

Workshop: Critique of Religion; Framing Jews and Muslims in Public Debate and Political Theory Today, in the Light of the Genealogies of Such Framing

This is the closing workshop for the NWO-funded project *Critique of religion and the framing of Jews and Muslims in Public Debate and Political Theory Today* (2013-2018) in which we try to understand recent controversies concerning Jewish and Muslim religious practices in Europe in the light of the broader history of framing Jews and Muslims in the European context. These controversies are usually framed in terms of shifting relations between secular cultures and (orthodox) religion, both in public and in academic debates about them. The central research question of our research project is how such framing is related to how Jews and Muslims have been historically, and still remain, the objects of cultural stereotyping, racialisation and discrimination.

During this workshop, we want to pick up on the central questions that have occupied us throughout the project, and that have become more salient in the course of the last years, with the attacks on Charlie Hebdo, on Jewish persons and locations, the killings on November 23 2015 in Paris, the increase of both anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism/Islamophobia and the securitization of religion, Islam in particular. Please feel welcome and register via a.e.e.blijdenstein@uva.nl.

Conveners:

The NWO-research group 'Critique of Religion; Framing Jews and Muslims in political theory and public debate': **Yolande Jansen** (University of Amsterdam and Free University Amsterdam); **Thijl Sunier** (Free University Amsterdam); **Matthea Westerduin** (Free University Amsterdam); **Anna Blijdenstein** (University of Amsterdam)

The workshop has been supported by:



Programme: 21-24 June 2017

Wednesday 21 June (Public event in *De Nieuwe Liefde*, Da Costakade 102)

20.00-22.00 Evening on the work of prof. Ella Shohat: Antisemitism and Islamophobia; Common Roots, Different Destinies?

Interview and roundtable in cooperation with the *Menasseh Ben Israel Institute* from the Jewish historical museum and the University of Amsterdam, and *De Nieuwe Liefde*. Please see:

<http://bit.ly/2rxBCka>

Panelists:

Prof. Annelies Moors (University of Amsterdam, Anthropology)

Prof. Nasar Meer (University of Edinburgh, Social and Political Sciences)

Prof. Ivan Kalmar (University of Toronto, Anthropology)

Thursday 22 June (Bushuis, VOC-zaal, Kloveniersburgwal 48)

9.00-9.30 Registration

9.30-9.45 Introductory remarks Yolande Jansen and Thijl Sunier

9.50-11.50 Session 1. Drawing the fine lines between Critique of Religion, Blasphemy, Hate Speech and Humor. Exploring the relations between current legal and cultural-historical perspectives in the European context

Critique of Religion, Blasphemy, Hate Speech and Humor seem to be the four categories covering the semantic field of specific contested enunciations at the intersection of critique of religion and discrimination. While the fine lines between them are notoriously difficult to draw, the categories rubricate the specific enunciations in terms of highly differently valued speech acts: they can be evaluated as belonging to a worthy and longstanding Enlightenment tradition, as insulting or discriminating, or as just funny and/or nicely provocative. In session one, we address the contemporary juridical and cultural complexities of these categories in the light of their historical transformations.

Speakers:

Yvonne Sherwood, 'Blasphemy as a History of 'Drawing the Line': The Jew, the Christian and the Muslim BSV and ASV or ACH ('Before the Satanic Verses' and 'After the Satanic Verses', or 'After Charlie Hebdo')', University of Kent.

Lars Tønder, 'Comic Politics in a Tragic World: Affect, Religion, and Agonistic Empowerment' Political Science, University of Copenhagen

Yolande Jansen, "'A crooked, passion-laden mirror'" – Europe and Minorities As a Question, Philosophy, Universiteit van Amsterdam and Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

Comments:

Yasco Horsman (Comparative literature, Leiden University).

12.00-13.30 Lunch

13.30-15.30 Session 2. Muslims and Jews as Europe's Interrelated Others (non-Christian, non-Enlightened, non-liberal, Oriental, non-spiritual, Semitic etc, but also Arab or Jew, internal or external, 'black' or 'white' etc.)

Over the last years, a lot of work has been done concerning the intertwined genealogies of Muslims and Jews in European discourses and imaginaries. It has become more and more clear how theological, biological, linguistic, anthropological and governmental discourses and practices have been intertwined in their formation. In this session, we want to discuss which of these lines of intertwinement are the most relevant to highlight in the European context today. We ask this question in the light of the fact that on the one hand, in the legal and governmental spheres, there are relatively successful alliances between Jews and Muslims in Europe today concerning religious practice, while on the other hand, media images and daily realities in Israel/Palestine seem to drive them apart, in a context of rising anti-Muslim populism and an increasingly strong emphasis on the so-called Christian, Judeo-Christian, or secular (Enlightenment-related) dimensions of Europe.

Speakers:

Matthea Westerduin, 'Racial supersessionisms. Early Christian constructions of 'Judaism' and the categories of race and religion', Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Nasar Meer, 'Racialization Relations', University of Edinburgh

Anya Topolski, 'Judeo-Christian' Europe's Practice of Divide et Impera: Masking the Race-Religion Constellation', Radboud University Nijmegen

Commentator:

Judith Frishman, Religious studies, Judaism, Leiden University

15.30-16.00 Tea**Two keynote lectures:**

16.00-16.40 'Rethinking the figure of the Semite: Jews, Arabs and the Impetus to Re-member'
Gil Hochberg, Comparative Literature, University of California Los Angeles.

16.40-17.20 'Ambivalent Indigeneity: Genealogies of the Split Arab/Jew Figure'

Ella Shohat, Cultural studies, New York University.

17.20-18.00 Conversation and Discussion

Moderator : Noa Roei, Comparative Literature, University of Amsterdam.

Friday 23 June (Bushuis, VOC-zaal)**9.00-9.30 Coffee****9.30-12.00 Session 3: The Jews, Muslims and Christians in Liberalism's Category of Religion**

Over the last years, it has been established quite well in the literature that Liberalism's category of Religion has a genealogy which entangles it with (1) a conceptual privileging of Protestantism as the ultimate form of religion, especially of religion seen as compatible with the Enlightenment and with individual religious freedom, (2) with colonial history and (3) with Post World War II American foreign politics. In this session we will deal with the ways in which this complex genealogy effects today's debates about religion and secularism, and about religion in the public, in mainstream liberal political theory. We will focus especially on whether and if so how the legacies of liberalism's entanglements in religious hierarchy and justifications of geographical expansion are traceable in today's liberal conceptualizations of religion in the public sphere.

Speakers:

Maleiha Malik, 'Integrating Jews and Muslims in European Democracies: Mission Impossible?', King's College London.

Anna Blijdenstein, 'Liberalism and religion's dark sides. Cécile Laborde's disaggregative approach', Universiteit van Amsterdam.

Robert Yelle "'By Fire and Sword": Early English Depictions of Islam and Judaism as Political Religions, and their Connection with Debates regarding Secularism and Freedom of Religion', Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich.

Maria Birnbaum, 'Arbiters of Orthodoxy: Pakistan, Israel and the International Politics in Recognizing Religion', University of Oslo.

Comments:

Irena Rosenthal, Law and PPLE, University of Amsterdam

Michiel Leezenberg, Philosophy, University of Amsterdam

12.00-13.15 Lunch

13.15-15.45 Session 4: Exploring the context today: securitization of religion, the global rise of jihadism and of terrorism, global imaginaries related to terror and war, of populist nationalism, new masculinities, the Israeli-Palestine conflict and how (not) to address it

A panel in which we try to identify contemporary factors that intersect in complex ways with the genealogies of religion, secularity and specific religious groups in Europe. How, for example, in the public fear of jihadism or takfirism, and/or salafism, or in the debates on circumcision, or in the debates on the Israeli-Palestine conflict do the genealogies of Jews and Muslims (the Semite, the Saracen, etc.,) intersect with affective reactions to actual acts of terror in the name of Islam, or to actual violence in the Middle East, and Israel in particular? And how do new global media and new techniques of journalism effect the perception of Muslims and Jews in Europe today? What is the gender dimension of the new violent imaginaries and practices surrounding religion in political history in Europe? We will anticipate here the second keynote lecture in which we will be seeking to understand what kind of everyday ethics we might be looking for, or hoping for, in the current context analysed during this session.

Speakers:

Martijn de Koning, 'The racialization of danger – How Islam and Muslims became a matter of security in the Netherlands', University of Amsterdam.

Schirin Amir-Moazzami, 'Secular embodiments and the politics of (un)veiling and male circumcision in France and Germany', Freie Universität Berlin.

Ivan Kalmar, "The Next Battle Will Be in Brussels:" Reframing Muslims and Jews in the East of the European Union, University of Toronto.

Hilla Dayan, 'The Neozionist turn and the "return" of antisemitism in the Netherlands', Amsterdam University College.

Comments:

Erella Grassiani, Political Science, University of Amsterdam.

Ibtissam Abaâziz, Co-founder of 'Meldpunt Islamofobie' and Erasmus University Rotterdam.

15.45-16.15 Tea

16:15-18.00 Keynote Lecture Paul Silverstein: 'Whither Postcolonial Europe? New Racisms, New Solidarities'.

Paul Silverstein, 'Whither Postcolonial Europe? New Racisms, New Solidarities', Reed College, Portland.

Comments:

Sarah Bracke, Political Sociology of Islam in Europe, University of Amsterdam.

18.00-18.45 Drinks

Saturday 24 June (Belle van Zuylenzaal, UB/University Library, Singel 425)

9.30-10.00 Coffee

10.00-12.30 Panel 5: 'The European Question': Legacies of orientalism, supersessionist theology, racism and the Holocaust; what does it mean to inherit deep historical stereotypes of Judaism and Islam (and Christianity and the Enlightenment) in the European context today, and what can we do/not do with them for an everyday ethics?

This panel will be organised for collectively wrapping up the themes discussed earlier and for bringing up new ideas, lines of research and projects for collaboration. To open up the format, the panel will be organised as a roundtable in reaction to brief interviews with the following participants:

Esther Romeyn (Holocaust memory and Jewish-Muslim relations in today's context in the Netherlands), University of Florida.

Thijl Sunier (Anthropology of Religion, Islam, Turkey, European history), Free University Amsterdam

Hilla Dayan (Sociology), Amsterdam University College

Marianne Vorthoren, SPIOR (Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond) (tbc)

Moderator: **Yolande Jansen**

12.30. End of conference