

Religion & Politics in the Crisis of Engagement



**Towards the Relevance of Intercultural Theologies
and Interreligious Studies**

26 – 29 April 2017, University of Muenster, Germany

Programme and Registration: www.esitis.org

Academics and scholar-practitioners alike find themselves living in the midst of a “crisis of engagement” vis-à-vis large global crises, intractable geopolitical conflicts, and waves of global migration. Because these situations are creating greater social and cultural instability and intercultural stress across many regions of the world, the academic fields of “Politics and Religion,” “Religions and International Relations,” “Conflict and Peace Studies,” and “Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies” have received renewed attention. Given the prominence of these emergent fields, one vital concern arises: Have the much needed resources, knowledge, and discourses of engagement available in these fields not yet been fully tapped or not sufficiently related and integrated to meet and overcome the contemporary crisis of engagement and the daunting global challenges facing us today? This conference will take up this query by revisiting the legacies of political theology and critical religion. It will bring them into conjunction with discourses of engagement currently being developed by academics and scholar-practitioners working to understand and confront the intertwinement of religion & politics in areas of global crises, migration, and intercultural stress, as well as the fields of trauma, conflict transformation, and peacebuilding. Drawing on the insights that have been gained, the conference in particular seeks to reflect on and foster new engaging intercultural theologies and interreligious studies.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 26 April 2017

Arrival and Registration at Conference Venue | 14:00-15:00

Venue: Akademie Franz Hitze Haus, Kardinal-von-Galen-Ring 50, 48149 Münster

Opening | 15:00-16:00

Ulrich Winkler (Salzburg, President of ESITIS): **Welcome Note**

Norbert Hintersteiner (Münster): **Introduction to the Conference Theme**

Plenary Session 1 | 16:30-18:30 | Chair: Lidia Rodriguez (Bilbao)

The Future of Political Theologies and Discourses of Engagement

In the face of global crises, recent developments across a variety of disciplines have led to renewed and widespread interest in "political theology" – a diverse range of approaches to interrogating, (re)imagining, and (de)constructing the intersection of politics, religion, and theology, past and present. Viewing political theology as both a historical and contemporary, even global, phenomenon, here a range of perspectives will be engaged, including the practices of contemporary communities of "lived political theologies" that subvert existing power structures and call into question common conceptions of contemporary political life and possibilities. Finally, we will discuss the relationships between political theologies and other discourses of engagement and explore how they figure in current intercultural theologies and interreligious studies.

Jörg Rieger (Nashville)

Is Political and Intercultural Theology Real Theology, and Why Should Anyone Care?

Few would dispute that political and intercultural theologies are here to stay. What is disputed, however, is their place in the academy. It is frequently assumed that political and intercultural theologies are merely examples of special interests and concerns and thus optional, to be embraced by some but not by others. The terminology of contextual theology has added to the confusion, as contexts are often misunderstood as the special interests and concerns of some rather than others. This presentation will argue that political and intercultural theologies are not optional but necessary for the academic study of theology and religion today. Rather than special interest, they promote fresh approaches to the common interest, challenging seemingly unilateral and universal approaches.



Jörg Rieger is Cal Turner Chancellor's Chair in Wesleyan Studies and Distinguished Professor of Theology at Vanderbilt University Divinity School. His main interests are movements and developments that bring about change and the positive contributions of religion and theology. His most recent books include *Unified We are a Force: How Faith and Labor Can Overcome America's Inequalities* (co-ed., 2016), *Faith on the Road: A Short Theology of Travel and Justice* (2015), *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude* (with Kwok Pui-lan, 2012).

Jürgen Manemann (Hannover)

Facing the Inability to Act – Political Theology and Prophetic Pragmatism

Political theology has to be understood as a contribution to make life more human and to preserve it. Our actual political life indicates whether we really believe in God or just in our believing in our belief in God. Because "whenever we use the word God this must change our life" (Metz). Political Theology is a theology which directs "its face towards the world" (J.B. Metz). Facing the world presupposes the need to act. But more

and more people are unable to take an active part in politics. This inability effects our belief. In order to face this inability to act, especially in the light of climate change, political theology has to be connected with "Prophetic Pragmatism" (C. West).



Jürgen Manemann is director of the Research Institute of Philosophy in Hannover. His areas of interest are Religion and Politics, Environmental Philosophy, Political Theory and Democracy Studies, and Anthropology of Economics. His publications include: *Carl Schmitt und die Politische Theologie* (2002), *Prophetischer Pragmatismus* (co-ed., 2012), *Kritik des Anthropozäns. Plädoyer für eine neue Humanökologie* (2014).

Stefan Silber (Osnabrück)

Latin American Liberation Theology as a Transforming Political Theology

Liberation Theology not only represents a broad academic movement in Latin America, but also has deep roots in the life of the People of God. In recent decades, it has further developed, getting more diverse, ecumenical and secular. This paper critically reviews these current transformations, especially their relations with Postcolonial Studies, indigenous movements, and Latin American feminism, in order to situate the contribution of Liberation Theologies within the global development of political theologies.



Stefan Silber is Privatdozent at the University of Osnabrück. His academic interests are in Liberation Theology, Postcolonial and Indigenous Theologies. His publications include: Stefan Silber, *Glauben in Megacitys. Transformationsprozesse in lateinamerikanischen Großstädten und ihre Auswirkungen auf die Pastoral* (co-ed., 2014); *Fermento de otro mundo posible. Reflexiones sobre la Iglesia y Dios en el mundo de hoy* (2014).

Reception | 20:00-21:30 | Chair: Nelly van Doorn-Harder (WFU, USA)

Launch of New Journal: *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology*

Equinox; Vol 1, 1 (2017)

Thursday 27 April 2017

Plenary Session 2 | 09:00-12:00 | Chair: Ulrich Winkler (Salzburg)

Facing New Politics and Religion Entanglements: Critical Study of Religion Perspectives

This session will focus on new relations and entanglements between religions and politics in the fabric, turmoil and crisis of a globalized world and explore how religions reshape and express their identities therein. Developments of neoliberal policies have generated an increasing transfer of the state's responsibilities to the sphere of civic associations and religious organizations. Faith-based organizations take advantage of this vacuum by manifesting their public responsibility and involvement in different fields, such as welfare, international cooperation for development, the prevention of religious radicalism, policy formulation, or disaster relief in the global south. Radicalism and religious legitimization of global conflicts also prompt fundamentalist entanglements of religions and politics, contributing to a negative perception of religion. How does the

Critical Study of Religion read structures, perception and representation of current religion in societies? How does it engage with problematic Religion & Politics entanglements of our times?

Paul Bramadat (Victoria)

Illiberal Religion and Liberal Politics: The Pebble in the Shoe or the Canary in the Coal Mine?

This presentation reflects on the challenges facing members of liberal democracies struggling to interpret the meaning of religiously-rooted resistance to some of the key policies and values of these societies. Since many of us now rather “naturally” assume that particular liberal democratic norms are benign and attractive to others around the world, and since tensions between “open” and “closed” forms of secularism have yet to be resolved, one often sees either moral panic or political laziness when dealing with religiously-justified violence and radicalization. While politicized religion is often treated as the pebble in the shoe of an otherwise universally acceptable global liberalism, in some instances such movements may be an indication of some of the inherent problems with any “totalizing” religious or political vision.



Paul Bramadat is Professor and Director of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria, Canada. His work focuses issues of multiculturalism, immigration, radicalization, and health systems in response to religious and spiritual needs. Publications include: *The Church on the World's Turf* (OUP), *Religion and Ethnicity in Canada* (UTP), *Christianity and Ethnicity in Canada* (UTP), *Spirituality in Hospice Palliative Care* (SUNY Press), *International Migration and the Governance of Religious Diversity* (McGill-Queen's University Press), and *Public Health in the Age of Anxiety: Religious and Cultural Roots of Vaccine Hesitancy in Canada* (UTP).

Ulrich Willems (Münster)

Participation and lecture contribution confirmed. Lecture title and details to follow.

Anne Koch (Salzburg)

Charity Markets as Fields of Competition and Cooperation in Global Cosmopolitan Religion

The lecture will sketch how global religion was affected by the series of global financial market crisis in the first decade of 21st century. With the case study of a global charity event in the field of cosmopolitan spirituality it examines the cooperation of participating fundraisers and yoga studios across 35 countries, their media communication and networks. This empirical research contributes to a better understanding of global spiritual narratives that are efficient to motivate people across cultures for a good aim and how it implements neoliberal tools. It asks for the social milieu of participants and the regulation of affects and how the occurrence of such new players in the secularist-spiritual field changes the environment of classical religious organizations.



Anne Koch is Professor of Religious Studies at Salzburg University. Her main areas of research are method and theory in the study of religion, economics of religion and aesthetics of religion/embodied cognition, contemporary religion in Europe, healing in diverse traditions and global urban yoga. Publications include: *Religionsökonomie. Eine Einführung* (2014), “Perspectives from Sociology of Religion: Modeling Religious Pluralism from in-ward and outward”, *Journal of Inter-Religious Studies* 16 (2015) 30-40, “Competitive Charity. A neoliberal culture of ‘giving back’ in global yoga”, *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 30 (2015) 73-85.

Annette Wilke (Münster)

Engaged Religion, Political Theology and the Analytical Study of Religion – Exemplified by the IS and Reform Vedanta

This paper is about the challenging proposal to investigate the IS and reform Vedanta as two specific forms of engaged religion and political theology. These two movements have commonly been charged with oppositional stereotypical patterns like (Muslim) violence and (Hindu) non-violence, or perverted religion and mystical spirituality. The paper attempts a critical evaluation of “insider” and “outsider” perspectives. It analyses not only stereotypes of self and other, but also the discursive construction of ideal communities, the movements’ use of mass media for the production of utopian spaces and their concrete steps to political action.



Annette Wilke is Professor for the Study of Religion at the University of Münster. Her major fields of research are Hindu traditions past and present, aesthetics (religion and the senses), religious imagination, mysticism, ritual studies, and processes of cultural transfer. Her current research is on “Global Hinduism – The Chinmaya Mission in India and around the world.” Publications include: A. Wilke/O. Moebus, *Sound and Communication. An Aesthetic Cultural History of Sanskrit Hinduism* (2011), and A. Wilke / L. Traut (ed.): *Religion – Imagination – Ästhetik. Vorstellungs- und Sinneswelten in Religion und Kultur* (2015).

“Corridor of Ideas”: Parallel Paper Sessions I | 14:00-16:00 |

Plenary Session 3 | 16:30-18:30 | Chair: Jagbir Jhutti-Johal (Birmingham)

Migrants, Refugees and Religion: Negotiating Intercultural Stress

Migration, refugees, and religion, when experienced in an intense way, evoke uneasy sentiments. The recent surge of Middle Eastern refugees coming into Europe laid bare these sentiments, with political scientists speaking of “La Géopolitique de l’émotion” (Dominique Moïsi 2008) and the situation in religion and politics often being framed in terms of the hospitality-hostility debate, negotiating the rise and space of anti-immigration political parties in Europe and elsewhere. Obviously, the perfectly legitimate question arises here: How much intercultural and interreligious stress can societies handle? Is intercultural and interreligious dialogue, including the academic craft of intercultural theology and interreligious studies, too soft a practice when put to a real social test? Political scientists, sociologists of religion, and cultural studies scholars versed in or recently engaging in migration studies will address the phenomenon of intercultural stress and related topics in European politics, religion, and culture.

Jorge Castillo Guerra (Nijmegen)

Convivencia of Pluralities through Practices of Intercultural Relationships

Successive migratory movements and the recent intensification of the transfer of refugees to European countries pose new questions to current reflections on the role of religion in public spaces and social relations. Other questions arise concerning the faith that migrants introduce into societies of destination and on the way how that faith is transformed according to processes of identity transformation. Reflections on the faith of migrants has led to a new theological discourse, coined as Theology of Migration. This theology assumes the transnational perspective of migrants and intends to analyze both the processes that origin migration and as those who are started by migration. In this lecture, we approach especially this last perspective to analyze the social tensions in societies of destination, such as borders policies in relation to hostility and populism. From a postcolonial critical view on the concept of hospitality we will focus on proposals for a society of intercultural convivencia that is based on the faith and public practices of migrants.



Jorge E. Castillo Guerra was born in Panama and studied Theology in Chur in Switzerland, Tübingen in Germany and Nijmegen in the Netherlands. He defended his PhD thesis on the Liberation Ecclesiology of Jon Sobrino in Nijmegen. Currently he is assistant professor and researcher in the Empirical and Practical Study of Religion at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology & Religious Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen and researcher of the program World Christianity and Migration at the Nijmegen Institute of Missiology.

Anya Middelbeck-Varwick (Berlin)

Participation and lecture contribution confirmed. Lecture title and details to follow.

Detlef Pollack (Münster)

Cultural and Social Integration in the Self-image of Muslims of Turkish Origin in Germany

The increasing pluralization of the religious in Germany raises the question as to the overarching norms of social cohesion and as to the integration of sections of the population that differ culturally and religiously from the majority society, not only on the political and legal, but also on a social level. As social lines of tension frequently run between the majority society and religious or ethnic minorities, it is not sufficient to understand the respective orientations of the majority society's members only. Instead, it is advisable to analyze carefully the attitudes, situational interpretations, wishes and dislikes of minorities. The project aims to pursue these questions on the basis of a representative social survey among Turkish Muslims in Germany.



Detlef Pollack is Professor of Sociology of Religion and Speaker of the Cluster of Excellence on "Religion and Politics" at the University of Münster. His areas of research are on religion and politics in premodern and modern cultures, church and religion in Europe, transnational networks in the Pentecostal movements, perception and acceptance of religious diversity in Europe. His publications include: *Dissent and Opposition in Communist Europe* (co-ed., 2004), *Rückkehr des Religiösen? Studien zum religiösen Wandel in Deutschland und Europa* (2009), *Grenzen der Toleranz: Wahrnehmung und Akzeptanz religiöser Vielfalt in Europa* (co-ed., 2014), *Religion in der Moderne: Ein internatioaler Vergleich* (co-ed., 2015).

General Meeting | 20:00-21:30 |

European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies

Friday 28 April 2017

Plenary Session 4 | 09:00-12:00 | Chair: Stanislav Grodz (Lublin)

Religions Engaging Trauma, Conflict and Peace

The notion that religion has an intrinsic relationship with conflict and violence has been subverted by the fact of religion's capacity to respond to the trauma of mass atrocities, its role as a conversation starter amongst divided communities and its contribution to peacebuilding. A particular case may involve one or more religious traditions and their varying cultural expressions, be engaged with grassroots organizations of victims, civil society activism, or top-level faith-based diplomacy, reflecting religion's association with and potential in particular social and political locations. Case studies of such engagements show how practices of lived religion, with alternative interpretations of texts, beliefs, symbols, rituals and institutions enacted, can alter the trajectories of trauma, conflict and peace processes. How do intercultural theologies and interreligious studies resource and become part of such transformative engagements and when do they fail?

Patrice Brodeur (Montreal)

Mapping the Field of Religion, Trauma, Conflict and Peace

This contribution will present a theoretical overview summarizing important contemporary developments and challenges encountered in recent scholarship at the intersection of these four key interrelated concepts. The clashes of ignorance (Edward Said 2001), the globalization of indifference due to spiritual poverty (Pope Francis, 2016), the return of ideology (IPI-Salzburg Forum 2016) or grievances (Brodeur [forthcoming 2017]), as well as the increasing world military expenditure (SIPRI, 5 April 2016), require an analytical framework to make sense of their interrelatedness and combined ethical challenges. This presentation will seek to map a transdisciplinary framework to address this increasing analytical complexity and introduce examples of spiritual

approaches (compassionate listening, interworldview dialogue, etc.) that seek to go much deeper than conflict mediation by addressing trauma through healing processes.



Patrice Brodeur is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Theology and the Sciences of Religions at the University of Montreal (Canada) as well as Senior Adviser at the KAICIID International Dialogue in Vienna. He has published mostly in the fields of Religious Studies and Conflict Resolution. His co-authored books include: *Religion as a Conversation Starter: Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans, 1990-2008*, (Continuum Press, 2009) and *The Pluralist Paradigm: Democracy and Religion in the 21st Century* (Scranton University Press, 2006), and *Building the Interfaith Youth Movement: Beyond Dialogue to Action* (Roman & Littlefield, 2006)

Jude Lal Fernando (Dublin)

Participation and lecture contribution confirmed. Lecture title and details to follow.

Zilka Spahic-Siljak (Sarajevo)

Women, Religion and Trauma: Healing in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The role of religion in healing traumas and as coping mechanism in overcoming one's traumatic experiences is not sufficiently explored in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Balkans. State and religious institutions rarely mention religions as important mechanisms for trauma healing and only non-governmental organizations, in particular women's organizations, included religion in their work with survivors and used religion in psycho-social therapy. In this paper I explore how some women wartime rape survivors in Bosnia and Herzegovina used religion and wrestled with God during the war when traumas were fresh and how they learned to live with traumas after the war and build their lives thanks to their deep faith in God. For analyzing these experiences, I draw on research by Medica Zenica and Pergament J. Kenell who discusses the role of religion in healing of wart-time rape traumas and the experience of faith and God shaping the healing process and directing the actions of survivors.



Zilka Spahić Šiljak (Sarajevo) is currently a research scholar at Stanford University – Global Studies. She also runs the TPO Foundation Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Her scope of work concerns human rights, politics, religion, education and peace-building. Her books include *Shining Humanity – Life Stories of Women Peacebuilders in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2014); *Contesting Female, Feminist and Muslim Identities. Post-Socialist Contexts of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*, (2012); *Women Religion and Politics* (2010); and *Monotheisms Three Voices* (2009).

Ursula Hauser (Zürich)

How Can We Help Traumatized People as Psychotherapists?

Since many years I am working as a Psychoanalyst with the method of Psychodrama with traumatized people: in Central America mostly with groups of Women (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala), and in Palestine with a mixed training group (Gaza). This presentation discusses and reflects on Psychodrama as a successfull method in trauma work as experienced in the above cases, combined with some video presentation from those settings.



Ursula Hauser is a psychoanalyst and psychodramaturgist. Academic formation in Zurich/Switzerland and Klagenfurt /Austria, psychanalytic formation in Zurich (PSZ) and psychodramaturgical formation at the MORENO institute in Überlingen / Germany and Boston /USA. Since 1981, living and working in Latin America and Europe.

“Corridor of Ideas”: Parallel Paper Sessions II | 14:00-16:00 |

Plenary Session 5 | 16:30-18:30 | Chair: Anne-Hege Grung (Oslo)

Making Peace with Islam: Islamic Approaches for Peacemaking

Nathan C. Funk (Ontario)

Making Peace with Islam: Islamic Approaches for Peacemaking

Examining Islamic peace teachings and paradigms within a larger comparative context, this lecture explores both the distinctiveness of Islamic approaches to peacemaking and ways in which Islamic experiences of conflict and peace mirror those of other communities. Particular attention will be given to “keynote themes” emphasized by Muslim peacebuilders, to challenges presented by contemporary social and political contexts, and to cases in which Islamic precepts have been applied to support restorative justice, nonviolent social justice advocacy, and interfaith understanding.



Nathan C. Funk is Associate Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Waterloo’s Conrad Grebel University College, in Ontario, Canada. He is co-author of *Islam and Peacemaking in the Middle East* (Lynne Rienner, 2009) and co-editor of *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam: Precept and Practice* (UPA, 2001).

Nayla Tabbara (Beirut)

Sketching a Peacebuilding Theology in Islam

This presentation will put forth theological foundations for peace building in Islam by responding to the challenges of diversity management in the public sphere. It will thus base itself on current writings and reflections around 4 themes: theology of religious diversity, religious freedom and freedom of conscience, political theology, namely the question of religion and state, and Islamic reflections about peace jihad and the call to common service and shared responsibility that it entails. These reflections and advances in Islamic theology will serve as a backdrop for developing an Islamic perception of peace building in our diverse societies, be they Muslim majority societies or societies where Muslims are a minority, and in contexts of interreligious diversity.



Nayla Tabbara is Director of Adyan Institute. Professor of Science of Religions, Islamic Studies and Qur’anic Interpretation. Expert, Author, Trainer and Consultant on interreligious and intercultural relations, education on diversity and Islamic Theology of other religions. Her publications include: *L’hospitalité divine: l’autre dans le dialogue des théologies chrétienne et musulmane* (2013; co-authored with Fadi Daou); *What about the other: a question for intercultural education in the 21st century* (ed., 2012).

Marco Schöller (Münster)

Participation and lecture contribution confirmed. Lecture title and details to follow.

Plenary Session 6 | 20:00-21:30 | Chair: Anne Kull (Tartu)

James Movel Wuye & Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa

Co-Executive Directors, Interfaith Mediation Centre (Kaduna, Nigeria)

The Pastor and the Imam from Nigeria: Interfaith Strategy for Peacebuilding

Former rival youth militia leaders engaged in violent clashes between Christians and Muslims, a pastor and an imam were inspired by the teaching of their respective faith traditions to pursue the path of peace. They will share their two-decade journey from vengeance to forgiveness and from enmity to friendship and will discuss their faith-based psychosocial counseling of victims of the insurgency in northern Nigeria. They will talk about their work to bridge gaps caused by unhealed collective memories of past perceived injustices through North-South dialogue among ethno-religious and sociopolitical groups, focusing on women, youth, and adults in target communities. They will provide insight into the prospects and challenges of interreligious peacebuilding in the face of insurgency and violent extremism and offer strategy recommendations.



Imam Muhammad Nurayn Ashafa and Pastor James Movel Wuye, from Kaduna State in northern Nigeria. They set up the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Forum in 1995 and also the Interfaith Mediation Centre. In 2002 they signed the Kaduna Peace Declaration with many other religious leaders. They have been awarded the Heroes of Peace Award from the New York City-based Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding. They are now seeking to replicate their efforts through centers in Jos, Owerri and Lagos in Nigeria, and more recently they have conducted interfaith work in southern Sudan and Kenya. They have published a book, *The Imam and the Pastor: Responding to Conflict*, and a film, *The Imam and the Pastor*, 2006.

Saturday 29 April 2017

Plenary Session 7 | 09:00-12:00 | Chair: Marianne Moyaert (Amsterdam)

Towards Engaged Intercultural Theologies and Interreligious Studies

Recent concern with “Theology and the Crisis of Engagement” (Jeff Nowers and Nestor Medina 2013) was anticipated in the field of intercultural theology when the term was suggested as the new name for what used to be – at least in Christian theological circles – called missiology. Critics of the new name saw engaged theologies and missionary practice for social transformation being lost in what appears to be a largely Western dominated discourse of inter-culture and inter-religion. In this final stage, drawing on the insights yielded by the conference regarding the critical relationship between theology, religious studies, and the social and political sciences as evidenced in the vital fields of engagements explored throughout the conference, the conference will seek to meet this critique. By looking forward, it will reflect on the concepts as well as future areas of “engaged intercultural theologies” and “engaged interreligious studies.”

David Cheetham (Birmingham)

Exploring “Immanence” for Engaged Interfaith Meetings: The Phenomenological Turn

Eschewing more cognitive theologies of religions, this paper seeks to explore the 'phenomenology of immanence' as a discourse for interfaith engagement. It will argue that the 'theology of religions' is an approach that prevents *engaged* intercultural and interreligious studies. Whilst acknowledging the practice of comparative theology and scriptural reasoning, this paper will seek to go further by proposing a phenomenological turn towards the 'immanence of meeting' - considering the work of Edmund Husserl, Pierre Bourdieu, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Charles Taylor. Finally, the paper will seek to explore the extent to which phenomenological approaches can complement or critique more metaphysical theological viewpoints.



David Cheetham is Reader in Philosophical Theology at the University of Birmingham, UK. He is the author of numerous academic papers and books including *Ways of Meeting and the Theology of Religions* (2013), *Understanding Interreligious Relations* (ed. 2013), *Intercultural Theology: Approaches and Themes* (ed. 2011) and *John Hick* (2003).

Perry Schmidt-Leukel (Münster)

Why We Need an Engaged Interreligious Theology

Reducing “engaged theology” to the ideological support of practical and political agendas would be short-sighted. One of the major global challenges facing the world continues to be the challenge of rival religious superiority claims and apparently conflicting truth claims. Sustainable peace and fertile relations among religions cannot be built on politics alone but need to be established on the persistent theological effort of discerning religious truth on all sides, turning it into the foundation of collaborative theological reflection. Changing global religious constellations requires a new form of theological thinking: it requires an interreligious theology.



Perry Schmidt-Leukel is Professor of Religious Studies and Intercultural Theology and a Principal Investigators of the Cluster of Excellence "Religion and Politics" at the University of Muenster. He has more than 250 publications in the field of religious diversity and inter-faith encounter. His Gifford Lectures of 2015 appear in 2017 with Orbis Publisher as "Religious Pluralism and Interreligious Theology".

Paul Hedges (Singapore)

Interreligious Studies: Engaged Scholarship as the Study of Religion, or Being a Scholar-Activist

Bruce Lincoln’s “Thesis on Method” suggests that an advocate or activist cannot concurrently be a scholar in the academic study of religion (13th thesis). Interreligious Studies (IS) questions the construction of scholar and religious insider or activist as separate spheres; both are implicated in networks of power and boundary construction. This paper argues that IS provides a model for the scholar-activist operating as an engaged scholar within fields of interreligious relations, dialogue, and engagement. Debates in the area will be reviewed and a model of the scholar-activist proposed.



Paul Hedges is Associate Professor of Interreligious Studies at the Studies in Interreligious Relations in Plural Societies Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He researches in various areas including the theology of religions, comparative theology, interreligious relations and dialogue, and method in the study of religion. Recent books include *Towards Better Disagreement: The Dialogue of Religion and Atheism* (2016), *Contemporary Muslim-Christian Encounters* (2015), and *Controversies in Contemporary Religion* (3 volumes, 2014).

Call for Papers

European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies (ESITIS) Conference

Religion & Politics in the Crisis of Engagement
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Programme and Registration: www.esitis.org

A significant part of ESITIS’ vision is to establish possibilities for scholarly exchange and represent an open space for new research, cutting-edge academic reflections and to bring experienced and junior scholars as well as students together. In the «corridor of ideas» part of our conference consisting of parallel paper sessions, we welcome paper presentations by scholars and postgraduates connected to the following topics:

1. **The Future of Political Theology.** Convener: Jörg Rieger (Nashville)
2. **The Future of Critical Religion.** Convener: Anne Koch (Salzburg)
3. **Trauma, Resilience and Reconciliation.** Convener: Zilka Spahić-Šiljak (Sarajevo)
4. **Refugee Crisis and Migration.** Convener: Jorge Castillo Guerra (Nijmegen)
5. **Gender Justice and Conflict Transformation.** Convener: Anne Hege Grung (Oslo)
6. **Inter-Rituality in Conflict Zones.** Convener: Marianne Moyaert (Amsterdam)
7. **Buddhism and Conflict Transformation.** Convener: Jude Lal Fernando (Dublin)
8. **Islamic Approaches to Peacebuilding.** Convener: Nayla Tabbara (Beirut)

All paper proposals must be considered by the ESITIS board/the chairs of the sessions before being accepted. If you want to present a paper, email an abstract of no more than 500 words to Associate Professor Anne Hege Grung, vice president of ESITIS: annehg@teologi.uio.no
Please indicate in the abstract which group you want to present your paper in.

**The deadline for abstract submissions is
Monday 9 January 2017.**