



International Research Training Group *Transformative Religion*
—*Religion as Situated Knowledge in Processes of Social Transformation*—

Call for Applications

Application deadline: 16 January 2023

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Stellenbosch University, University of the Western Cape and University of KwaZulu-Natal are jointly collaborating in the International Research Training Group (IRTG) *Transformative Religion: Religion as Situated Knowledge in Processes of Social Transformation*, funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Germany, DFG) and National Research Foundation (South Africa, NRF). In this German-South African IRTG, the following doctoral positions are advertised:

Germany (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin)

6 doctoral researchers (65% full time equivalent E13 TVÖD, funded by DFG)

4 doctoral researchers (self-funded)

South Africa (Stellenbosch University, University of the Western Cape, University of KwaZulu-Natal)

8 doctoral researchers (NRF doctoral bursary, funded by NRF)

4 doctoral researchers (self-funded)

for the period from **01.07.2023 to 30.06.2026**.

Profile of the IRTG *Transformative Religion*

The German–South African IRTG *Transformative Religion* transdisciplinarily investigates the impact of religion in processes of social transformation and the impact of these transformations on religion in contemporary global societies with an intercontinental perspective. It seeks to contribute to recent academic research and public debates on the complex relationship between religion and society.

Against the backdrop of discursive differences in perceiving and positioning religion in the field of knowledge between the global north and the global south and with a distinctive decolonial approach, this IRTG aims at a critical epistemology through which the situatedness of religious knowledge production and reception in processes of social transformation can be researched. In case studies from contexts in the global South and North, the IRTG seeks to investigate religion as specifically situated knowledge functioning as a resource and as a site of social transformation. It engages scholars from two continents and a variety of disciplines to go beyond conventional research approaches.

The research focus of the IRTG unfolds in the following four research areas:

- Research area 1, **national identity**, will focus on the relationship between normative elements of religious knowledge in processes of public deliberation and conflicts of hegemony and power concerning modern nation states and their corresponding social imaginaries.
- Research area 2, **development**, will investigate the transformative role of religion in development discourses and practices and its implications for decolonising dominant notions of development.
- Research area 3, **migration**, will study the entanglements of migration and mobile religious practices, and how these entanglements both are being produced by and co-produce social transformations.
- Research area 4, **healing**, will focus on healing practices in the context of situated religious knowledge and how they contribute to and are at the same time shaped by social transformation.

Supervision and qualification programme

The IRTG is committed to excellent supervision and qualification of doctoral researchers. Each candidate is expected to pursue their own dissertation project related to one of the IRTG's research areas within the overall thematic framework of the IRTG. Each doctoral researcher will be supervised by an interdisciplinary advisory team of three IRTG scholars from Germany and South Africa. The advisory team will be allocated by the admission board in consultation with the selected candidates.

The IRTG's qualification programme has been jointly developed with respect to the specific requirements of doctoral qualification in Germany and South Africa. Transcontinental joint supervision and evaluation procedures, as well as transdisciplinary theoretical, methodological and professional training, will be part of an overall strategy that promotes innovative research and excellent qualification of young researchers. The programme is structured in 3 phases:

- Engagement phase (year 1): Doctoral researchers are introduced to the IRTG with theoretical and methodological seminars and key competence seminars and begin their doctoral project.
- Research phase (year 2): Doctoral researchers will focus on their individual research as they conduct research visits at partner institutions abroad and/or conduct field research.
- Finalisation phase (year 3): Doctoral researchers complete their training and finalise their doctorate.

A vital, and obligatory, component of the qualification programme is a research stay at one of the partner institutions in South Africa/Germany (depending on the main study location). The length of the research stay can vary from one to two semesters.

Upon successful completion of the qualification programme, doctoral researchers will be provided a transcript outlining all qualification elements.

Funding

Candidates can either apply for the DFG/NRF funded positions or apply for membership in the IRTG without funding.

The remuneration of the funded positions in Germany is done according to a 65% full time equivalent in remuneration group E13 of the German Public Service Salary Scale applicable to the State of Berlin (TV-L). In South Africa, bursary funding in accordance with the regulations of NRF doctoral bursaries. In addition, candidates will receive funding for research stays abroad

and conference visits. Doctoral researchers with children can apply for additional family support measures during their participation in the programme.

Candidates applying for the non-funded positions do not receive any funding for their living costs but may receive a limited amount of funding for conducting their research projects (e.g. short-term research stays). However, accepted candidates who have not secured funding of their living costs will be supported in their endeavours to acquire funding from other sources (e.g. third-party scholarships).

Requirements

The IRTG *Transformative Religion* seeks applications of candidates who would like to pursue a doctoral dissertation in full-time mode in the thematic framework of the IRTG.

Required:

- An excellent master's degree in anthropology/ethnology, religious studies, cultural studies, sociology, African studies, theology, political science or related disciplines (ordinarily candidates should be located in faculties of humanities, social sciences and/ or theology). Candidates applying without a completed master's degree will need to convincingly justify that they will obtain degree before 30.06.2023. In those cases, admission will be conditional on the successful completion of the degree.
- A substantially above average academic profile.
- Proficiency in written and spoken English as well in any other language required for the successful implementation of the planned doctoral project.
- Cultural sensitivity and openness to work in a highly transdisciplinary and internationally composed team.
- The ability to work independently and the desire to complete their doctoral dissertation within the time frame of three years.
- The willingness to spend some time abroad.
- Agreement to pursue the doctoral project under the guidance of the principal investigators of the international research training group 'Transformative Religion' and the academic institutions connected to it.

Desirable:

- Study, work or research experience in a foreign country and/or another university will be considered asset.
- Prior knowledge in the thematic field of the IRTG and the research area applied for is an asset.
- Prior publications will be considered an asset.
- Voluntary engagement and/or prior work experience in the thematic field or research areas of the IRTG.
- Prior experiences in antiracist, decolonial voluntary work will be considered an asset.

Selection Criteria

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Stellenbosch University, University of the Western Cape and University of KwaZulu-Natal are committed to a transparent and fair selection process. Applications will be reviewed by the admission board of the IRTG in a structured selection process based on standardised guidelines. The main criteria for selection of individual candidates are:

- academic career and qualification

- the scientific excellence of her or his proposed research project
- the relevance of the project to the IRTG research focus and research areas
- the applicant's competence profile and relevant professional experience
- her or his motivations for participating in the qualification programme.

Factors that may have hindered an applicant's academic career such as (child)care obligations, disabilities, chronic illnesses, minority discrimination or other conditions or situations of hardship can be voluntarily disclosed and will be taken into consideration during the selection process.

Female* candidates and candidates with non-binary gender are particularly encouraged to apply. Severely disabled applicants with equivalent qualifications will be given preferential consideration. On the South African side, at least 90% of the positions will be allocated to candidates from previously disadvantaged groups, and should be younger than 32 years of age. On the German side, candidates with PoC and/or migration background are particularly encouraged to apply.

Application Documents

Applicants are required to submit:

- a letter of motivation (including indications on whether the application refers to Germany or South Africa as the main study location and on whether the application is for a funded or non-funded position)
- their full CV, including a list of publications (if applicable)
- transcripts of their academic records (degree certificate if master's has been completed, otherwise the current grades overview)
- a letter of recommendation by a former supervisor speaking to the academic qualification of the applicant
- a concise proposal of the planned PhD project. The proposal of strictly 10 pages/3.000 words/20.000 characters should include an outline of the state of the art of the relevant literature, the central research question(s), the planned methodology and the envisaged time plan of the project. The proposal should also indicate to which of the IRTG's four research areas the planned PhD project is related.

Kindly submit all documents in one pdf file named SURNAME_FIRSTNAME.pdf via e-mail to transformative-religion@hu-berlin.de.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to an individual interview scheduled for the end of January 2023. More information about the IRTG *Transformative Religion* can be found on the website www.transformative-religion.org.

For the German positions, please visit also our website www.hu-berlin.de/stellenangebote, which gives you access to the legally binding German version of this Call for Applications.

Should you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact the IRTG coordinator, Dr Clemens Wustmans, at the above e-mail.

We're looking forward to receiving your application!