



Religious Pluralism: Uncovering Gender

8-10 September 2010

MAPS, Maison d'analyse des processus sociaux
Université de Neuchâtel, Switzerland

<http://www.uncovering-gender.ch/conference.htm>

Call for papers

1 Conference theme

Following the due course of globalization, transnationalisation and migration, ideas about religious pluralism have been widely diffused within academic circles over the past years. Although studying changing religious realities in terms of pluralism is currently a hot topic in the social sciences and humanities, looking at religious systems with a gender focus is still a relatively new perspective - and a neglected one.

Religion and gender are intertwined but separate concepts: they are (re)constructed and (re)produced in social interaction, implicate normative values, are anchored in institutional arrangements and linked to social hierarchies, and they are also part of subjective identity formations.

In other terms, the issue of the intersections between religion and gender raises a broad range of questions, entails vast political debates and stresses its social and scientific importance at the same time.

Under the title ***Religious Pluralism: Uncovering Gender***, we propose a conference that explores a broad range of phenomena which could be described using these terms. Our main aim is to clarify the intersections between religion and gender: the focus lies on theoretical approaches, methodological implications and possible empirical operationalisations in various disciplines.

In order to avoid conceptual confusion, we can identify the following focuses:

- (1) To study the historical intersection of the concepts of gender and religion and attempt to clarify their uses for theoretical and empirical purposes across different disciplines.
- (2) To develop innovative methodological toolboxes for the study of constructions of gender within religious systems.

- (3) To discuss the articulation of gender and religion from the theoretical perspective of “boundary making” and the question of the “performative nature” of gender and religion.
- (4) To direct attention to the physical level of the various interactions between gender and religion and to examine different bodily representations of these interactions.

These focal points provide the general structure of the conference. Both explicit theoretical analyses and empirical research papers will be accepted.

2 Thematic structure of the conference

Session 1: Defining gender and religion. Theoretical frames and disciplinary approaches

The first session will focus on the (historical) intersection of the concepts of gender and religion, their expanding interpretation and the links between academic and wider public discourses. Alongside papers with a focus on the history of concepts and discourse analysis, we also invite analytical contributions defining both concepts and their analytical connections or trying to identify their various dimensions and contextual specifications.

We specifically call for papers on:

- The historical intersection of the terms gender and religion and current interpretations of gender and religion in academic and public discourse.
- Possible analytical connections between gender and religion across different disciplines.
- Hermeneutical reflections on gender and religion: how can scientists capture relations between these two perspectives?

Session 2: How to study gender and religion. Methodological challenges and innovations

We invite papers that discuss the intersection between gender and religion from the perspective of various methodological questions. In this session, we propose to explore how analytical tools that have emerged from gender theories can enlighten social studies on religion, religiosity and religious actors – and vice versa. The papers selected should avoid falling back on simplistic and essentialist views of men and women and instead focus on the social production of masculinities and femininities in their contexts. This session will also compare and contrast methodological questions that arise from various disciplinary traditions.

Here is a list of indicative questions to be covered:

- How can scientists capture relations between gender constructions and religions?

- What are the qualities, the special features of a gender perspective on religious studies? And what is the significance, the advantage of religion as a tool to explore certain gender constructions?
- How can gender perspectives on religious studies be useful and what do such perspectives contribute to the discipline?

Session 3: Doing Religion? Doing Gender? Religious and gendered boundary making under conditions of globalization and transnationalisation

We invite papers which discuss the articulation of gender and religion from the theoretical perspective of “boundary making.” The focus lies on all forms of religious and gendered boundary making and on religious and gendered self-identification and external categorizations. At the same time, we are interested in papers discussing the question of the “performative nature” of gender and religion: religious and gender categorizations are actively (re)produced, (re)appropriated and modified by a large spectrum of actors (among others: individuals, media, nation-states, etc).

We welcome papers discussing the following topics:

- How are religion and gender intertwined and used in a performative way for boundary making?
- In which way are religion and gender interdependent? How are religious symbols used in order to construct or deconstruct gendered boundaries (and vice versa)?
- How is gender and religious boundary making articulated in the question of power and social inequalities?
- In what ways do globalization and transnationalisation influence such boundary making processes? (for instance in the context of migration)

Session 4: Embodying religion and gender. Looking at interactions between gender, religion and physicality

Understanding religion and gender as products of performative activities may shape the view of these actions on the physical level and may stress questions about the social and cultural significance of the body in the interaction between gender concepts and religious systems: What connections between gender concepts and social constructions of the human body can be found in religious systems? What role do they take on? And how can they be clarified through scientific approaches?

We invite papers that discuss such interactions within the dimension of theoretical and methodological approaches as well as contributions focussing on concepts of gender and the human body communicated in religious systems.

We specifically call for papers addressing the following questions:

- What are the embodiments of gender and religion as analytical tools?
- What are the possible ways to apply theories on gender and the body to religion, and on religion and gender to the body?
- What role do physical elements play in concepts of gender and religion from an emic point of view? What relations between these concepts can be observed in displays of religious world views through clothing, sexual regulations, dietary restrictions, rituals, etc?

3 Conference structure

To encourage open discussions across diverse disciplines, the conference will be held as a closed seminar. Therefore, we will select 20 outstanding papers for presentation. We expect the participants to be present for the entire conference.

4 Submission of paper proposals:

Paper proposals should contain a preliminary title, an abstract of 100 to 200 words and a more extensive outline of about 1000 words. The outline should contain a clearly stated research question, indications of methodology and approach, references to the literature and a tentative structure of the sections of the paper. Applications should also indicate in which of the conference sections the paper could be placed.

Paper proposals should be sent in electronic version simultaneously to:

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The deadline for submitting paper proposals is 28 February 2010.

The authors will be notified by 31 March 2010 if the proposal has been accepted and will be asked to submit full draft versions of their papers by July 31.

We aim to have selected papers published following the conference.

5 Organisation and conference conveners

Organiser: Maison d'analyse des processus sociaux (www.unine.ch/maps - www.unine.ch/maps-chaire)

Conference conveners:

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