

# Religion Across Media

## Theoretical Perspectives and Case Studies

University of Oslo, February 13-15, 2012

Workshop organized by the the research network on Religion in Pluralist Societies (PluRel) [www.uio.no/english/research/interfaculty-research-areas/plurel/](http://www.uio.no/english/research/interfaculty-research-areas/plurel/) at the University of Oslo in cooperation with the Nordic research program on The Role of Religion in the Public Sphere (NOREL) [www.religioninpublicsphere.no](http://www.religioninpublicsphere.no)

The workshop is open to all interested on Wednesday February 15. The two first days is by invitation with active participation from all attenders. Please contact the workshop secretary Beate Solli <beatsol@student.teologi.uio.no> if you want to be invited for this part of the workshop. Other inquiries could also be directed to her. See the program below.

### Rationale

The study of media and religion has emerged as one significant perspective upon the forms of secularization in modern societies, of the distribution of power in religion, of gender patterns in various religious media, and indeed of the very mediatization of religion. Scholars in the Nordic countries have been successful in establishing a truly interdisciplinary study of this topic.

The study of religion and media is in itself already a cross-disciplinary field, with contributions from sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, religious studies, theology, and of course media studies. As the academic apprehension of religion and media is maturing, it is becoming apparent that there is a significant potential for interdisciplinary exchange between this field and other strands of sociological, cultural, and historical study of religion. Analytical insights from the field of media studies could for instance be brought to bear on religion in ancient media, such as ritual or early manuscript culture. And, vice versa, insights from such analyses could contribute back to the study of current media and religion a strengthened awareness of continuities and discontinuities between the (post-) modern and earlier societies. All this calls for continuous theoretical reflection and exchange. The workshop *Religion Across Media* attempts to address issues of religion and media precisely through establishing a widely cross-disciplinary dialogue and focus upon theoretical and analytical concepts and problems. The aim is to thematize such analytical concepts that have been particularly salient in recent Nordic studies on the topic.

### Program

**Monday February 13th** (*Workshop for invited participants*)

*Venue: Lucy Smiths hus, Rådssalen, Blindern*

11:30 Lunch

12:30 Birgit Meyer, Utrecht University  
**Material Mediation: Religion in the World**  
 Comment: Knut Lundby, University of Oslo  
 Chair: Oddbjørn Leirvik, University of Oslo

14:00 Kim Knott, Lancaster University  
**Religion, Space and Contemporary Media**  
 Comment: Henrik Reintoft Christensen, Aarhus University  
 Chair: Inger Furseth, NOREL

15:30 Coffee

16:00 Mia Lövheim, Uppsala University  
**New Media, Religion and Gender**  
Comment: Albrecht Hofheinz, University of Oslo  
Chair: Sindre Bangstad, University of Oslo

19:00 Dinner

**Tuesday February 14th** (*Workshop for invited participants*)

*Venue: Lucy Smiths hus, Rådssalen, Blindern*

08:30 Coffee and tea

09:00 Peter Horsfield, RMIT University  
**The Ecology of Writing and the Shaping of Early Christianity**  
Comment: Terje Stordalen, University of Oslo  
Chair: Reidar Aasgaard, University of Oslo

10:30 Stewart Hoover, University of Colorado at Boulder  
**Finding Religion in the Media**  
Comment: Mia Lövheim, Uppsala University  
Chair: Inger Furseth, NOREL

12:00 Lunch

13:00 David Thurfjell, Södertörn University  
**Mediating Gypsiness through the Holy Spirit: Pentecostalism and social mobilisation among European Roma**  
Comment: Ingrid Myklebust, University of Oslo  
Chair: Anders Martinsen, University of Oslo

14:30 Mona Abdel-Fadil, University of Oslo  
**Moulding Ideal Muslims Selves and Reforming Society to Match - An Ethnographic Approach to Islamic Online Counselling**  
Comment: Birgit Meyer, Utrecht University  
Chair: Oddbjørn Leirvik, University of Oslo

15:30 Coffee

16:00 **Paper session**

Liv Ingeborg Lied, MF Norwegian School of Theology  
**Mediation and publication in a manuscript culture; or, discussing the “year zero” of religion and media studies**  
Comment: Peter Horsfield, RMIT University

Aike Peter Rots, University of Oslo  
**The Totoro Paradigm: Shinto, Nature and Environmentalism in Japanese Popular Discourse**  
Comment: Kim Knott, Lancaster University

Teemu Taira, University of Turku  
**Media Discourse on Religion and the Secular in Finland**  
Comment: Stig Hjarvard, University of Copenhagen.

19:00 Dinner

## Wednesday February 15th (Open day)

Venue: *Domus Theologica, U40, Blindern*

09:00 *Panel discussion*

### **Religion Across Media: Mediation and mediatization – concepts of time and space**

Discussions from the previous days of the workshop will be carried further into this panel discussion. Which analytical concepts are suitable to grasp Religion Across Media? How could this be done across time even back to ancient times, and across space beyond the Nordic context? Leading international scholars in the ongoing debates on mediation and mediatization of religion take part in this panel.

Discussion leader: Stig Hjarvard, Professor, Department of Media, Cognition and Communication, University of Copenhagen.

Discussants: Birgit Meyer, Professor of Religious Studies, Utrecht University

Mia Lövheim, Professor of Religious Studies, Uppsala University

Peter Horsfield, Professor and Associate Dean for Writing and Communication at the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University, Melbourne.

10:30 Coffee

11:00 Birgit Meyer, Professor of Religious Studies, Utrecht University

### **Film as Revelation** (*Public lecture*)

This presentation takes the Ghanaian video-film industry as a case to analyze deployment of the popular imagination in a setting of neo-liberal media deregulation which offers unprecedented possibilities for people to seize the hitherto state-dominated medium of cinema, screening and making public an alternative imagery. Based on twenty years of historical and ethnographic research, this lecture focuses on a salient aspect of video-movies: the depiction of spirits on screen and their indebtedness to Pentecostalism (the fastest growing variant of Christianity in Africa). Next to pictures, a number of clips will be presented that suggest a framing of movies as a revelation through which the operation of what happens in the spiritual realm is exposed, and it will be proposed that the camera itself is made to operate as an all-seeing eye of God. The central point is to argue that the use of audio-visual technologies is embedded in a Christian imaginary, thereby bringing about a techno-religious realism through which moving pictures are vested with an aura of truth.