanbul.

Alper Bilgili graduated from Bosphorus University, Department of Political Sciences and International Relations. He received his M. A. degree from there also. He is a Ph. D. student at Istanbul University, Faculty of Arts and Literature, Department of Sociology. Alper is affiliated with the Sabanci University as teaching assistant; and with Yildiz Teknik University as adjunct professor. He also offers courses at Fatih University, Department of Sociology.

Session 25
Chair: Jacques Haers (Leuven)

Jacques Haers is a Jesuit priest, Professor of Theology at the Catholic University of Leu- ven, member at OCIPE, Brussels and Professor of Theology at Lumen Vitae in Brussels, as well as being Chair for the Centre of Liberation Theologies (since 2001).

Ina Merdjanova (Dublin) (see p. 4)
Religion and Politics in the Post-Communist Balkans: an Overview

Abstract: The paper will discuss comparatively the ‘return’ of religion in the public sphere of different Balkan countries after the end of the Cold War. It will focus on the instrumentalization of religious identities for various nationalist projects in the context of multiple transitions undergone by the post-communist societies (social, political, economic and ideological), and particularly in the context of the violent dissolution of the Yugoslav Federation into new nation-states.

Session 26
Chair: Rahim Acar (Istanbul) (see p.11 above)

Gazi Erdem (Ankara)
Islam in Secular Turkey: the Presidency of Religious Affairs

Abstract: Among Islamic countries, modern Turkey offers an excellent case study in balancing religion and secularism, as it is totally different from other Muslim countries. In Turkey, Islam and democracy coexist. A moderate perception and understanding of Islam can be seen clearly. Religious freedom is granted for all religious groups. Though they have some problems due to the state’s perception of religion, in general they enjoy religious freedom provided for by the constitution, and follow the jurisdiction of their respected religions. The Turkish states’ perception of religion can be traced back to the Ottoman Empire. During the transition from the Ottoman Empire to a secular republic, the Presidency of Religious Affairs (the Diyanet) was established as a public institution. This discussion evaluates the basics of religious freedom in Turkey and the positions of religious people (not only those of Muslims, but also of Christians and Jews). Furthermore, the organization, duty, and services of the Diyanet will be explained and discussed.

Gazi Erdem is the Head of Strategic Planning Department in the Presidency of Religious Affairs. He has studied for his MA in England and completed his Ph.D. in Ankara. The topics of the MA and Ph.D theses were "Orthodox Church under Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth Century" and "Christians under Ottoman Empire: 1856-1876" respectively. He taught a course on the Life of Prophet Muhammad in the Hartford Seminary in CT/USA. Publications include Islam for Youth (Ankara, 2009) for the Turkish youth born abroad. He also edited the special issue of Muslim World II/2008 (Diyanet Special Issue).
Tuesday, May 10th  
Session 27

Chair: Jacques Haers (Leuven) (see above)

Manuela Kalsky (Nijmegen)  
Women and Power Struggles in Islam, Christianity, and (Post)Secular Societies

Abstract: Today the Netherlands is one of the most secular societies in Europe. Apart from the fact that people are leaving the churches there is a religious revival going on in Dutch society. Sociologists of religion conclude that there is a kind of 'unbound spirituality' outside the institutions. Moreover, there are 800,000 Muslims in the Netherlands who are asking for their right of religious freedom. This lecture gives an overview of the changes and challenges politics and religion are facing in the Netherlands today, with a special attention to the position of women within this power struggle.

Dr. Manuela Kalsky is the director of the Theological Research Centre of the Dutch Dominicans in Nijmegen, NL. She was born in Germany, studied Christian theology at the university of Marburg and Amsterdam (PhD on Christology from the perspective of women in different cultures). She lectured at the universities of Vienna, Fribourg, Hamburg and Hannover, and contributed writing in the field of gender, religion and interreligious dialogue. As chief editor of the multimedia websites www.reliflex.nl and www.nieuwwij.nl she is a frequent participant in Dutch debates on the issues of multicultural and -religious society. As head of the interdisciplinary research program ‘Looking for a new “we” in the Netherlands’ her research interest is focused on multiple (religious) belonging and issues of identity. For publications (such as ‘Interreligious Dialogue and the Development of a Transreligious Identity. A Correspondence’, in: Journal of the European Society of Women in Theological Research 17 (2009), 41-58), for more info, see: www.manuelakalsky.nl and www.dstsnl.nl.

Nazife Şişman (Istanbul)  
Islam and Women in Turkey’s Modern and post-secular Discourse

Abstract: Throughout the modern period “women” has been the symbolic-cultural site upon which the political controversy has been built up. So in this paper I will try to expose the political and historical dynamics of the “Islam and women” issue throughout Turkey’s modernization period. What were the thoughts of late Ottoman and early Republican elite, modernist and Islamist intellectuals concerning this issue? Was there a common base that made possible the use of terms “Islam” and “feminism” within the same compound after 1980? The historical and political background will be depicted around these questions and in parallel to the stages corresponding to subsequent political periods in Turkish modern history. Then through the central role of “headscarf ban” in all discussion concerning notions of modernity, presence of religious identity in public sphere, multicultural identity, the duality between republican equality and constitutional citizenship etc., I will focus on the post-secular discourse.

Nazife Şişman gained her BA degree in Economics from Boğazkale University and did postgraduate studies in Sociology. She works as a freelance writer. Her writing interests centre on women issues in Muslim experience in the modern period. Identity politics, cultural encounters, and everyday life constitute her main study areas. In Günün Kısa Tarihi (Short History of the Present-2008) the writer deals with the question of practicing faith in a secular world. Her recent work Baştursu: Simriz Din Yani Sinir (Headscarf: Border of a Borderless World-2009) makes a study of the socio-politics of the headscarf issue in Turkey. Her publications include among others Emanet’ten Mülk’e: Kadın, Beden, Siyaset (Women, Body and Politics-2003), Küreselleşmenin Pençesi İslam’ın Peçesi (Pawn of Globalisation, Veil of Islam-2005). Her translations from English to Turkish include Martin Lings’ The Life of the Prophet; Seyyid Hossein Nasr’s An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines; Mawdudi’s Tefhim’ül Qur’an; Amina Wadud’s Qur’an and Woman.

Session 28

Chairs: Rahim Acar (Istanbul) and Norbert Hintersteiner (Dublin) (see above)

Hadi Adanali (Istanbul)  
Ethical Roots of Intercultural Dialogue

Abstract: The main aim of intercultural dialogue is to establish a link through which the members of different cultures communicate with each other. Though the communicative link has many dimensions, among which four are prominent: linguistic, cognitive, emotive, and normative- each dimension among these is partially independent, i.e., one can speak the language of a culture and be familiar with its inner workings but still avoid communication. Similarly, one may not speak the language of a culture or understands very little about that culture but still have a genuine interest in communicating with its members. Linguistic, cognitive, emotive and ethical dimensions are also interrelated, i.e., speaking a language increases the capacity for cognitive understanding and this helps to establish empathy. Competence in these domains contributes to the overall success of the communicative interaction. Thus, this presentation analyzes the complex relations among these domains with respect to intercultural dialogue and asks whether the ethical dimension has a priority over others.

Dr. Ahmet Hadi Adanali: born in Yalova, Turkey in 1963; B.A. in Religious Studies at Ankara University; M.A. in Philosophy at Middle East Technical University in Ankara; Ph.D. in Islamic Philosophy at the University of Chicago. Between the years 1995-2008, he has lectured on philosophy, Islamic thought, democracy and human rights at Ankara University. He has worked as visiting scholar at various universities inclu-
Interreligious Coexistence and the Unfinished Projects of Southeast Europe

Abstract: Since the changes in the last 20 years South East Europe is offering a chance especially on the fields of intercultural and interreligious relations. Islam and Christianity are living together in SE-Europe under different political conditions but in general successfully. The wars by the break-down of Yugoslavia have sharpened some conflicts because politics has used religion to create hatred and conflicts. Some steps of reconciliation were done but the process is not yet finished. It is an important process because the challenge is to create a European Islam. It has to be mentioned that the relations between the Christian Churches (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) could be also better.