

International Workshop | 8–9 June 2023

Religion and

the Liberal Script:

Contestation,

(In-)Compatibility,

or Sustainance?

Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin, Charlottenstraße 53/54, 10117 Berlin

SCRIPTS

CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE

Contestations of the Liberal Script

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT SCRIPTS

The Cluster of Excellence “Contestations of the Liberal Script (SCRIPTS)” is a research consortium hosted by the Freie Universität Berlin (Free University Berlin) that unites eight major Berlin-based research institutes and is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

The term “liberal script” marks a set of ideas and institutional arrangements for how society is organized based on the core principle of individual self-determination. From historical, philosophical, political, and global-comparative perspectives, SCRIPTS analyses why the liberal model of societal organization has fallen into crisis despite its political, economic, and social achievements.

Interdisciplinary, international research teams investigate the nature of the current challenges, the reasons for the rise of alternate concepts of societal organization, and the consequences of these alternate visions for our time.



ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Across the globe, faith traditions have been a source of support for liberal democracy, but also a source of significant challenge. Prominent examples range from Islamically justified restrictions on civil rights in several Muslim-majority countries, to Hindutva propaganda undermining equal citizenship in India, to Russian Orthodox support for the war of aggression against Ukraine and restrictions on civil rights (especially for LGBTQ+ communities), to Catholic and white evangelical support for racist, xenophobic, sexist and homophobic policies that exclude large sections of the US and Latin American populations.

The SCRIPTS workshop “Religion and the Liberal Script” seeks to move beyond such prominent controversies to look more deeply and systematically at the more deeply and systematically into the interrelationships between faith traditions and the liberal script. The programme is divided into two parts.

The first part focuses on theological and philosophical perspectives, raising questions about the genealogy and intellectual history of the concept of ‘religion’ itself, as it relates to the rise of (European) philosophical liberalism. The workshop will then consider normative political-theoretical approaches to the relationship between faith traditions and the liberal script. Topics include: distinguishing between the presence of faith traditions in the population and the presence of faith traditions in policy and law, and exploring the general compatibility of faith traditions and liberal democracy in increasingly pluralistic societies.

The second part of the workshop will focus on historical and empirical perspectives. It will look at concrete cases of interrelations between faith traditions/religious institutions and the liberal script – relations of support and challenge. Presentations will include both historical and contemporary perspectives as well as case studies from different parts of the world, covering a variety of faith traditions interacting with a variety of liberal democracies.

The workshop seeks to shed more light on the conditions that shape these relationships. In other words: under which conditions do tensions and challenges arise and under which conditions is the relationship between religion and the liberal script (mutually) supportive?

Religion and the Liberal Script: Contestation, (In-)Compatibility, or Sustainance?

**INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP
8–9 JUNE 2023**

Evangelische Akademie zu Berlin
Charlottenstraße 53/54
10117 Berlin

PART 1

Theological and Philosophical Perspectives

10:00 – 11:00

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Tanja Börzel | SCRIPTS, Freie Universität Berlin
Gregor Walter-Drop | SCRIPTS, Freie Universität Berlin
Marcia Pally | New York University

11:00 – 12:30

ROUNDTABLE 1 GENEALOGIES AND INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

This section will take up ongoing discussions about the interdependence or juxtaposition of 'religion' as a concept and its Christian legacy, and liberal thought and practice from a genealogical perspective. Contributions might address, for example the entangled histories of this relationship, the juxtapositions and hierarchisations of different 'world religions' as part of Europe's imperial legacy, or the links between race and religion as modern categories of difference.

Schirin Amir-Moazami – Chair | SCRIPTS, Freie Universität Berlin
Sultan Doughan | Goldsmiths, University of London
Anya Topolski | Radboud University Nijmegen
Theodore Vial | Iliff School of Theology, Denver, CO

12:30 – 14:30

LUNCH BREAK

14:30 – 16:00**ROUNDTABLE 2
NORMATIVE-THEORETICAL APPROACHES 1**

In this (double) session we would like to discuss normative political theoretical approaches to the relationship between religion and the liberal script. These may range from the assumption that religion should be privatised and that religion and politics should be neatly separated (Rawls), to the incorporation of religion through its translation into a secular language as a democratising feature (Habermas), to approaches that call for ‘disaggregating’ religion in order to transgress its Christian inscriptions and adapt it to the to the plurality that actually exists in liberal orders (Laborde). This section could also address the status of secularism in the liberal script and the the related normative question of whether the secular state is best suited to manage or tame religious conflicts, or whether it might be part of the problem.

Mohamed Amer Meziane – Chair | Columbia University, New York
Mahmoud Bassiouni | Goethe Universität Frankfurt
Maeve Cooke | University College Dublin
David Gushee | Mercer University, Macon, GA
Nahed Samour | Humboldt Universität zu Berlin

16:00 – 16:30**COFFEE BREAK****16:30 – 18:00****ROUNDTABLE 3
NORMATIVE-THEORETICAL APPROACHES 2**

Continued from Roundtable 2

Stefan Gosepath – Chair | SCRIPTS, Freie Universität Berlin
Nadia Fadil | Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
Rainer Forst | Goethe Universität Frankfurt
Wolfgang Palaver | Universität Innsbruck

19:00 –**DINNER AT GOODTIME
HAUSVOGTEIPLATZ 11A
10117 BERLIN**

PART 2

Historical and Sociological Perspectives

09:00 – 10:30

ROUNDTABLE 4 HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

Religions as elements of socio-cultural systems with transcendental reference are considerably older than the philosophical concept of liberalism. It is not surprising, therefore, that the emergence, success and spread of the concept of social order, referred to here as the “liberal script”, had – from the very beginning – various points of contact with what only then began to be called “religion” (as distinct from the prevailing social order of the particular context). The very term suggests a functional differentiation that had previously been absent. In this panel we want to explore, from a historical perspective, the interrelations between the liberal script and religion, religiosity or organised religion in different historical and cultural contexts.

Gregor Walter-Drop – Chair | SCRIPTS, Freie Universität Berlin

Faisal Devji | University of Oxford

Gudrun Krämer | SCRIPTS, Freie Universität Berlin

Andrea Turpin | Baylor University, Waco, TX

10:30 – 11:00

COFFEE BREAK

11:00 – 12:30

ROUNDTABLE 5 CURRENT TRENDS

Current trends in secularisation processes show less a general disappearance of ‘religion’ as such than a transformation of religiosity and religious institutions. Some religious communities are flexible enough to engage in various forms of contestation, cooperation and adaptation within the alternative venues offered by the liberal script; others are not. Why are some forms of religiosity and religious institutions more successful than others? The session will discuss these trends in a global perspective, from the religious pluralisation of Western publics to the rise of global Islam and global Christianity, with a focus on India and the African continent.

Mariano Barbato – Chair | Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

Titus Hjelm | University of Helsinki

Nico Koopman | Stellenbosch University

Ines Michalowski | Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

12:30 – 14:30

LUNCH BREAK

14:30 – 16:00

ROUNDTABLE 6
FAITH TRADITIONS AS A CHALLENGE TO THE LIBERAL SCRIPT

The norms of popular religions can clash directly with the principles of the liberal script. In this section we want to explore this along with another, almost reverse effect: Political scientists and communication scholars often rely on cognitive science models to explain the widespread public embrace of misinformation, which in turn fuels democratic backsliding. They may overlook the fact that phenomena such as conspiracy theories, white supremacist ideology or hypernationalism can also be seen as systems of meaning, purpose and community. They would thus constitute new, “strange rites” (Tara Isabella Burton) that benefit from the weakening of mainstream religions. If this is true, the question arises as to what social disruptions are underpinning this process.

Steven Livingston – Chair | George Washington University, Washington DC

Robert Jones | Public Religion Research Institute, Washington DC

Samuel Perry | University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK

Dmitry Uzlaner | Universität Innsbruck; Ben-Gurion University

Rudolf von Sinner | Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Paraná, Curitiba

16:00 – 16:30

COFFEE BREAK

16:30 – 18:00

ROUNDTABLE 7: FAITH TRADITIONS AS SUSTENANCE/CREATIVE RESOURCE FOR THE LIBERAL SCRIPT

Although much of the recent public attention and scholarly research has focused on the challenges that faith traditions pose to liberal democracy, this panel pulls the lens back, so to speak, from the current political crises to broaden the picture and to consider the multiple ways in which faith traditions ground liberal democracy: the presuppositions, articles of faith, values and goals that underpin liberal, democratic norms, founding documents, structures, institutions, practices, etc. Consideration will also be given to the ways in which faith traditions ground resistance to illiberalism.

Marcia Pally | New York University

Yonatan Brafman | Tufts University, Boston MA

Dion Forster | Stellenbosch University

Charles Mathewes | University of Virginia, Charlottesville VA

Michael Seewald | Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster

19:00 –

DINNER AND FAREWELL AT RISTORANTE DA VINCI
GEORGENSTRASSE (S-BAHNBOGEN 192)
10117 BERLIN-MITTE

SCRIPTS



For further information about SCRIPTS
please visit: <https://www.scripts-berlin.eu>



A SCRIPTS Factsheet
can be found here: https://www.scripts-berlin.eu/_medien/docs/SCRIPTS_Factsheet_2022.pdf



A longer description of the research aims
can be found here: https://www.scripts-berlin.eu/_medien/docs/SCRIPTS_Summary_2022.pdf

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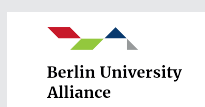
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