

Europe and Religion: social dynamics and transnational perspectives

The question of religion has returned to the fore of public debate at both the nation-state and European level (consider controversies over the religious and secular dimensions of national identities and the European identity; debates about Islam; religious education in schools; sectarian deviation; gay marriage and adoption rights; issues and controversies in bioethics, etc.). This is reflected in academic research on the state of religion in Europe in a globalized world. In the debate on the retreat of secularism, which also addresses the question of the “European exception”, some even speak of “desecularization” and of “post-secular societies”. Rich in traditions in this field of study, Europe is also made up of countries where political, cultural and religious histories are intertwined in very different ways. At a time when Europe is focussing on building a knowledge-based society, and when national differences nevertheless remain strong in this area, receiving academic training in Berlin, Budapest, Florence and Paris in topics regarding Europe and Religion is a considerable asset for Ph.D. students.

Educational project

For the doctoral course entitled ‘Europe and Religion: Social Dynamics and Transnational Perspectives’, the five partner institutions offer a European Doctoral Programme in the social sciences and history of religion, based on their regular teaching activities, research seminars, and research activities. This course is the second curriculum of a broader European Doctoral Programme in the Human and Social Sciences, whose first curriculum (‘Europe and the Invention of Modernity’) was launched in 2010. A third curriculum (‘Europe in a Global Context’) is also being planned.

The programme ‘Europe and Religion: Social Dynamics and Transnational Perspectives’ relates to research in the contemporary world (19th to 21st centuries) and concentrates on a multi-disciplinary study of processes of change, transfiguration, and re-compositions of the religious. Students receive their doctoral training through seminars held by contemporary historians, sociologists, anthropologists and philosophers, with interventions – where appropriate – from specialists in political science and law whose interests include religion. The studies are not limited to institutionalized religion, but include all social forms of religious life at the collective and individual level.

Teaching programme

- Reflecting the diverse background and academic foci of the five partner institutions, different approaches and perspectives are used for the study of the various aspects of contemporary religion. Excellence in the social sciences and related disciplines consists in a good application of empirical research and in the development of an appropriate theoretical background. The aim of the European Doctoral Programme is to enable the doctoral students to broaden their intellectual horizons, moving from one academic institution to another and experiencing first hand a multi-focal doctoral training. Although the doctoral students is enrolled in one of the partner institutions, they also work in the other institutions, each of which offers a thematically

oriented, specific seminar course. The goal is to provide the doctoral students with a coherent doctoral training so they can exploit the intellectual resources of all the partner institutions.

- Students are required to attend, in the different partner institutions, the research seminars or courses organized for them according to the academic calendar compiled by the Programme Director. This calendar consists of two six-week periods (= 72 teaching hours in each period) per year for the first two years of the doctoral programme. The topics of these six-week periods are:

Religion, Modernity, Secularization (Paris, EHESS, EPHE)

State, Religion, Politics (Florence, SUM)

Social Structures of the Religious (Budapest, CEU)

Circulations of the Religious (Berlin, HU)

The courses are held on a rotating basis at the five partner institutions. Attendance is compulsory. After the first semester, and in conjunction with the student, each student is assigned a supervisor proposed by the Faculty Council. Students are encouraged to take part in existing interdisciplinary workshops and to organize sessions devoted to the discussion of their research. The third year is mainly devoted to writing the doctoral thesis.

- The Faculty Council convenes at the end of the first and second year to decide whether the doctoral students can advance to the second and third year, respectively. The Council makes the decision on the basis of an interview with each student and the discussion of a written report prepared by the student. Any student who does not meet the expectations of this programme is required to leave, and the scholarship is suspended. More specifically, students are required to submit the following:
 - a state-of-the-art-paper and a detailed account of the overall research project (end of first year);
 - an annotated table of contents and two chapters of the thesis (end of second year).

Payment of the scholarships is closely dependent on the regular submission of the students' reports on the progress of their research.

All the activities of the programme follow the principles of the European Charter of Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.