

Religion as situated knowledge in processes of social transformation and decolonization

24 January 2022 | 18:00–20:00 (South African Time) / 17:00–19:00 (German Time) | online via Zoom

Troubling the social and epistemic origins of religion and social sciences has enjoyed a great deal of attention in recent years. Most significantly, scholarly entanglements with colonial and imperial regimes has seen calls for decolonization of various academic disciplines and methodologies, as well as critical research in this field. As societies with histories of colonialism and segregation, both South Africa and Germany have experienced postcolonial transformations to their social fabric, and both countries have seen increasing calls for more critical research on coloniality, religion and social transformation. Our project, Religion as Situated Knowledge is one such effort to bring into conversation scholars and research from the Southern Africa and Germany to interrogate the ways that religion has shaped, and has been shaped by different relations to power.

We are happy to invite you to this opening panel of the IRTG on Religion as situated knowledge in processes of social transformation and decolonization. It will explore several key questions related to religion from different contexts, lived and embodied experiences, and not only expose the coloniality inherent within the academic enterprise, but also show how it might open new avenues about what religious experiences, worldviews and engagements count as knowledge and what ramifications this might have for social transformation processes in Southern Africa, and Germany.

In an effort to launch our own efforts to trouble the coloniality of religion and social sciences, we brought together three established researchers known for their work on the intersection of religion and knowledge production, and especially its relation to social transformation. Prof Nelson Maldonado-Torres brings his keen observations about coloniality of being, of power and of knowledge in the Americas and Southern Africa, while Prof Birgit Meyer's work on material religion in social transformative processes in West Africa and Europe might make decisive contributions to how we think about migration development and national identity. Finally, Claudia Jahnel's work on intercultural theology and the body in a range of empirical context will complete the panel which will be convened by our own Prof Federico Settler.

Panelists

Nelson Maldonado-Torres is a Professor at the Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies and the Comparative Literature Program at the Rutgers School of Arts and Science. He is particularly interested in the crossings of different genealogies of thinking, and their appearance in different genres of writing, discourses, artistic expressions, and social movements.

Birgit Meyer is a Professor for Religious Studies at the Universiteit Utrecht. Trained as a cultural anthropologist and working on lived religion in Ghana for more than 20 years, Birgit Meyer studies religion from a global and post-secular perspective.

Claudia Jahnel is a Professor for Intercultural Theology and Embodiment at the Ruhr University Bochum. She is especially interested in theological and religious hybridity, identities, and deconstruction of othering.

Please register with bettina.schoen@hu-berlin.de to receive the link to the video conference.

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