

Press release

New visiting professorship for religion and politics

For fresh international and interdisciplinary stimuli – historian Lucian Hölscher first Hans Blumenberg Visiting Professor to come to the Cluster of Excellence in Münster

The internationally renowned Bochum historian Prof. Dr. Lucian Hölscher is the first holder of the newly set up “Hans Blumenberg Visiting Professorship” at the University of Münster’s Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”. In public lectures and in his research in the summer semester, he is going to address the 2017 anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and the culture of Protestant piety in Germany. The new visiting professorship is designed to contribute to bringing innovative stimuli from international research to Münster and consolidating the interdisciplinary compatibility at the Cluster of Excellence. Some 200 academics from more than 20 disciplines of the humanities and social sciences conduct research in the Cluster.

In his opening lecture on 12 April 2016, Lucian Hölscher will critically examine how state and church commemorate the Reformation 500 years ago. “The possibility of a new interpretation of the Reformation is up for discussion”, says Prof. Hölscher, “Not as a manifestation of the denominational separation but as part of the revival of Christianity on the cusp of the modern age.” The differences between Catholics and Protestants have largely disappeared from everyday life. The question is, however, whether this holds true for the Reformation’s sociopolitical impulses as well. The opening lecture, „500 Jahre Reformation in Deutschland – Wie erinnern wir uns daran?“ (500 years of Reformation in Germany – how do we remember it?) will be followed in April and May by three additional public lectures on the history of the culture of Protestant piety.

Prominent place for interdisciplinary religious research

During the visiting professorship in Münster, Prof. Hölscher will work on the second volume of his “Geschichte der protestantischen Frömmigkeit” (History of Protestant piety). The first volume, which covered the period from the Reformation to the beginning of the 20th century, is one of his most distinguished works. “Lucian Hölscher is one of the internationally leading representatives of social, cultural and religious history of the modern era, and has given major impetus to a new theory of history”, emphasises the speaker of the Cluster of Excellence, sociologist of religion Prof. Dr. Detlef Pollack. “His research findings are of high interest for our work. We expect important stimuli for our historical and social scientific research projects.”

In the semesters to come, other renowned researchers from varying disciplines will be appointed to the Hans Blumenberg Visiting Professorship – named after the influential philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996) – e.g. from sociology, ethnology and law. Guest professors will be selected at the suggestion of the Cluster of Excellence’s Principle Investigators for one semester each. Members of the Cluster of Excellence

conduct secular and denominational research across cultures and eras, and related to history and the present age. Münster has thus become a place of interdisciplinary religious research that is prominent in size and diversity.

The lectures of the “Hans Blumenberg Visiting Professorship” will be held on four Tuesdays between 6.15 and 7.45 pm as of 12 April 2016 in lecture theatre F2 at Fürstenberghaus, Domplatz 20-22 in Münster – the location of the public lecture series of the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”. For this reason, the start of the lecture series in the summer semester will be postponed to 10 May 2016, its title being “Religious politics today – problem areas and perspectives in Germany”.

Prof. Dr. Lucian Hölscher is emeritus professor for modern history and the theory of history at Ruhr-University Bochum (RUB). He has been a member of the board of RUB’s Käte Hamburger Kolleg “Dynamics of Religion between Asia and Europe”, which has a historical approach, since 2008 and is head of its research field 3, “The formation of the notion of religion”. (vwm/ska)

Public lecture series “Hans Blumenberg Visiting Professorship”

Summer semester 2016

Tuesdays, 6.15 to 7.45 pm

Lecture theatre F2 at Fürstenberghaus

Domplatz 20-22

48143 Münster

12.04.2016, lecture 500 Jahre Reformation in Deutschland – Wie erinnern wir uns daran? (500 years of Reformation in Germany – how do we remember it?)

19.04.–03.05.2016, lectures Protestantische Frömmigkeitskultur in Deutschland (Protestant piety culture in Germany)

19.04.2016 Das Konzept der Konfession (The concept of denomination)

26.04.2016 Der Wandel der christlichen Gemeinde (The change of the Christian community)

03.05.2016 Die Säkularisierung der modernen Gesellschaft (The secularisation of modern society)

First Hans Blumenberg Visiting Professor – Lucian Hölscher

Prof. Dr. Lucian Hölscher is emeritus professor for modern history and the theory of history at Ruhr-University Bochum (RUB). He has been a member of the board of RUB’s

Käte Hamburger Kolleg “Dynamics of Religion between Asia and Europe”, which has a historical approach, since 2008 and is head of its research field 3, “The formation of the notion of religion”. One of his most important works is his “Geschichte der protestantischen Frömmigkeit” (History of Protestant piety), which describes the change of Protestant piety from the Reformation until the early 20th century. In his research, Lucian Hölscher concentrates on the political, social and cultural history of the 19th and 20th centuries – with a focus on the religious history of the modern age – and the theory of history as well as on the history and methodology of the science of history.

“In his research, Lucian Hölscher connects the study of religious semantics such as ideas of the past, the present and the future with the analysis of social structural and political changes”, explains the speaker of the Cluster of Excellence, sociologist of religion Prof. Dr. Detlef Pollack. “His works are relevant for many members of the Cluster of Excellence, whose research concerns the strongly represented modern age and modernity. There are also many connections to ongoing research activities at the Cluster of Excellence with regard to methodology, however, such as reflecting, from the point of view of the philosophy of science, methods that are applied in the science of history.”

Visiting professorship named after Hans Blumenberg

Following positions in Hamburg, Gießen and Bochum, the renowned Münster philosopher Hans Blumenberg (1920-1996) was professor at the University of Münster from 1970 until his retirement in 1985. Through his publications, he significantly contributed to redefining the place of the modern age in the historico-scientific and philosophical discussion. He challenged the secularisation thesis predominant at that time, according to which theological patterns of interpretation had been persisting since the Middle Ages across the changeover to the modern age and into the modern state. In his main work, “Die Legitimität der Neuzeit” (The Legitimacy of the Modern Age), Blumenberg advocates to interpret the onset of the modern age as an act of human self-assertion against the theological claims for absoluteness of late Medieval thinking. Thus, in critical contrasting with philosophers Carl Schmitt (1888-1985) and Karl Löwith (1897-1973), he was crucial in shaping the secularisation debate that argued from the point of view of the history of ideas. This is considered a major contribution to the theory of historical periodisation and the theory of the modern age.

In his studies dealing with the history of concepts, of ideas, of philosophy and with anthropology, the philosopher also addressed the interpretation of myths and metaphors. For instance, he engaged in anecdotic and essayistic considerations about the theme of the lion. Author Sibylle Lewitscharoff picks up on this theme in her novel, “Blumenberg”. The scholar was a member of the Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur zu Mainz (academy of sciences and literature), of the German Research Foundation’s senate (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG) and of the Senatskommission für Begriffsgeschichte (senate commission for the history of concepts), and he co-founded the research group “Poetik und Hermeneutik” (poetics and hermeneutics). As a young man, he had to stop studying Catholic theology in 1940 as, with a view to his mother’s family, he was considered a “half-Jew” in National Socialism. He later studied philosophy, German and classical philology.

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The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” of WWU Münster

Some 200 academics from more than 20 disciplines of the humanities and social sciences and from 14 countries do research in the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” of the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster (WWU). They deal with the complex relationship of religion and politics across epochs and cultures: from the ancient pantheon and Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Middle Ages and the early modern period to the current situation in Europe, America, Asia and Africa. 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 religions. The federal government and the state governments support the project within the scope of the Excellence Initiative with 33.7 million euros from 2012 until 2017.