

Contested Privates: invitation and instructions for MA students

Introduction

Central to the *Contested Privates* research project is the oppositional pairing of religion and homosexuality in contemporary public debates in the Netherlands, Sweden, Serbia and Spain. The project is a collaboration of the Amsterdam Center for the Study of Lived Religion at VU University Amsterdam and the Chair of Religion and Gender, Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University, and is funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO). MA students with an interest in religion and sexuality are kindly invited to join this project by writing their MA thesis within the general framework of the project.

Project description

This project starts from the observation that in recent decades the public perception of both religion and sexual diversity has changed fundamentally. While religion is increasingly considered to be a private matter, sexual diversity has gained public importance. And whereas religious identity, long accepted as a matter of course, steadily has become contested in its public and most characteristic manifestations, acceptance of sexual diversity is now often presented as a prerequisite for modern citizenship. Conflicts about religion and homosexuality are, therefore, an important source for studying the connecting and dividing functions of religion in contemporary society. This project, then, focuses on the strategic and ideological assumptions, interests, and effects of present-day constructions of (homo)sexuality and religion in public discourse. Its aim is to map out the social, political, and cultural dimensions of framing religion and homosexuality as polarized constructs. The central question is: how are religion and homosexuality constructed as oppositional pairings in contemporary Dutch, Swedish, Spanish and Serbian society? The central (PhD) project will uncover and analyze oppositional pairings of religion and homosexuality in political debates, public counseling and information, and popular culture in the Netherlands. Two postdoctoral projects put the research in a comparative perspective by looking into recent Dutch history (1946 to 2005) and three other European countries (Sweden, Serbia, and Spain). The critical analysis, bearing on feminism and queer studies, will unmask stereotypes and uncover subtexts with alternative constructions of both homosexuality and religion, contributing to ways of overcoming the polarized state of affairs.

For more details: <http://www.livedreligion.org/cultures/projects/contested-privates/>

MA projects

Within the Contested Privates project, the contribution of MA students is crucial. As part of the “community of learners” they are involved in further developing the project’s theoretical framework, formulating relevant research questions, collecting data and performing analyses. We therefore kindly invite students with an interest in religion, sexuality and gender to take part in this project by writing their MA thesis on a topic related to the project’s main research question.

Requirements

MA students who want to take part in the project should meet the following criteria:

- You are completing or have completed a BA, or are able to demonstrate sufficient knowledge and expertise in one or (preferably) more of the following fields: religious studies, islamic studies, theology, gender studies, queer studies, cultural studies or media studies.
- Preferably, you will write your MA thesis in English.
- You are able to start your MA project in a period that suits the concerned researcher: if you want to work on contemporary discourse in Sweden: fall term of 2014; if you want to work on contemporary discourse in Spain or Serbia: spring term 2015; if you want to work on contemporary discourse in the Netherlands: please contact Marco Derks; if you want to work on public discourse in the Netherlands, 1946-2005: please contact David Bos.
- You master the language of the discourse you will be analyzing and you have access to media sources in these countries.

Benefits

MA students who join the Contested Privates project will enjoy the stimulating experience of being part of an enthusiastic and motivated team of researchers. You will be presented with state-of-the-art theory and research questions concerning religion, sexuality and gender. Since your MA thesis will contribute to a larger research project, your research will have a wider range and added societal value. Moreover, you will be able to strengthen your international network.

Thesis supervision

Thesis supervision will be arranged according to the regulations of your home university. Preferably, one member of the Contested Privates research team will act as one of your supervisors.

Research team and contact

The research team consists of:

Prof. Ruard Ganzevoort (VU University Amsterdam, project leader)

Prof. Anne-Marie Korte (Utrecht University, project leader)

Dr. David Bos (VU University Amsterdam, post-doc researcher, d.j.bos@vu.nl)

Dr. Mariecke van den Berg (VU University Amsterdam, post-doc researcher, c.a.m.vanden.berg@vu.nl)

Marco Derks MPhil (Utrecht University, PhD candidate, m.derks1@uu.nl)

For applying for the project or more information, please contact Marco Derks (for MA research on contemporary public discourse in the Netherlands), David Bos (for MA research on public discourse in the Netherlands, 1946-2005), or Mariecke van den Berg (for MA research on contemporary public discourse in Sweden, Spain or Serbia).