

Call for Presentations

Doing and Believing. Religion and Gender. 30. Student symposium of the Study of Religion.

29 May to 1 June 2025, University of Basel

«In this sense, gender is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of the metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative — that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed.» — Judith Butler¹

In recent decades, post-structuralist perspectives have fundamentally changed our understanding of gender: Gender is no longer understood as an innate quality, but as a performative construct, shaped by cultural and regulative practices. Our understanding of religion has also developed into that of a dynamic symbolic system of beliefs and practices that are constantly being discursively reconstructed, negotiated and transformed. This symposium invites students from Bachelor's and Master's level, as well as PhD students, to explore the interaction between gender and religion.

In this symposium, we would like to focus on how gender roles are reflected in religious systems through practices and narratives and at the same time are shaped by them. Religion not only functions as a mirror of social gender images, but also plays an active role in their construction, consolidation and further development. Religious rituals, myths, institutions, and movements can confirm, question or transform existing gender roles. Through this perspective, we aim to examine the complex interplay in which religion both influences the representation of gender and contributes to the ongoing negotiation and transformation of gender roles. We hope that this thematic focus will result in a variety of different contributions from different disciplinary perspectives.

¹ Judith Butler: Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. 1999 New York, p. 32.



Gender as a lens for the study of religion:

Study of religions sees itself as the sum of diverse approaches and perspectives for dealing with the most diverse religious phenomena. In order to allow these to enter into a dialogue during this symposium, gender will be used as a *tertium comparationis*. Subsequently, we would like to open up possible topics, the completeness of which should remain open:

Historical approaches to religion and gender: This area encompasses the historical analysis of gender roles in religious contexts and can cover both historical and contemporary phenomena. The perspective ranges from European religious history to non-European traditions and shows how gender understandings develop and change in different cultures and epochs.

Description of practices and rituals: With a focus on ritual-theoretical approaches in anthropology as well as concepts of material religion and *Religionsaesthetik*, the course examines how gender-specific roles are expressed in religious practices and rituals. This approach illuminates the embodied and sensual dimension of religion and gender and asks how gender roles are shaped and experienced through material and performative practices.

Texts and Narratives: Interpretation and Gender: This area is dedicated to the analysis and interpretation of religious texts and narratives. It examines how these shape gender images and what role they play in the mediation, confirmation, or transformation of gender roles. The perspective includes canonical texts as well as oral traditions and modern religious narratives.

Sociological approaches to analyzing religion and gender: Sociological approaches focus on the social structures and institutions to which religion and gender are anchored. Topics such as religious communities, gender norms and power relations are emphasized in order to understand how religion and gender roles interact in social contexts and the resulting social dynamics.

Theological perspectives on gender: This area includes theological approaches from different religious traditions that deal with sex and gender. This can include feminist, queer, postcolonial and interreligious theologies that address questions about the relationship between divinity and gender and the its representation in theological concepts.

Theoretical and methodological reflections on religion: This subject area encourages reflection on theoretical and methodological approaches that examine the relationship between religion and gender. The aim is to scrutinize the methodological foundations, assumptions, and concepts that shape our understanding of religion and gender and to develop new perspectives and tools for research.

We welcome contributions in a variety of presentation formats: from traditional academic lectures to multimedia presentations and creative explorations of the topic. Presentations can directly address the thematic focus or look at the relationship between religion and gender from different perspectives, whether closer to the main theme or with a broader reference.



Guidelines for submissions:

We are accepting proposals for two types of presentations:

Short presentations: 20 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of discussion.

Long presentations: 45 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of discussion.

Please submit an abstract of **max. one page** outlining the focus and central arguments of your presentation. Indicate the desired format (short or long) and include a short biography (few sentences) of your academic background and research interests.

Submission deadline: 31th March 2025

Notification of acceptance: 13th April 2025

Submission and contact:

Send your proposals to: symposium-religionswissenschaft@unibas.ch

If you have any questions or require further information, please contact us at the same address.

We look forward to receiving numerous interesting submissions!

With best regards

Your board of the Studierendensymposium der Religionswissenschaft 2025

Jonas Bissig | Leah Gutzwiller | Svenja Müller | Florence Remy | Alice Seiler