

## **Unions and Divisions: Religion and Reconciliation in the Black Sea Region**

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Type:

Call for Papers

Date:

June 11, 2020 to June 13, 2020

Location:

Pennsylvania, Ukraine

Subject Fields:

Anthropology, Human Rights, Religious Studies and Theology, Russian or Soviet History / Studies, Sociology

### **Call for Papers**

**The Working Group on Religion in the Black Sea Region**

**Seventh Annual Workshop**

## **Unions and Divisions: Religion and Reconciliation in the Black Sea Region**

**11-13 June 2020, Kyiv, Ukraine**

States and transnational governing bodies increasingly rely on faith-based organizations to play a significant role in processes of reconciliation and peacekeeping. This workshop invites us to think about the cultural capital religion, religious institutions, and faith-based organizations potentially offer that might enable them to play a role in mediating processes of reconciliation, conflict resolution, and social transformation more broadly. In the same breadth, armed combat, state-civil society tensions, and institutionalized discrimination, which often stem from populism, nationalism, inequalities as well as resource scarcity,

frequently appeal to religious principles to justify their causes and grievances. Such dynamics can make the involvement of religious organizations an escalating factor that enflames conflicts.

Is there place for religious peacebuilding and faith-based diplomacy in an increasingly polarized and pluralist world? Is it realistic to expect religious actors to become neutral bridges in conflict resolution? In some instances, we see states “weaponizing” and “securitizing” religion. When and how might the religious factor escalate tensions and activate the links reinforcing the connections between religion and violence?

We encourage presentations based on research that uses a variety of methods and innovative styles of argumentation to study religious encounters in Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region, including the Caucasus. We welcome interdisciplinary proposals that draw on anthropology, history, political science, religious studies, and sociology to address the intersection of religion, conflict and resolution among societies that have been or are divided.

The thematic scope of the conference focuses on, but is not limited to, such topics as:

- the role of religion in the stabilization/destabilization of structural violence, oppression, and inequalities
- dynamics that place religion on an ethnic axis to strengthen/undermine identities
- religion and the global rise of populism and nationalism
- moral and ethical dimensions of human rights and restorative justice
- forgiveness and the unforgivable
- empathy and understanding the Other
- techniques of inter-community vs intra-community dialogue, storytelling and conflict mediation
- bridging theory, method and practice to better understand ethnic, racial and religious conflicts

**Format:** Each participant will make a 20-minute presentation, followed by commentary from a discussant, and open discussion.

The working language is English.

**Logistics:** The costs of travel to Kyiv and three nights of accommodation will be provided.

**Proposals:** Please submit a brief CV (max. 3 pages) and a **300-word proposal** to: [soc.injener@gmail.com](mailto:soc.injener@gmail.com) by **1 March 2020**. Notification of acceptance will be given by **23 March 2019**.

**The Working Group on Religion in the Black Sea Region** brings together scholars from around the world and from different disciplinary backgrounds to consider how religion has shaped the histories, cultures and politics of the peoples of the Black Sea region over time. By conceptualizing a broad geographic area as a common research site, from the Balkans to the Caucasus mountains to the Ukrainian and Russian steppe to Anatolia, this Group aims to think critically about how such categories as “region,” “nation” and “border” and the role religion - and its twin secularism - have played in organizing political space in this part of the world. The Working Group supports research on institutionalized religion and contemporary forms of “lived religiosity.” The Group sponsors publications and three annual events: a conference, a workshop for junior scholars, and a two-week summer school on anthropological theory and ethnographic methods. Catherine Wanner is the convener of the Working Group.

This conference is sponsored by the

**Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen,  
Switzerland**

in cooperation with the

**Ukrainian Catholic University**

**Kyiv-Mohyla Academy**

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