

**Call for Papers**  
**Religion as an Object of Historical and Social Scientific Study:**  
**Global Perspectives**

**Workshop at the Centre for Advanced Studies**  
**„Multiple Secularities – Beyond the West, Beyond Modernities“**  
**Leipzig University, 4-5 November 2021**

In recent decades, the category of ‘religion’ has been increasingly problematised as a concept for comparative, trans-regional and trans-historical research. This category, a main objection goes, was coined in a particular context and retains a normative bias, either of a Christian or of a modern Western nature. Some attribute especial relevance to the modern academic study of religion in shaping or even creating the category of ‘religion’. At the same time, and somewhat paradoxically, ‘religion’ has become a meaningful category globally. This historical process of globalisation cannot be attributed solely to the influence of Western hegemony. Neither does it amount to homogenisation. While historical and social scientific approaches to religion do seem to be most firmly and widely established in European and North American academic settings, their establishment and differentiation from theology is more recent than is often assumed. Equally, the historical and social scientific study of religion is not confined to Europe and North America, but has also become institutionalised in other regions and contexts.

This workshop will bring together case studies and theoretical reflections on the study of religion as an object of historical and social scientific inquiry in different academic contexts in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. We are especially interested in the global presence and characteristics of religion as an object of study in the most pertinent academic disciplines: History of Religion; Comparative Religious Studies; Sociology; Anthropology and Political Science (excluding Theology and Philosophy). Central questions concern the place, status and history of research on religion in these disciplines: What are the main authors, theories and topics? Do academics within these disciplines understand their approach to be secular, and how do they distinguish it from theological approaches? How do they conceptualise ‘religion’ and do they address the question of universality and particularity, or the issue of (de-)colonisation in this regard? In the respective disciplines, which canons and genealogies of the study of religion are constructed? What connections, but also barriers are there between research on religion in different academic contexts? What are the institutional, political and societal conditions facilitating or hindering the establishment and development of the mentioned disciplinary approaches to religion? Potentially of interest also are pre-institutional precursors configuring religion as an object of historical and sociological inquiry. Please note that this workshop is not concerned with case studies that themselves use religion as an analytical concept, but rather in meta-studies on the presence of disciplinary usages and their characteristics.

While our aim is for a diverse array of academic contexts to be covered and represented, for pragmatic reasons, the workshop language will be English.

Costs for travel and accommodation will be covered. In the event of travel restrictions due to coronavirus, the workshop will be held in a hybrid format, allowing for virtual participation.

We plan to publish selected contributions.

Please send your contribution and direct all inquiries to: [florian.zemmin@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:florian.zemmin@uni-leipzig.de)

**Timeline**

- 30 April 2021: Deadline for abstract (250–350 words) and short biography
- 15 May 2021: Notification of acceptance
- 30 October 2021: Deadline for draft of full paper
- 4-5 November: Workshop