



WESTFÄLISCHE  
WILHELMS-UNIVERSITÄT  
MÜNSTER



# The Cluster of Excellence Religion and Politics



Religion und Politik

EXZELLENZCLUSTER | WWU MÜNSTER



Some 200 academics from more than 20 disciplines in the humanities and social sciences and from around 14 countries research in the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” of the University of Münster. They deal with the relationship of religion and politics across epochs and cultures: from the world of ancient gods and Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period to the current situation in Europe, America, Asia and Africa.



The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics in Pre-Modern and Modern Cultures” was founded in 2007 at the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster. Its scholars deal with the relationship of religion and politics across epochs and cultures. It is nationally the largest research association of its kind and of the 43 Clusters of Excellence in Germany, it is the only one to deal with religion. The German Federal Government and the Federal States support the project with 33.7 million euros in the Excellence Initiative’s second funding phase from 2012 until 2017.

The approximately 80 research projects range from antiquity until today. The members cooperate across interdisciplinary boundaries by means of interconnecting platforms. The following subjects are involved: history, law, political science, religious sociology and religious science, Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Islamic theology, classical and modern philology as well as philosophy, history of art, Arab studies, ancient Near Eastern studies, ethnology, archaeology, Egyptology, Jewish studies, Byzantine studies, musicology and book studies.

A graduate school for PhD students forms part of the research association. A programme for postdoctoral academics was added in 2012. Both programmes offer young academics favourable conditions for independent research. The Centre for Research Communication promotes the dialogue of



humanities and social sciences with representatives of the media, politics, educational institutions, the churches and religious communities as well as with the citizens.

As a result of the Cluster of Excellence’s activities, the University of Münster has become a unique place for interdisciplinary religious research. In order to safeguard this, the University is developing sustained structures beyond the Excellence Initiative. In the first funding phase from 2007 to 2012, in addition to new professorships, three centres were founded: the Center for Religion and Modernity (Centrum für Religion und Moderne, CRM), the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (Centrum für Mittelalter- und Frühnezeitforschung, CMF) and the Centre for Eastern Mediterranean History and Culture (Centrum für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mittelmeerraums, GKM). They serve to attract new research associations and to act as a forum for public events, publication series and journal editors.



# Academic concept



The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” investigates the relationship of religion and politics in different constellations of power and situations of conflict – from antiquity until today, spanning the polytheism of antiquity, the religions of Africa and East Asia, and the scripture-based monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in their diverse developments and interrelationships.

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The researchers examine “religion” and “politics” as historically variable social and cultural fields, the interrelationship of which is the result of conflicts, negotiation processes and symbolic constructing. They divide the matter into four fields of research: normativity, mediality, integration and violence. In an interdisciplinary manner, they discuss the differentiation of religion and politics, transcultural entanglements, the relationship of religion and gender, and cultural ambiguity.

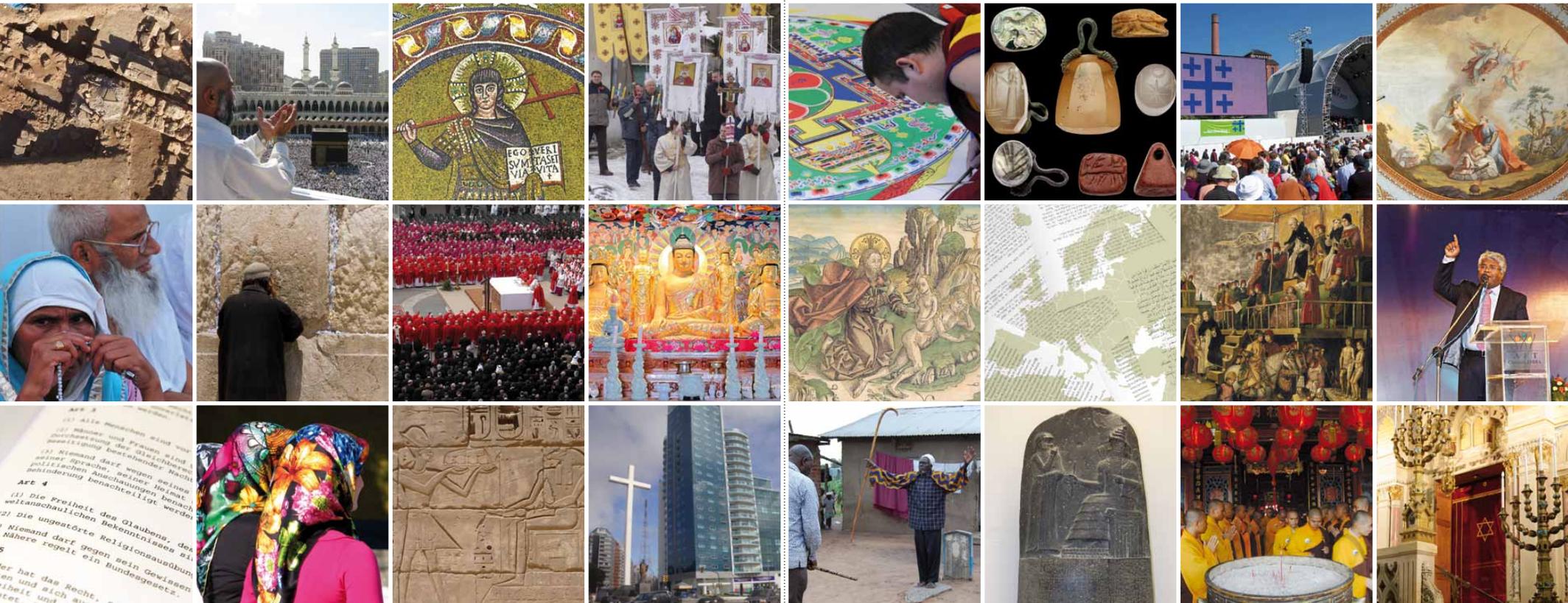
The Cluster of Excellence has an exceptional position in the international research community as it connects subjects and methods in a manner unlike that of other religious research institutions: in some 80 individual projects, research is undertaken that is both historical and based on the present, empirical and normative, analytic and hermeneutic. The results of the interdisciplinary cooperation have already brought about numerous publications, for instance on the topic of religion and

violence, the integration of religious plurality, the implementation of norms, about political and religious stagings, and the secularisation theory.

Work set out from the experience that the modern division of religion and politics, which had long been taken for granted, has been confounded by global processes of economic, political, cultural and medial interrelations. Master narratives such as the modernisation theory were put into perspective and historicised. The secularisation theory, which is geared to western liberal societies, had to be modified and broadened. The Cluster of Excellence is continuing with this work.

The aggravation of several political-religious conflicts in the world has further intensified the topicality of the subject in recent years. The researchers assume that present situations of conflict may only be adequately evaluated from a historical and culturally comparative perspective. Therefore, they regularly make contributions to public debates with the aim of providing a larger reflective distance from contemporary problems. In addition to intense media work, public lecture series, lectures, workshops, interactive and cultural events such as exhibitions or film and concert series also serve this purpose. The Centre for Research Communication conveys the researchers’ expertise to the public outside the universities.

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# Research programme



- Goldene Pracht  
Mittelalterliche Schatzkunst in Westfalen
- Andreas Heppich  
ISAAC LA PEYRERE
- Ludwig Siep — La philosophie pratique de Hegel
- Robert Schlich, Saleem (Hrsg.)  
Kollektive Identitäten
- Michael Höfner - Engelbert Winter  
KOMMAGENE
- Meyer - Schubert (Hrsg.)  
Politik und Islam
- Kirchlichkeit und Religiosität in Ostmittel- und O...
- Werner Freitag (Hrsg.)  
DIE PFARRE IN DER STADT
- Funke / Haake  
Greek Federal States and Their Sanctuaries
- Gabriel | Spiess | Winkler (Hrsg.)  
Religion – Gewalt – Terrorismus
- Grothaus/Krüger |  
INTEGRATION RELIGIÖSER PLURALITÄT
- Silke Hamel  
Die katholische Kirche  
und Gewalt
- Robert Waltz (Hrsg.)  
Zwei Sonnen am Goldenen Horn?
- Grünbart, Rückert, Vučićević (Hrsg.)  
Livi, Schmidt, Sturm
- campus  
DIE 1970ER JAHRE ALS SCHWARZES JAHRZEHT
- Felicity Jenz /  
Hanna Aelke  
Missions and Media
- KARL GABRIEL, CHRISTEL GÄRTNER, DETLEF POLLACK  
UMSTRITTENE SÄKULARISIERUNG
- FELANT 246  
Jakob Wöhrlé  
Fremdlinge im eigenen Land
- VANINLIVAS VREZELIENE  
EINE DEUTSCHE KONSTANTINOPOL
- ZWICK (Hrsg.)  
Religion und Gewalt im Mittelalter
- Jürgen Werbeck (Hrsg.)  
Sühne, Martyrium und Erlösung?
- Michael Höfner /  
Lucida /  
Singschorn Winter (Hrsg.)  
Lokale Identität  
Im Römischen Nahen Osten
- Oriens et  
Occidens 14
- Albertz  
and  
Schmitt  
Family and Household  
Religion in  
Ancient  
Israel and  
the Levant
- HERDER  
SPEKTAKEL DER MACHT

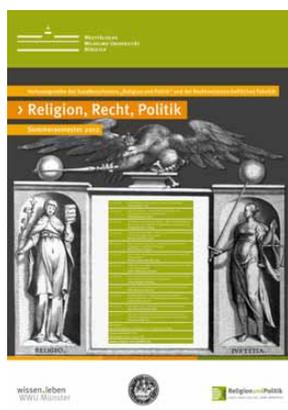
The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” examines the manifestations and the changing relationship of religion and politics from antiquity until today. To be able to systematically investigate this complex subject, the approximately 200 researchers divided it into four fields of research: normativity, mediality, integration and violence.

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The “Normativity” field of research, for instance, deals with the questions as to why norms which had been a given for a long time are suddenly called into question, and as to whether norms may still be justified religiously in secular societies. The “Mediality” field of research is concerned with how change in the media influences religion and politics. The “Integration” field of research deals with the question as to which factors make it easier for the members of different religions to live together peacefully. The “Violence” field of research investigates the potentials for violence and peace in religious systems of meaning, and examines how violence is justified by sacred texts.

### Examples from the fields of research and interconnecting platforms

#### Normativity



#### Mediality



#### Integration



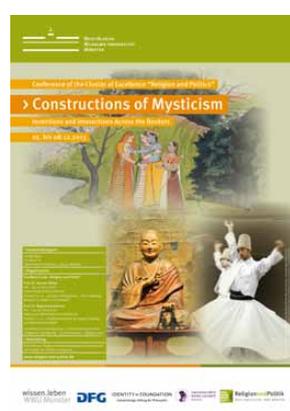
#### Violence



#### Differentiation



#### Transcultural Entanglements



#### Religion and Gender



#### Ambiguity



Four interconnecting platforms dealing with overlapping questions serve as crosslinks between the fields of research: the platform “Differentiation and De-Differentiation” examines how the relationship of religion and politics has developed over the centuries, and to which extent the two fields have become differentiated in the modern age. The platform “Transcultural Entanglements” deals with mutual influences between different religions and cultures from antiquity until today.

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The interconnecting platform “Religion and Gender” investigates the mutual influence between gender and the social, political and religious order in different ages and cultures. The platform “Cultural Ambiguity” asks how societies deal with forms of ambiguity and indecisiveness, and how much tolerance they show towards such ambiguity. The interconnecting platforms provide room for interdisciplinary communication and theoretical reflection.

# Organi- sation



The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” is headed by a board of directors which is elected for two years and consists of nine members entitled to vote, as well as by the meeting of the principal investigators (PI).



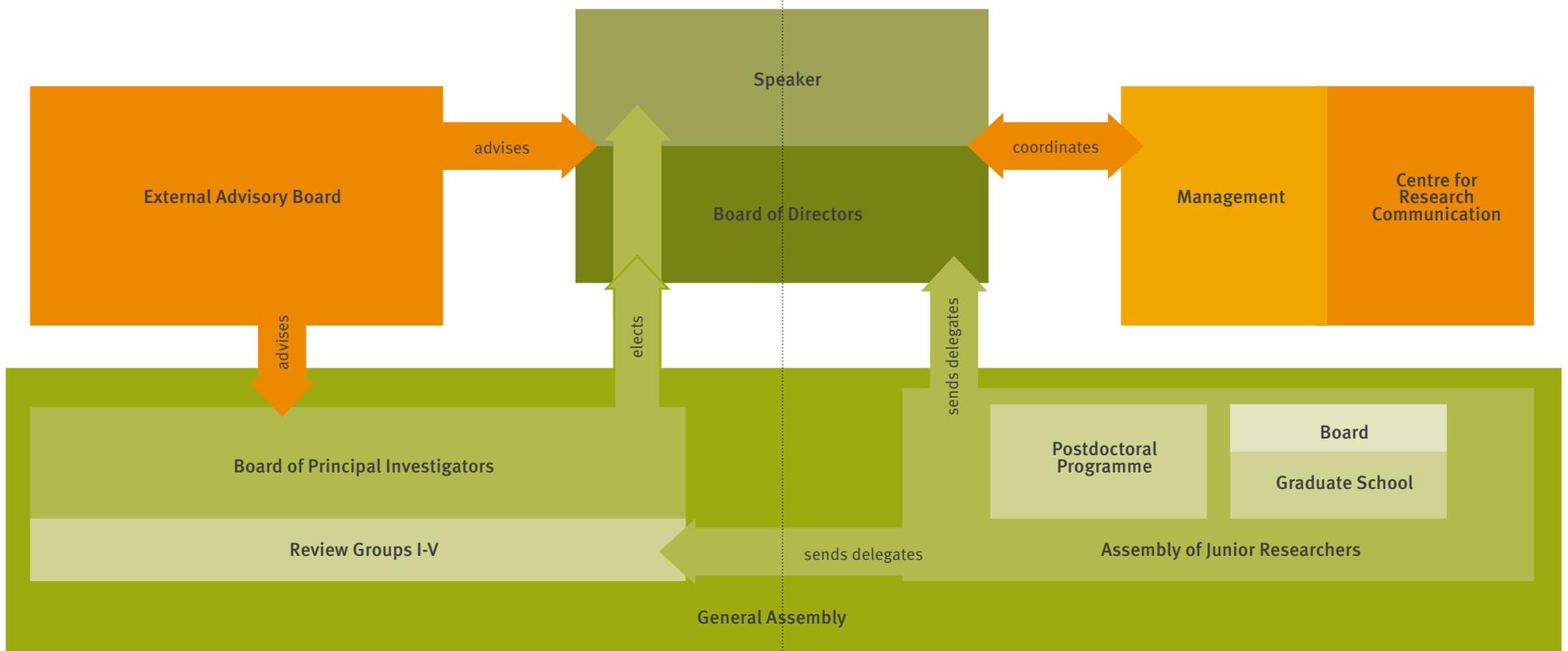
The board of principal investigators elects a speaker who represents the Cluster of Excellence within and outside the university and who acts as chairperson in all committees of the research association.

The members of the Cluster of Excellence convene for a full meeting once every semester in order to discuss the research agenda and the Cluster’s common activities. An advisory board, consisting of internationally renowned scholars, gives academic advice to the Cluster and makes recommendations for its further work.

The Cluster’s management is responsible for the academic coordination and practical organisation of the Cluster of Excellence. The first point of contact for the public is the Centre for Research Communication, which advances the dialogue with the media and with the public.

The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” maintains a Graduate School and a Postdoctoral Programme for the promotion of junior researchers and for the unity of research and teaching. The programmes offer junior researchers the opportunity for independent participation in interdisciplinary research.

The Cluster of Excellence has set itself the target of treating people as equal, irrespective of gender, age, family background, ethnic affiliation, sexual orientation, illness and handicap. The research association has established the position of an equal opportunity commissioner in order to counteract discrimination.





**Promoting  
junior  
researchers**

**The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” maintains a Graduate School and a Postdoctoral Programme for the promotion of junior researchers and for the unity of research and teaching. The programmes offer junior researchers the independent participation in interdisciplinary research.**

The institutions support focused and structured doctoral and postdoctoral studies on a topic from the conflicting interests of religion and politics. The Graduate School offers doctoral students from the humanities and the social sciences an interdisciplinary Doctoral Studies Programme.

The Doctoral Studies Programme is designed to train researchers in the traditions and requirements of their own academic discipline, at the same time also broadening their perspectives beyond the boundaries of subjects and departments. Each of the doctoral candidates is mentored by a team of two professors and a mentor who already holds a PhD.



During the Cluster of Excellence’s first funding phase from 2007 to 2012, 47 doctoral students completed the Doctoral Studies Programme in the Graduate School. They found subsequent employment with other universities and research institutions and in publishing houses, schools, government departments, church institutions and libraries.

In the Postdoctoral Programme, which came into being at the beginning of the Cluster of Excellence’s second funding stage in 2012 as a novel format, researchers with an outstanding doctoral degree find their own platform for exchange in overlapping research questions. They take part in the Cluster of Excellence’s fields of research and interconnecting platforms, and also benefit from the Postdoctoral Programme’s own activities and further training in higher education didactics. In addition, the institution invites guest researchers to the Cluster of Excellence.



# Research communi- cation





# Religious research in the future

With the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”, the University of Münster has become a nationally singular place of religious research. The University has created sustainable structures in order to safeguard the extent and diversity of its interdisciplinary research activities and international exchange.

In addition to new professorships in religious sociology, Jewish studies, Islamic law and Islamic history, three centres were founded. The Center for Religion and Modernity (Centrum für Religion und Moderne, CRM), the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (Centrum für Mittelalter- und Frühneuzeitforschung, CMF) and the Centre for Eastern Mediterranean History and Culture (Centrum für Geschichte und Kultur des östlichen Mittelmeerraums, GKM) serve to attract new research associations and to act as a forum for public events, publication series and journal editors.

The “Hans-Blumenberg-Professur”, a visiting professorship for the topic of religion and politics named after the Münster philosopher Hans Blumenberg, will link the centres and make for international incentives. The Cluster of Excellence maintains close ties with other institutions at the University of Münster, such as the Centre for Islamic Theology (Zentrum für Islamische Theologie, ZIT) and the Centre for Religious Studies (Centrum

für Religiöse Studien, CRS). There is also a close exchange with the Faculties of Protestant and of Roman Catholic Theology as well as with Jewish studies and with the Centre for Advanced Study in Bioethics.

The **Center for Religion and Modernity (CRM)** was established within the context of the Cluster of Excellence in order to account for the new focus of religious studies in Law and the Social Sciences at the University of Münster. It concentrates and organises the research on religions in the modern age at the University of Münster.

The **Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies (CMF)** emerged from two research units, the Institute for Early Medieval Studies and the research unit for the modern history of Great Britain. It builds on proven interdisciplinary cooperation structures which were established by four successive Collaborative Research Centres, and publishes two internationally renowned journals, “Frühmittelalterliche Studien” and “Zeitschrift für Historische Forschung”.

The **Centre for Eastern Mediterranean History and Culture (GKM)** networks all classical and ancient studies at the University of Münster. The function of the centre is to intensify interdisciplinary cooperation, develop new research projects, and provide a forum for public events.



## Contact

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