

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### Embracing Faith and Desire. Autumn School on the Anthropology of Gender, Sexuality and Religion 26–29 September 2023 | FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg

#### Convenors:

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#### Thematic scope and aims

This Autumn School explores the **intersections of gender, sexuality and religion from an anthropological lens**. In many contemporary societies across the globe these intersections have been both enacted as sites of volatile contestation and creative transformation. On the one hand, the darker side of this relationship often manifests in the controversies and tensions around how religious conservatism hampers gender equality, facilitates gender based violence and reproduces marginalization of people of non-heteronormative and non-cis-normative genders and sexualities. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the facts that for many of those being subjected to these oppressive dimensions of religious discourse, religion has also become a source for not only attaining solace and spiritual joy but also means cultivating personal and collective wellbeing.

There is no other setting that can offer us a richer understanding of the complex relationship between gender, sexuality and religion than the everyday life. Differences and similarities of human life-worlds are object of study in social and cultural anthropology following a comparative perspective. In contrast to other disciplines in the social sciences and the humanities that focus on very specific fields of society and culture, such as political science, economics and psychology, social and cultural anthropology follows a holistic approach, i.e. it focuses on complex interrelations and interactions between different sub-areas of cultural dynamics and social practice. Given this understanding and strategy, relationships between religion, gender, and sexuality – and beyond – can be fully understood in its complexity.

The ethnographic methodology is key to understand dynamic cultural and social processes, constellations of meaning and contexts of action, especially from the perspective of the actors. Given this, doing ethnography is an especially valuable approach for studying life-worlds of marginalized people, for example, to capture their mostly invisible and silenced social realities and to give them voice. If we take this perspective, we come across meaningful examples. In Indonesia for instance, Muslim queer and trans communities and their allies mobilize both physical and virtual spaces and places for collectively engaging with Islamic theology and religious practices towards inclusiveness and diversity. This happens amidst escalating discriminatory public campaigns and local government policies towards LGBTIQ+ communities and is frequently tied to Islamic morality (Wadud 2006, Garcia 2020). In the Netherlands and in Poland, for example, different groups of Christian pilgrims negotiate gendered and national identifications at religious shrines. Women and men especially relate here to Virgin Mary when re-negotiating gender roles in the context of European nation-building discourses (Samson 2012). Jewish feminists and queers claim their rights in manifold places in the diaspora with a particular intersectional approach that embraces their religious faith as well as their gender and sexual identities (Brettschneider 2016, Greenebaum 1999). These examples demonstrate that gender, sexuality and religion are not only about personal identity, embodied subjectivities and affective

sensibilities; they are also about social organisations, power structures and material entanglements. These manifold dimensions should be explored in the upcoming Autumn School at the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg.

### **Autumn School formats**

This four-day Autumn School aims to provide **young and emerging scholars (advanced MA-students and PhD-students) in social and cultural anthropology** with analytical, theoretical, and methodological tools for the study of gendered and sexualized dynamics in religious contexts. It brings together junior researchers from a variety of global and national contexts with leading scholars from internationally renowned research institutions. This set-up enriches the understanding of the participants of new critical developments in the fields of the anthropology of gender, sexuality, and religion and enables an in-depth theoretical exploration of their individual research projects. In addition to focused lectures, readings, and class discussions, the School will provide graduate students from around the world with opportunities to develop academic writing and presentation skills through collaborative work with senior researchers and leading experts in the field.

**The Autumn School aims at 15-20 participants.** According to the thematic scope of the student's research projects, they will be assigned to certain thematically framed working groups which are each led by one of the senior scholars. Each group/panel will be formed by three to four students plus one senior scholar, i.e. five groups/panels will be held throughout the Autumn School.

To get started, the senior scholar will select readings for the group that apply to the student's common research interests, their shared methodology and/or theoretical frameworks. The group will discuss the readings together. In a second slot, the graduate students will have the opportunity to present their research projects orally, to get feedback from their peers and from the senior scholar. In addition, each student gets the chance to improve their writing skills (and career perspectives). After a writing example (and a CV) had been submitted to the assigned expert prior to the Autumn School, the expert will comment on each piece in an individual one-to-one-session. The Autumn School furthermore offers the opportunity to either train ethnographic methods (for students who have not yet entered the field) or the oral defense of the prospective MA- or PhD-thesis (for students who are about to finish their thesis). Through the method of "presenting the thesis/research findings in 3 sentences", they additionally improve their rhetoric and presentation skills in general. Feedback will be provided by peers and by the senior scholar. Thus, students in each panel will work with fellows and particularly with an appointed advisor on the development of their research.

Apart from developing academic anthropological and ethnographic research, writing, and presentation techniques, this Autumn Schools furthermore offers a platform for rich intellectual engagement and networking. Keynote lectures will be held by leading scholars in the field of gender, sexuality, and religion. Moreover, a panel discussion with activists from the intersectional field of gender, sexuality and religion will provide perspectives on the themes of the Autumn School from non-academic, but still overall relevant, viewpoints: from the Liberal-Islamischer-Bund e.V. (confirmed), Keshet Deutschland – "Die jüdische LGBTQIA\* community in Deutschland" – (confirmed), and the Arbeitsgruppe LGBTIQ "Kreuz & Queer" (requested). Film screenings and a guided city tour through Erlangen that covers questions of gendered history in the city offer further intellectual stimulation with thematic aspects of the Autumn School. Through joint dinners, students, scholars, and activists can connect with each other also in informal settings.

### **Keynotes:**

- Prof. Dr. amina wadud

(Professor Emerita of Islamic Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University)

- Prof. Dr. Melissa Wilcox

(Professor of Religious Studies; University of California, Riverside)

### **Senior scholars/ mentors:**

- Prof. Dr. Claudia Liebelt (FU Berlin, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology)
- Dr. Omar Kasmani (FU Berlin, SFB Affective Societies)

- Dr. Wikke Jansen (University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg Center for Transcultural Studies)
- Anna Fedele, PhD (Philosophical-theological College Brixen, Italy )
- Kim Knibbe, PhD (University of Groningen, Comparative Study of Religion)

#### **Activists panel :**

- Marco Linguri (LIB e.V.)
- Nicoleta Mena (Keshet Deutschland)
- Natascha Hilterscheid (Kreuz & Queer - Arbeitsgruppe LGBTIQ der Nordkirche) (requested)

#### **Preliminary Programme**

<b>Tuesday, 26/09/2023</b>	<b>Wednesday, 27/09/2023</b>	<b>Thursday, 28/09/2023</b>	<b>Friday, 29/09/2023</b>
	<u>9:15am-10:45am</u> Panels I, II, III  Selected readings (selected by senior scholar according to the thematic fit)	<u>9:15am-10:45am</u> Panels IV, V  Selected readings (selected by senior scholar according to the thematic fit)	<u>9:15am-11:45am</u> Panels I-V  Fieldwork preparation: fine-tuning participant observation techniques, interview questions etc. <i>Or:</i> Practicing thesis-defense
	<u>11:15am-1:30pm</u> Panels I, II, III  Oral presentations by students, Q&A, Feedback from the senior scholar	<u>11:15am-1:30pm</u> Panels IV, V  Oral presentations by students, Q&A, Feedback from the senior scholar	<u>12pm-12:30pm</u> Concluding remarks + farewell
<u>2pm-3pm</u> Registration, coffee	<u>1:30pm-3pm</u> Lunch break	<u>1:30pm-3pm</u> Lunch break	
<u>3pm-4pm</u> Opening remarks	<u>3pm-4:30pm</u> Panels I, II, III  Feedback on writing (individually)	<u>3pm-4:30pm</u> Panels VI, V  Feedback on writing (individually)	
<u>4:15pm-5:45pm</u> Keynote I:  amina wadud Joint dinner	<u>5pm-6:30pm</u> Keynote II  Melissa Wilcox Joint dinner	<u>5pm-6:30pm</u> Roundtable discussion with political activists	

#### **How to Apply:**

Application packages from eligible students should contain:

1. **Curriculum vitae** (including education, publications, teaching experiences)
2. One-page **description** of your research project (introduction, research questions, methodology, approach)
3. **Motivation** for participation in the Autumn School (one page)
4. Information on funding: Does your institution refund an Autumn School travel cost or not?  
**Travel subsidies can be provided for 5 selected participants..**

Application materials should be sent directly to Viola Thimm and Ferdiansyah Thajib by **15 June 2023**.

- ⇒ Successful applications will be notified via email by **30 June 2023**.
- ⇒ Selected students will be required to submit a **full-length conference paper** (maximum: 6,000 words, including references, notes and bibliography) based on their original abstract by **25 August 2023**.

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