

Press release

Continuation of “Journalism on Religion” training programme

Cluster of Excellence and School of Journalism qualify media professionals to deal with religious issues – Themes such as antisemitism and racism, conflicts over religious practices, and new ideological movements – Positive feedback leads to continuation of only training programme of its kind in Germany

Münster, 24 June 2024 (exc) Antisemitism or racism, conflicts over religious practices such as the burkini and circumcision, and new ideological movements. To provide media professionals with expertise on religious matters, the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” at the University of Münster and the School of Journalism ifp are continuing the “Journalism on Religion” training programme, the only one of its kind in Germany. The in-service programme qualifies journalists from political, cultural and specialist editorial offices to report on religious belongings and conflicts in pluralistic societies in a sound and critical way.

The deadline for registration for the “Journalism on Religion” programme is 1 October 2024 (information below). Lectures will be given by professors from the Cluster of Excellence, members of religious and non-religious groups, and journalists who specialize in religious matters. There will also be visits to religious sites such as synagogues, churches and mosques, as well as diverse insights into Jewish, Christian and Muslim life today. Unique in the German-speaking world, the training programme will take place from January 2025 to June 2026 in five modules in Berlin, Münster, Frankfurt am Main, Cologne and Munich. Lecturers from the Cluster of Excellence include the sociologist of religion Detlef Pollack, the historian Barbara Stollberg-Rilinger, the Catholic theologian Michael Seewald, the Islamic theologian Dina El Omari, and the communication scientist Thorsten Quandt.

The programme addresses the way in which the increasing diversity of beliefs is dealt with politically, legally and socially, conflicts over religious practices such as headscarves and crucifixes, church labour law, religious freedom and challenges faced by religious constitutional law. It also deals with the background to antisemitism, ideological movements and conspiracy theories in digital worlds, international conflicts over religion in the past and present, and the relationship between religion, violence and gender.

“A diversity of religious and non-religious beliefs can generate social conflicts”, says Cluster of Excellence speaker Prof. Dr. Michael Seewald. “Part of our research is to look at how social belongings arise, how conflicts over them are regulated, and how equality is achieved. Through this training programme, we can offer media professionals scholarly insights into such complex phenomena; indeed, science-based reporting is one of the cornerstones of democracy”.

Burkhard Schäfers, seminar leader at the Catholic School of Journalism ifp, highlights the programme’s importance for editorial offices: “The Middle East conflict shows that journalists need specialist knowledge on the subject of religion in order to be able to ask relevant questions and to understand how events fit into the wider picture”.

Viola van Melis, Head of the Centre for Research Communication at the Cluster of Excellence, says that the training programme has proven to be an effective tool for strengthening specialist and science journalism. “Those from large media organizations who participated in the programme were positive with regard to the variety of issues covered, the experts involved, and the excursions undertaken; in many cases, they were also able to feed their new knowledge into their reporting. This encourages us to continue with the programme”. (vvm/tec)

Training programme:

Module 1, 22-24 January 2025, Berlin:

Religion, politics, law: The undisturbed practice of religion shall be guaranteed

Module 2, 9-11 July 2025, Münster:

Plurality of worldviews: Religions and the tolerance of ambiguity

Module 3, 8-10 October 2025, Frankfurt am Main:

Belonging or excluded: The lives of religious minorities in Germany

Module 4, 28-30 January 2026, Cologne:

Us and them: Religious conflicts and their political consequences

Module 5, 24-26 June 2026, Munich:

Ideological movements and conspiracy theories: Religions in the digital age

Each module begins on Wednesday at 4 pm and ends on Friday at 1.30 pm.

Registration at: <https://journalistenschule-ifp.de/seminardetails/1037>

Caption: Michael Seewald, Speaker of the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” (private)

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The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”

The Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics. Dynamics of Tradition and Innovation” has been investigating since 2007 the complex relationship between religion and politics across eras and cultures. The 140 researchers from 20 disciplines in the humanities and social sciences focus in the funding phase (2019 to 2025) on the “dynamics of tradition and innovation”. They analyze in transepochnal studies ranging from antiquity to the present day the conditions and factors that make religion an engine of political and social change. The focus of interest is on Europe and the Mediterranean region, as well as on their entanglements with the Near East, Africa, North and Latin America. The research network is the largest of its kind in Germany; and, of the Clusters of Excellence, one of the oldest and the only one to deal with the issue of religion. It will receive funding of 31 million euros from 2019 to 2025.