

**ICLARS**  
**INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR LAW AND RELIGION STUDIES**  
**PALERMO, 1-3 SEPTEMBER 2026**

**PANELS ACCEPTED**

**Proponent:** Joel Harrison

**Institution:** Sydney Law School, University of Sydney

**Title:** *The Future of Law and Religion (and of Law and Religion Scholarship)*

**Abstract:**

This panel will explore how the future interaction or mutual influence of law and religion is likely to be shaped by a contest: between appeals to the neutrality of the state (including then a movement away from identifying religious categories as distinctly valuable) and accounts emphasising the historical and contemporary importance of religion for constituting a common, public life. Such a contest is not limited to a single domain of law. It relates to charity law (and issues of identifying charitable purposes), to accommodating religious practices and claims of legal pluralism, and to constitutional order (including the purposes of political authority and understanding key principles of constitutionalism). In exploring what the future of law and religion might look like, and where significant fault lines of future contest may lie, this panel will also necessarily consider the future of law and religion scholarship. ‘Law and religion’ has been criticised as parochial in its concerns, but this panel will consider the potential for law and religion scholarship to be a lens for understanding the political community.

**Speakers:**

- Dr Joel Harrison, Senior Lecturer, Sydney Law School, University of Sydney
- Professor Nicholas Aroney, Professor of Constitutional Law, TC Beirne School of Law, University of Queensland
- Dr Jane Norton, Senior Lecturer, Auckland Law School, University of Auckland
- Dr Lukas Opacic, Lecturer, Sydney Law School, University of Sydney
- Nathan Chapman

**Proponent:** Alberto Patiño Reyes

**Institution:** Universidad Anáhuac México. Profesor e Investigador de la Facultad de Derecho

**Title:** *“Entre protección y exclusión: la jurisprudencia frente a la no discriminación religiosa”*

**Abstract:**

La no discriminación por motivos religiosos ha sido objeto de protección judicial por parte de los tribunales constitucionales durante los últimos en algunos países latinoamericanos, generando una jurisprudencia antes inusitada, la cual ha beneficiado a las minorías religiosas. Sin embargo, la paradoja es que en ocasiones la misma jurisprudencia también provoca discriminación ya sea para la mayoría religiosa o para determinados grupos religiosos.

**Speakers:**

- Profesor Alberto Patiño Reyes - Universidad Anáhuac México
- Profesor Gonzalo Flores - Universidad Católica San Pablo de Arequipa, Perú
- Profesor Jorge del Pico - Universidad de Talca, Chile

- Profesor Marcio Henrique Pereira - Universidade de São Paulo, Brasil
- Profesor Cristian Badillo - Centro Internacional de Estudios sobre Libertad y Religión CIELRE, México

**Proponent:** Herman Selderhuis

**Institution:** Theological University Apeldoorn (The Netherlands) Professor of Church History and Church Law

**Title:** *Offensive speech and religious illiteracy*

**Abstract:**

The panel presents two papers in which the topics of offensive speech and religious illiteracy are highlighted from a legal-historical and a present-day European perspective, and a third paper in which both topics are related to the research infrastructure RESILIENCE and its legal and social relevance for today.

**Speakers:**

- Giacomo Favaretto - PhD Fscire (Palermo)
- Perparim Uxhi - Phd Fscire (Palermo)
- Karla Boersma - WP Leader, RESILIENCE (Apeldoorn)

**Proponent:** Marcio Henrique Pereira Ponzilacqua

**Institution:** Universidade de São Paulo/ University of São Paulo (Brazil)/FAPESP

**Title:** *State, Law and Religion in Latin America: Current Socio-Legal Challenges (2023-6)*

**Abstract:**

The main idea of the panel is to explore religious freedom in light of contemporary social transformations, particularly regarding ideological and political polarizations, from the perspective of emerging challenges in terms of social cohesion and the advancement or regression of equality among different social actors.

Issues and Problems

In pluralistic societies, religious freedom is one of the pillars of social integration and peaceful coexistence. Conceived as a principle promoting tolerance and mutual respect, it is today confronted with growing tensions between social groups, sometimes exacerbated by the ideological or political exploitation of religious discourse.

These phenomena, far from pacifying the public sphere, fuel divisions and can fuel violence. In several contexts, religious lobbies use their social and political influence, often through ultranationalist or conservative agendas, to consolidate power and promote certain faiths at the expense of stigmatized minorities.

This dynamic contradicts the protective and unifying ideal that religious freedom is supposed to promote and weakens the very foundations of peace and social cohesion.

Methodology and Expected Contributions

The proposed analysis is situated at the intersection of law and religion. It draws on the sociology of law and religion, the philosophy of law, and various branches of positive law (public law, tax law, etc.). This intersecting perspective allows for the examination of religious freedom as both a legal and social object.

The panel brings together researchers from various continents and universities, from complementary disciplinary fields (philosophy and sociology of law, public law). This intersection of approaches and contexts aims to offer a multidimensional, multidisciplinary and comparative reading of contemporary socio-religious issues, to grasp the complexity of national and international challenges, to grasp the legislative and jurisprudential implications,

and to grasp the challenges to be addressed in building, in the 21st century, a harmonious coexistence respectful of the principles of cohesion and equality.

**Speakers:**

- Marcio Henrique Pereira Ponzilacqua - Professor, PhD, Universidade de São Paulo (USP) /Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP), Brazil, coordinator
- Florence Faberon - Professor, PhD, Université du Clermont-Auvergne (UCA) - France
- Caetano Dias Correa - Professor, PhD, Universidade Federal Santa Catarina (UFSC) - Brazil
- Thalita Angélica Gomes Borges - PhD student, USP/FAPESP - Brazil
- Olivier Nugues - PhD student, Université du Guyane (UG) - France
- Vinicius Gonzaga Ferreira - PhD student, Université Paris Nanterre - France

**Proponent:** Sylvie Bacquet

**Institution:** University of Westminster (Associate Dean, Law School)

**Title:** *The Place of Religion within faith-based education: contemporary approaches*

**Abstract:**

The place of religion within state funded education remains a highly debated and controversial issue as state schools seek to accommodate the increasing diversity of religious beliefs in a society which has become highly secularised. The extent to which religion is accepted and accommodated in state funded education largely depends on the relationship between religion and the state in any given country and is deeply rooted in the specific history of nations. Secular states like France or the United States for instance seek to keep religion out of school in order to maintain the neutrality of the state while other countries such as England are prepared to endorse and fund faith schools.

The extent to which pluralist liberal states should fund religious schools is controversial. While state sponsored faith schools can fulfil the right of parents to educate their children according to their own religious conviction (ICCPR 18(4)), promote religious freedom as well as shared community values and culture, it can also inhibit social cohesion and integration, hinder the development of individual autonomy, create segregation and promote beliefs and practices which are at odds with secular society. In state-funded non-denominational schools, the place of religion can also be controversial and contested. Disputed issues include manifestation of belief or practice, the teaching of Religious Education, the content of the curriculum or clashes between secular values and religious minorities. This panel brings together different perspectives on contemporary issues facing religion in state funded education.

**Speakers:**

- Sylvie Bacquet - University of Westminster, England
- Elena Miroshnikova - Tula State Pedagogical Leo Tolstoy University, Russia
- Stephanie Hennette Vauchez - Université Paris Nanterre, France
- Szilvia Köbel - Károli Gáspár Református Egyetem, Hungary
- Wojciech Brzozowski - University of Warsaw, Poland
- Weronika Kudla - University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland
- Adelaide Madera - University of Messina, Italy
- Brandon Reece Taylorian - University of Lancashire, England

**Proponent:** Roberta Medda-Windischer

**Institution:** Institute for Minority Rights - Eurac Research

**Title:** *Religious Teaching and Civic Education Between Democratic Citizenship, Militant Liberalism, and Autocratic Appeal*

**Abstract:**

Religious and civic education are traditionally regarded as instruments for cultivating democratic citizenship and fostering pluralism. Yet, in different contexts, these frameworks may be repurposed in ways that raise concerns. Civic education and the uncritical promotion of national values, for example, can sometimes reflect forms of militant liberalism, resulting in the forceful inculcation of specific normative commitments. At the same time, religious education can be mobilized to instrumentalize belief systems as a proxy for state ideology, thereby undermining the principle of neutrality.

This panel intends to explore how religious and civic education may be strategically instrumentalized, ranging from uncritical value promotion within democracies to their potential distortion as tools of exclusion, indoctrination, or authoritarian legitimation. It investigates how constitutional frameworks and state practices shape the boundaries between fostering democratic citizenship, advancing militant liberalism, and drifting toward illiberal projects.

Importantly, the panel also aims to examine how, and under which conditions, religious and civic education can develop in a virtuous direction, enhancing pluralism, critical reflection, and resilience against both illiberalism and polarization. By comparing different cases and theoretical perspectives, the panel seeks to clarify how religious and civic education can be safeguarded against coercive logics and reclaimed as inclusive tools for democratic participation.

**Speakers:**

- Dorjana Bojanovska Popovska - Postdoctoral Researcher, Democracy Institute, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary
- Ralf Lüfter - Assistant Professor of Moral Philosophy, Faculty of Economics and Management, Free University of Bozen, Bolzano, Italy
- Eugenia Relaño Pastor - Professor, Department of International Law, Ecclesiastical Law, and Philosophy of Law, Complutense University, Madrid, Spain
- David Katz - PhD candidate, Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany
- Kyriaki Topidi, Head of Culture and Diversity Cluster/Senior Researcher, European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg, Germany

**Proponent:** Balazs Schanda

**Institution:** Pazmany Peter Catholic University

**Title:** *State neutrality and collaboration with religion the (changing?) perspective of Central and Eastern European countries*

**Abstract:**

More than three decades after the collapse of the communist regimes in Eastern-Central Europe, the legacy of state supported secularization and general European trends of a changing religious landscape shape the relations between religious communities and states. The meaning of state neutrality is constantly redefined as states in the region reshape their role in facilitating religious activities.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Michaela Moravcikova - University in Trnava
- Prof. Dr. Damián Němec - Palacký University of Olomouc
- Dr. hab. Pawel Sobczyk - University of Opole
- Dr. Zawisłak Michał - Catholic University of Lublin
- Prof. Dr. Piotr Stanisław - Catholic University of Lublin
- Prof. Dr. Balázs Schanda - Pázmány Péter Catholic University

**Proponent:** Alexandra Budabin

**Institution:** Eurac Research, Senior Researcher

**Title:** *Beyond Religious Neutrality: Contesting Majority-Minority Boundaries and Security Governance along the Religious-Secular Continuum in Post-Secular Europe*

**Abstract:**

Contemporary legal frameworks for state-religion relations in Europe—built on neutrality, cooperation, pluralism and liberalism—are increasingly strained by superdiversity, the rise of nonreligion, and security imperatives. This panel interrogates the liberal myth of religious neutrality, showing how legal and policy regimes privilege majoritarian traditions, marginalize minorities, and often ignore the growing presence and claims of actors positioned along the religious-secular continuum. Drawing on empirical cases from Europe, with special attention to Southern and Eastern Europe (e.g. Spain, Italy, Ukraine and Greece), we expose the gap between normative commitments to equality and the lived experiences of religious, ethnic, and secular minorities—including those who contest or transcend established categories. We pay particular attention to how legal doctrines, court decisions, and social narratives translate these abstract commitments into practice, and to how bottom-up mobilizations contest, resist, or reshape the boundaries of neutrality and recognition. We engage critically with the emerging “post-secular laboratory” in Eastern and Southern Europe, examining the evolution of legal pluralism, the rights and recognition of minorities in cooperationist states, and the impact of security-driven governance. The panel concludes by proposing concrete pathways for reconciling the promise of equality with the complex realities of diversity in contemporary Europe.

**Speakers:**

- Alexandra Budabin - Senior Researcher, Eurac Research (panel chair and presenter)
- Zakaria Sajir - Assistant Professor, University of Salamanca (panel chair and presenter)
- Kyriaki Topidi - Head of the research cluster Culture & Diversity, The European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI)
- Eugenia Relaño Pastor - Senior Lecturer, Complutense University of Madrid
- Adelaide Madera - Full Professor of Canon Law and Law and Religion at the Department of Law, University of Messina
- Rafael Ruiz Andrés - Assistant Professor, Complutense University of Madrid

**Proponent:** Vincenzo Pacillo

**Institution:** University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Full Professor

**Title:** *Inheritance as Continuity: Law, Religion, and Cultural Identity Beyond Death*

**Abstract:**

This panel explores inheritance as a legal and cultural device through which societies negotiate continuity beyond death, at the intersection of law, religion, identity, and social memory. In particular this panel examines how post-mortem transmission of wealth operates as a mechanism that preserves or redefines belonging — whether through conversion, religious norms, intercultural practices, or doctrinal reforms.

The contributions range from the Reformation-era reconstruction of succession among Protestant princes, to the contemporary Italian framework governing inter vivos acts linked with religion with post-mortem effects, to the tensions between conversion, disinheritance, and identity. Additional papers investigate the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights concerning culturally or religiously inflected wills, the divergence between Hindu scriptures and customary practices regarding daughters' inheritance, and anthropological-legal analyses of inheritance as an ontological continuity expressed through ritual practices and religious symbolism.

Together, these studies illuminate inheritance as a deeply intercultural field in which legal norms, religious imaginaries, kinship grammars, and human rights constraints intersect. By examining succession not merely as a transfer of assets but as a transmission of meaning, the panel highlights how contemporary legal systems are challenged to reconcile cultural autonomy, equality, and the enduring human need to perpetuate identity beyond death.

**Speakers:**

- Melisa Vazquez - Researcher University of Cagliari
- Basira Hussen - Adjunct professor, University of Mantua
- Tiziano Rimoldi - Professor, Villa Aurora Seventh-day Adventist Theological Faculty (Florence)
- Nisha Bhaskar - Assistant Professore, KLE Law College, Bengaluru (India)
- Halim Bajraktari - Professor, University Ukshin Hoti Prizren (Kosovo)
- Dafina Abdullahu - Assistant Professor University Ukshin Hoti Prizren (Kosovo)
- Simona Fabiola Girneata - Roma Tre University of Rome

**Proponent:** Sümeyra Yakar

**Institution:** University of Samsun

**Title:** *From The Ottoman Sultanate to the Turkish Republic: The Intellectual Continuity of Authoritative Muslim Scholars*

**Abstract:**

The prominent scholar Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır (1878-1942) witnessed the strict changes in the governmental, educational and legal systems during the establishment process of the Turkish Republic. Being fluent in Turkish, Arabic, Persian and French languages, his main contribution to Islamic scholarship was his nine volumes exegesis, known *Hak Dini Kur'an Dili* (The Truth/God's Religion the Quran's Language) written in new Turkish alphabet upon the request of the Diyanet.

Yazır gave lectures regarding Islamic law, philosophy, and exegesis in Sulaymaniyah Madrasa and was designated as an amanuensis/transcriptionist of Shayh al-Islam (Meşihat Dairesi Mektubi Kalemî) in 1906. In this office, he cooperated with a committee that prepared fatwā's manuscripts as for the approval of Shayh al-Islam. Regarding his experiences in the transcriptionist office, he learned how to write an appropriate official fatwā. Even though it was not in his responsibility, he prepared the manuscript of fatwā that caused the dethronement of the Sultan Abdulhamid on 27th April 1909. In the fatwā, the Sultan was offered to choose one of two options that included the renunciation from the right of the

sultanate (including caliphate) or the dethronement. After the issuance of the fatwā, the Sultan was conveyed to Salonica under captivity. Although, Yazır was criticised because of his engagement in the preparation of the fatwā, the possible reasons behind this could be acknowledged as the alleviation of social oppression, the avoidance of military intervention threatening the survival of the parliament, the apprehension of the Sultan's life, his viridity or his personal evaluation of contextual circumstances. In analysing the fatwā, his legal reasoning can, however, be identified as the prioritization of removing hardship rather than acquiring benefit. By analysing the relevant fatwā and the critics regarding his religio-political stance, the research highlights the influence of contextual factors over the enhancement of his intellectual integrity.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Sümeyra Yakar - Associate Professor, Samsun University
- Dr. Emine Enise Yakar - Associate Professor, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University
- Dr. Hakime Reyhan Yaşar - Assistant Professor, İzmir Katip Çelebi University
- Dr. Reyhan Erdoğan Başaran - Assistant Professor, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi

**Proponent:** Hakime Reyhan Yaşar

**Institution:** Assistant Professor of Islamic Law at İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University

**Title:** *The Formation of Turkish Religious Literature: The Case of Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen*

**Abstract:**

The transitional period from the late Ottoman Sultanate to the early years of the Turkish Republic represents not only reshaped the administrative apparatus of the state but also deeply affected the status and modes of transmission of religious thought. Within this context, Ömer Nasuhi Bilmen (1883–1971) emerges as a pivotal scholar who bridged the Ottoman and Republican eras, ensuring the continuity of Islamic scholarship across a time of radical change.

Bilmen played an active role in the institutional representation of religious authority, assuming both scholarly and administrative responsibilities. His appointment as a President of the Directorate of Religious Affairs in 1960 attest to his enduring respectability within the evolving framework of the Republic's religious policies. His extensive works in Islamic law and Qur'anic exegesis exemplify his effort to transmit the classical Islamic intellectual heritage through the emerging linguistic and cultural environment of modern Turkey.

This study examines how Bilmen sought to preserve the continuity of religious knowledge and heritage through his works, while also raising awareness of the distortions introduced by Orientalist discourse. As an heir to the Ottoman scholarly tradition, Bilmen's intellectual legacy offers a distinctive lens for understanding the continuity of Islamic law throughout Turkey's modernization process.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Hakime Reyhan Yaşar - Assistant Professor, İzmir Katip Çelebi University
- Dr. Sümeyra Yakar - Associate Professor, Samsun University
- Dr. Emine Enise Yakar - Associate Professor, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University
- Dr. Reyhan Erdoğan Başaran - Assistant Professor, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli University

**Proponent:** Renae Barker

**Institution:** University of Western Australia

**Title:** *The Neutrality of the State and the Child*

**Abstract:**

This panel explores the contested ideal of state neutrality in matters of religion as it relates to children and those rendered vulnerable “as if children.” Drawing on diverse jurisdictions and theoretical lenses, the papers examine how courts and legal systems navigate religious beliefs, parental authority, welfare, and the best interests of the child. Contributors consider questions of judicial paternalism, the weight afforded to children’s and parents’ sincere religious views, and the limits of secular adjudication in disputes involving adoption, care, medical treatment, and education. The panel also interrogates structural protection deficits arising from weak or uneven rights cultures, including the marginalisation of children’s freedom of religion and freedom from religiously motivated harm. Further, it explores how claims of religious freedom intersect with emerging understandings of domestic and family violence, and the extent to which neutrality may inadvertently enable harmful practices. Collectively, the panel asks whether genuine neutrality is possible—or desirable—when the state is tasked with safeguarding vulnerable children.

**Speakers:**

- Mark Hill KC
- Neville Rochow KC
- Suvarna Variya
- Tania Pagotto
- Azzizat Amoloye
- Jenny Richards
- Silvia Angeletti

**Proponent:** Emine Enise Yakar

**Institution:** Recep Tayyip Erdogan University, an Associate Professor

**Title:** *From The Ottoman Sultanate to the Turkish Republic: The Intellectual Continuity of Authoritative Muslim Scholars*

**Abstract:**

Mehmet Rıfat Börekçi in the Period of the Transformation from the Office of Shaykh al-Islām to the Diyanet İşleri Reisliği (the Chairship of Religious Affairs). Mehmet Rıfat Börekçi (1860-1941) was the first president of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı; henceforth: Diyanet). Before the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Börekçi assumed many official duties including teaching at Fazliyye Madrasa, being a member of appellate court, and holding the position of the Muftı in Ankara. At the initial days of Turkish independence war, Börekçi established Müdafaa-i Hukuk Cemiyeti (Countrywide Resistance Organisation) and assumed its presidency to provide moral and material support to the Turkish national struggle. The authorities issued an ordinance for his arrest and condemnation of death because of his support to the opponents of the Istanbul government. He was also deposed from his muftıship office of Ankara by the Istanbul government, but the Ankara government immediately reinstated him to the same office. During these years, Börekçi issued the Ankara Fatwā that pronounced the obligatory and sacred nature of participating in the national struggle for every citizen. The fatwā galvanised the religious

sentiments of Muslims to partake in the independence war by reflecting the political tension between the Istanbul government and the Ankara government.

After the establishment of Turkish Republic, he was designated as the President of the Diyanet on 4th April 1924 and stayed in this office until his demise on 5th March 1941. One of the controversial issues during his presidency was the Turkification of khtubas (sermons) in Friday congregation. The issue was raised in 1923, but Börekçi did not lean toward Turkifying the khtubas. He issued a circular letter that states the necessity of reading the first half of khutba in Arabic and the second half in Turkish. The research, by evaluating these fatwās, attempts to elucidate Börekçi's status as a mediatory religious figure in both igniting and appeasing the religious sensitivity of Turkish Muslims in the transiting period.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Sümeyra YAKAR - Associate Professor, Samsun University
- Dr. Emine Enise YAKAR - Associate Professor, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University
- Dr. Hakime Reyhan YAŞAR - Assistant Professor, İzmir Katip Çelebi University
- Dr. Reyhan ERDOĞDU BAŞARAN - Assistant Professor, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi

**Proponent:** Reyhan Erdoğan Başaran

**Institution:** Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi

**Title:** *From The Ottoman Sultanate to the Turkish Republic: The Intellectual Continuity of Authoritative Muslim Scholars*

**Abstract:**

İzmirli İsmail Hakkı was a significant Muslim intellectual who responded to the profound political, social, and religious transformations of the early Republican era by seeking both to preserve the Islamic tradition and to establish a connection between religion and the new regime. İsmail Hakkı was a prolific scholar who received a deep Islamic education from childhood and mastered a wide range of languages, including Arabic, Persian, Greek, and French. He delved deeply into both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions. He stated that his methodology was built on the principle of “not treating any scholar’s word as revelation,” thereby avoiding both rigid traditionalism and a rootless modernism that merely imitates the West. In his writings, he consistently referenced the works, legal opinions (fatwas), and independent legal reasoning (ijtihad) of major Islamic figures to produce solutions for the religious challenges faced by society. Given that, he did not hesitate to criticize the intellectuals of his time whom he considered ignorant of Islamic knowledge and who unconditionally supported the state’s reforms. His conciliatory character is clearly demonstrated by his approach during the period when the call to prayer (Adhan) was recited in Turkish, a change that caused great unease among the Muslim community. Citing the legal precedents of Imam Abu Hanifa, who held that “the determining factor in the Adhan is custom” and that “those unable to pronounce Arabic may recite the Quran in their own language”, İzmirli conveyed the opinion that an Adhan recited in a language understood by the people could be permissible, as long as it fulfilled its primary purpose of calling people to prayer. This stance is crucial as it shows that he remained faithful to Islamic principles while simultaneously acting as a reconciling intellectual who sought to avoid the extreme polarizations that could damage social cohesion.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Reyhan Erdoğan Başaran - Assistant Professor, Ankara Hacı Bayram Veli Üniversitesi

- Dr. Sümeyra Yakar - Associate Professor, Samsun University
- Dr. Emine Enise Yakar - Associate Professor, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University
- Dr. Hakime Reyyan Yaşar - Assistant Professor, İzmir Katip Çelebi University

**Proponent:** Helge Årsheim

**Institution:** University of Inland, Norway, Professor

**Title:** *Religion under Bureaucracy – the Case of Norway*

**Abstract:**

This panel brings together four case studies on the bureaucratic and administrative management of religious convictions, practices, organizations and sites – from the assessment of asylum converts and the management of religiously motivated drug use, to the registration and oversight of state-funded religious schools and the identification and management of the sacred sites of indigenous peoples. Drawing on a broad variety of methods and data, all the papers will examine and discuss what kinds of interpretative frameworks and tools bureaucrats rely upon when faced with the determination of what forms of religion gain legal recognition, and how their regulatory efforts are perceived and understood by religious individuals and communities, with a particular emphasis on how efforts at governance affect the interpretations and practices of religious communities. The papers will discuss the role of legislative reform, the influence of human rights law, the interface between different professional logics and the importance of studying documents and bureaucracies for the study of law and religion more broadly.

**Speakers:**

- Helge Årsheim - Professor, University of Inland Norway (chair)
- Thale Waaler Eggen - PhD student, University of Inland Norway
- Marianne Friisberg Larssen - PhD student, University of Oslo
- Olav Børreson Fossdal - PhD student, University of Oslo
- Kristine Tjøtta - PhD student, University of Bergen

**Proponent:** Helge Årsheim

**Institution:** University of Inland, Norway, Professor

**Title:** *Nordic Religions, Inc*

**Abstract:**

This panel explores the origins, role and function of religious associational laws in the Nordic countries, paying particular attention to the many recent changes to these laws over the course of the last decades and their connections to surrounding debates about the role of religion in society. Featuring papers on the Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish and Danish laws on religious communities, the panel highlights the changing conditions set for registration and/or financial support and the role of these laws in the wider legal framework of the Nordic countries. The papers will examine the historical backdrop to these laws, their place in the political discussion on the role of religion in the public domain and the bureaucracies created in order to monitor and enforce their provisions. Paying particular attention to comparative aspects across the countries, the panel will feature a conversation between participants about whether the contours of a common Nordic religion law may be emerging. Additionally, the papers will discuss the wider role of these laws in providing protections for the freedom of religion or belief in the Nordic countries, assessing the extent to which their

provisions create tensions with international human rights law, particularly as developed in the jurisprudence at the European Court of Human Rights.

**Speakers:**

- Helge Årsheim - Professor, University of Inland Norway
- Pamela Slotte Russo - Professor, Åbo Akademi University and University of Helsinki
- Anna Sara Lind - Professor, Uppsala University
- Niels Valdemar Vinding - Associate Professor, University of Copenhagen
- Linnea Lundgren - Associate Professor at Marie Cederschiöld University
- Sofie Aaltonen - PhD Fellow, University of Copenhagen

**Proponent:** Daniela Tarantino

**Institution:** University of Genoa, Department of Political and International Sciences

**Title:** *The role of the State in interreligious dialogue: models, challenges and perspectives for a comparative approach*

**Abstract:**

This panel aims to explore, through a comparative and interdisciplinary approach, the role of the State in promoting, regulating, and mediating interreligious dialogue in contemporary societies. In an age characterized by growing religious diversity, identity-based conflicts, and persistent tensions between secularism and the recognition of religious difference, public institutions are being called to redefine their role as guarantors of civil coexistence and promoters of social cohesion.

Interreligious dialogue is no longer merely a theological or ethical matter but a political and legal issue of increasing significance. Legal norms, educational policies, and administrative practices profoundly shape the possibilities for constructive engagement between religious groups. The panel therefore seeks to examine how, and to what extent, the State can act as an active agent in fostering interreligious dialogue without undermining principles of neutrality, pluralism, and individual freedom.

Bringing together scholars from the fields of law, legal history, anthropology, sociology, and geopolitics, the session will investigate both historical and contemporary models of interaction between the State and religion. National case studies will be compared across diverse contexts—from liberal democracies to confessional and post-secular systems—in order to identify convergences and divergences in public policies, legal frameworks, and institutional strategies of mediation.

Ultimately, the panel seeks to propose a new theoretical paradigm capable of overcoming the traditional dichotomy between secular State and religious society. It envisions the State as a dynamic space of intermediation—one that integrates interreligious dialogue into the broader processes of democratic governance, civic formation, and cultural diplomacy. Through a comparative and multidisciplinary lens, this panel will offer conceptual and practical insights into how interreligious dialogue can be not merely tolerated, but institutionally supported as a civic and political value in the twenty-first century.

Description of the Presentations

1. The State and Religious Freedom: Comparative Legal Perspectives

An analysis of how different legal systems balance secularism with the promotion of interreligious dialogue, comparing European and non-European models.

2. Religious Pluralism in the History of the Modern State

A study of the historical roots of the relationship between political authority and religious diversity, focusing on the evolution and institutional limits of tolerance.

3. **State Mediation in Interreligious Conflicts: Experiences and Limits**  
Examination of the mechanisms through which states act as mediators in religious conflicts, assessing the effectiveness of reconciliation and dialogue policies.
4. **Anthropology of the State and Religion: Representations and Practices**  
An ethnographic analysis of how state institutions construct, interpret, and manage religious diversity within local communities.
5. **The Geopolitics of Interreligious Dialogue: The State as an International Actor**  
A study of the role of states in promoting interreligious dialogue as a form of soft power and cultural diplomacy.
6. **Public Policies and the Governance of Religious Pluralism**  
An evaluation of public policies regulating the presence of religion in the public sphere, balancing individual freedom, civil order, and institutional recognition.
7. **Law and Religion in Post-Secular Societies**  
A theoretical reflection on the role of law in contexts where religion reclaims public relevance, proposing a dialogical model of secularism.
8. **Toward a New Theoretical Paradigm: The State as a Space of Religious Mediation**  
A concluding contribution proposing a theoretical model that redefines the State as a platform for mediation between religious, cultural, and civic differences.

**Speakers:**

- Lorenzo Sinisi - University of Genoa
- Daniele Colonna - University of Genoa
- Elisabetta Colagrossi - University of Genoa
- Sara Bonfanti - University of Genoa
- Agostino Massa - University of Genoa
- Gabriele Casano - University of Genoa
- Daniela Tarantino - University of Genoa
- Arianna Pitino - University of Genoa
- Alessia Baghino - University of Santiago del Chile "Alberto Hurtado"

**Proponent:** Cristiana Cianitto

**Institution:** Associate professor, University of Milan, Dep. Cesare Beccaria

**Title:** *Law and religions in a pluralistic society: minority rights between respect and promotion*

**Abstract:**

The panel aims to explore the dynamics of interaction between law and religion in contexts characterized by growing pluralism. This relationship calls for an interpretative exercise based on the principle of human dignity and on a balance between the protection of religious freedom and the safeguarding of the neutrality of public space and institutions.

The analysis will take a comparative perspective with reference to certain European legal systems (Italy, France, Greece, Finland), with the aim of examining:

- the extent to which minorities are present in the public sphere in relation to the degree of secularisation of the social and institutional context;
- whether and how the different forms of regulation of relations between state and religious denominations can determine the degree of promotion of minority rights.

The analysis will use a qualitative-quantitative approach that will make extensive use of data collected by the ATLAS project.

The panel is promoted by the Research Centre on Religious and Belief Minorities in Contemporary Legal Systems, directed by Cristiana Cianitto, University of Milan, Department of Law “Cesare Beccaria”.

**Speakers:**

- Cristiana Cianitto - University of Milan, Dep. Cesare Beccaria – chair
- Rossella Bottoni - University of Trento
- Alessandro Ceserani - University of Milan, Dep. Cesare Beccaria
- Alessia Passarelli - Fondazione FSCIRE Bologna
- Gaia Federica Tarabiono - PhD candidate, DREST University of Insubria
- Marcello Toscano - University of Milan, Dep. Cesare Beccaria
- Ilaria Valenzi - University of Rome - La Sapienza

**Proponent:** Alessandro Negri

**Institution:** University of Milan, Researcher in Law and Religion

**Title:** *Beyond Western Europe: Neutrality, Identity, and Law and Religion in Comparative Legal Traditions*

**Abstract:**

Western Europe has long been regarded as the cradle of Law and Religion studies. However, in recent decades, scholarly interest in this field has significantly expanded across regions that were historically underexplored or lacked dedicated research traditions.

Major issues such as State neutrality, Church–State relations, and their implications for questions shaped by personal and collective identities — including religious symbols in the public sphere, freedom of expression, and the boundaries of blasphemy — have clearly become matters of global relevance, engaging legal and cultural traditions that are often very distant from one another.

This panel brings together two researchers from Western Europe with scholars working on Law and Religion in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia, and South America. It pursues two main objectives.

First, to explore different analytical approaches — sometimes rooted in long-standing local traditions — to classical themes in Law and Religion, as well as the distinct conceptual frameworks from which these issues are examined. Second, to identify, alongside the inevitable discrepancies, potential points of convergence and shared principles, based on the conviction that even distant legal and cultural traditions may ultimately reveal common ground.

**Speakers:**

Chairs:

- Alessandro Negri - Researcher, University of Milan
- Victor Moreno Soler - Researcher, University of Valencia

Speakers:

- Jeremias Brusau - Adjunct Professor, University of Buenos Aires
- Harun Iseric - Senior Teaching and Research Assistant, University of Sarajevo
- Kamilya Tlebuvaeva - Ph.D. Candidate in Religious Studies, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana
- Wan Naim Wan Mansour - Research Fellow and Deputy Head of Research, International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS), Kuala Lumpur

- Anoushe Zahoor Butt - Senior Associate and Private Secretary, Supreme Court of Pakistan

**Proponent:** Silvio Ferrari

**Institution:** University of Milan

**Title:** *Testing the boundaries of legal pluralism*

**Abstract:**

TESTING THE BOUNDARIES OF LEGAL PLURALISM: THE CASE OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Jehovah's Witnesses (JWs) are a perfect test case for assessing the degree of pluralism that exists in a state's legal system. Indeed, in order to respect the precepts of their religion, JWs make radical life choices that are sometimes at odds with the principles and rules shared by the majority of the population. Just to give some examples, JWs refuse blood transfusions, the use of weapons (and therefore military service), do not vote and avoid active participation in patriotic demonstrations; practice social distancing (that is the limitation of social relations with members expelled from the organization) and door-to-door proselytizing, and refrain from participating in inter-religious dialogue.

Faced with these religiously motivated practices, some States have banned the JWs, others have denied them the same support provided to other comparable religious organisations, while others have accepted and regulated the presence and activities of the JWs on an equal footing with other religions. This diversity of choices is rooted in the history and cultural, political and religious traditions of each country, which must be understood and respected. However, this does not exclude the need to assess these choices in the light of the principles of religious freedom, non-discrimination and promotion of minority rights that underpin a democratic and liberal society.

Based on data provided by a recent research project on the motivations, attitudes, and practices of JWs (JW-MAP), this panel aims to: a) contribute to a better understanding of the reasons underlying some controversial life choices of JWs; b) consider their compatibility with the principles and rules that guide social coexistence in liberal and democratic countries; c) compare the legal measures adopted in different countries regarding JWs, in order to pragmatically assess how effective they are not only in ensuring freedom of religion and non discrimination but also in opening spaces for the development of different normative worlds (Robert Cover) and life experiments (Stuart Mill); d) reflect on the opportunities provided by legal pluralism to build an effective framework for the management and inclusion of religious diversity.

**Speakers:**

- Silvio Ferrari - University of Milan. The JW-MAP Project Data and its Meaning for Legal Pluralism
- Francesco Alicino - Università LUM Jean Monnet
- Vincente Fortier - CNRS, Université de Strasbourg
- Gérard Gonzalez - Université de Montpellier
- Pierre Noel - University of Sherbrooke
- James T. Richardson - University of Reno

**Proponent:** Silvio Ferrari

**Institution:** University of Milan

**Title:** *Rights of religious minorities*

**Abstract:**

ARE THE RIGHTS OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES PROMOTED BY A SECULAR STATE?

This panel will discuss the relationship between secularisation and the rights of religious and belief minorities (RBMs). Does the process of secularisation affect these rights? Is this impact positive, strengthening minority rights, or negative, weakening them? Which forms of secularisation have a more direct impact on the legal provisions that regulate RBMs? In short, are RBMs better off in a secular state than in states that do not profess secularism?

Silvio Ferrari will argue that a secular state does not promote RBM rights by comparing data from the Atlas of Religious or Belief Minority Rights with data on the percentage of 'nones' in a country's population (taken as an indicator of secularisation). Instead, a secular state ensures more equal treatment of different minorities, and above all, it reduces the disparity between the rights enjoyed by these minorities and those of the majority religion. Marco Ventura and Javier Martinez Torron will act as discussants.

**Speakers:**

- Silvio Ferrari - University of Milan
- Louis-Léon Christians, Catholic University of Louvain
- Roberta Medda - Windischer, EURAC, Bolzano
- Javier Martinez Torron - University Complutense, Madrid
- Marco Ventura - University of Siena

**Proponent:** Javier Martinez-Torron

**Institution:** Universidad Complutense (Madrid, Spain)

**Title:** *Relaciones bilaterales entre Estado y confesiones religiosas: ¿una forma aún válida de cooperación? (Bilateral relations between State and religious communities: a still valid form of cooperation?)*

The panel is sponsored by the project NEUCOPER

**Abstract:**

In many European countries, there is a tradition of institutional relations between the State and major churches which has often materialized in bilateral sources of law, i.e., formal agreements between the State and religious communities that have a hybrid nature -- secular (State) and religious (church). Such tradition had its origin in the concordats of a number of European States with the Holy See, and has extended to other religious communities in the last decades. One of the consequences of it has been the establishment of multi-tier systems of recognition of the legal position of religious communities vis-à-vis the State — communities with an agreement enjoy a superior legal status. The rationale of this approach is to facilitate modes of State cooperation that take into account the different social roots of religious communities as well as their specific characteristics -- which in turn should lead to a higher degree of religious freedom for those communities and their individual members. However, in recent years, some scholars, and some case law of the European Court of Human Rights, suggest that systems inspired by bilateralism should be scrutinized in detail to ensure that they are fully compatible with the principle of equality and with the State's impartiality in religious matters. This panel will examine some of the areas typically covered by State agreements with religious communities to explore the extent to which such agreements remain a valid form of State cooperation with religion, and how they should be designed in a way that avoids causing discrimination and does not undermine the State's religious neutrality.

**Speakers:**

- Javier Martínez-Torrón - Universidad Complutense
- Rafael Palomino - Universidad Complutense
- Silvia Meseguer - Universidad Complutense
- Santiago Cañamares - Universidad Complutense
- Irene Briones - Universidad Complutense
- María José Valero-Estarellas - Universidad Villanueva
- Belén Rodrigo - Universidad CEU San Pablo
- Juan Navarro Floria - Universidad Católica Argentina

**Proponent:** Wojciech Brzozowski

**Institution:** University of Warsaw; University Professor

**Title:** *Teaching Law and Religion in an Age of Religious Illiteracy*

**Abstract:**

What happens when students of Law and Religion no longer speak the language of belief? This panel will explore the growing challenge of teaching Law and Religion in a context of declining religious literacy among students. As knowledge of religious traditions, symbols, and institutions becomes increasingly limited, the pedagogical and conceptual foundations of the field may require rethinking. The session will address whether and how legal education can adapt to this cultural shift while preserving the depth and integrity of the subject. [15: EDUCATION AND TEACHING]

**Speakers:**

- Wojciech Brzozowski - University of Warsaw; University Professor
- Paolo Vargiu - University of Leicester; Associate Professor
- Sylvie Bacquet - University of Westminster; Dr, Principal Lecturer
- Francisca Pérez-Madrid - University of Barcelona; Full Professor

**Proponent:** Paolo Vargiu

**Institution:** University of Leicester, Associate Professor

**Title:** *Judge v. Judge: Religious Pluralism through Dissenting Opinions*

**Abstract:**

State neutrality as a guarantee for the acknowledgement of freedom of religion and belief on an equal footing for all naturally brings into question the (tense) relationship between religious majorities and minorities. A particular field where this relationship plays a key role is that of judicial rulings, especially when the structure of the judgment enables judges to express dissenting or concurring opinions, thus making visible the different positions of the majority and the minority(ies). In this regard, dissenting and concurring opinions can alternatively be seen as a useful tool to give voice to minorities, paving the way for their better consideration in future decisions, or instead, as a too easy way for judges to avoid the difficult, but more responsible and fruitful task to find a compromise between their different point of views and interpretations in order to produce shared decisions reflecting a more balanced relationship between socio-cultural majorities and minorities. Such dynamics become particularly interesting within international courts and tribunals, in that these ones are inevitably bound to reflect not only the internal pluralism of one society, but also the discrepancies between different cultural and legal contexts.

The panel aims therefore at exploring the role of dissenting and/or concurring opinions within the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in matter of

freedom of religion or belief, with potential comparative reflections on the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS). The discussion will examine whether and how dissenting and concurring opinions manifest and possibly transform majority-minority relationships in religion-sensitive issues. Dissenting opinions, often regarded as legal outliers, can indeed exert a profound influence on the trajectory towards which case-law develops: on one hand, they carry the potential to lay the intellectual groundwork for future overrulings or refinements of judicial precedent, thus anticipating and perhaps facilitating subsequent shifts in majority positions; on the other, they can also act as a counterweight, slowing down the reception of minorities' stances within the legal order.

We welcome proposals on the following topics: general critical analysis about the model of ruling based on dissenting/concurring opinions; statistical analysis of the use of dissenting/concurring opinions in ECtHR/SCOTUS caselaw; role of dissenting/concurring opinions in the ECtHR caselaw concerning freedom of religion or belief or other religion-related matters (such as bioethical issues, family issues etc.); role of dissenting/concurring opinions in the SCOTUS caselaw concerning freedom of religion or belief or other religion-related matters; role of dissenting/concurring opinions in other national/international courts' caselaw concerning freedom of religion or belief or other religion-related matters.

**Speakers:**

- Paolo Vargiu - University of Leicester
- Maria Chiara Ruscazio - Università di Torino
- Alessandra Viani - Sapienza Università di Roma

**Proponent:** Miguel Rodríguez Blanco

**Institution:** Universidad de Alcalá / Catedrático

**Title:** *Respuestas a la diversidad religiosa en el ámbito educativo*

**Abstract:**

El aumento de la diversidad religiosa en las sociedades occidentales se ve reflejado en diversos ámbitos de la sociedad: las relaciones de trabajo, los espacios públicos, las relaciones familiares o las instituciones educativas.

En los últimos años el hecho religioso está planteando nuevos retos en los entornos educativos: uso de simbología religiosa, demanda de espacios para la práctica religiosa, formación en religión, menús escolares adaptados a las creencias de los alumnos, festividades, conflictos entre los progenitores respecto a la formación religiosa y moral de sus hijos, etc. Este panel pretende abordar estas cuestiones desde una perspectiva global cuyo eje sea el respeto al derecho de libertad religiosa y a la no discriminación por razón de religión. En él se expondrán los casos más recientes y relevantes de la jurisprudencia española, la legislación y la praxis seguida por determinados centros educativos, con el objeto de identificar buenas prácticas y erradicar usos y normativas que vulneran los derechos de las personas que participan en la enseñanza (padres, alumnos y profesores).

El panel es presentado por el Grupo de Investigación "Sociedad, Derecho y Religión (SOCIDER)", de la Universidad de Alcalá, dirigido por Miguel Rodríguez Blanco.

**Speakers:**

- Miguel Rodríguez Blanco - Catedrático de Derecho Eclesiástico del Estado. Universidad de Alcalá
- Marcos González Sánchez - Titular de Derecho Eclesiástico del Estado. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
- Isabel Cano Ruiz - Profesora Permanente Laboral. Universidad de Alcalá

- Catalina Pons-Estel Tugores - Profesora Permanente Laboral. Universidad de Illes Balears
- José Luis Chapado Martín - Profesor Asociado. Universidad de Alcalá

**Proponent:** Carmela Ventrella

**Institution:** Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro, Professoressa Ordinaria

**Title:** *Il sacro e la leadership: tradizioni di fede nei processi di rinnovamento della società plurale*

**Abstract:**

Il panel intende esplorare in prospettiva giuridica e comparata il ruolo della leadership religiosa nei modelli contemporanei di neutralità e cooperazione tra Stato e confessioni. La riflessione si concentra sulla libertà di espressione dei leader religiosi quale snodo cruciale per comprendere l'equilibrio tra tutela della libertà di religione o credo, principio di uguaglianza e divieto di discriminazione. In molti ordinamenti, infatti, la leadership confessionale rappresenta un interlocutore rilevante nello spazio pubblico, capace di incidere sul dibattito civico e sulle dinamiche sociali; al contempo, essa può sollevare questioni delicate quando l'intervento pubblico dei leader religiosi si confronta con obblighi statali di neutralità o con politiche di collaborazione istituzionale. Il panel si propone di analizzare tale ambito attraverso una pluralità di approcci, includendo: i profili costituzionali della libertà di parola dei rappresentanti confessionali; il ruolo attribuito ai leader religiosi nei diversi modelli di laicità e cooperazione; le implicazioni del discorso religioso per la coesione sociale e per la parità di trattamento; il modo in cui le istituzioni democratiche possono valorizzare l'apporto delle autorità spirituali senza compromettere i principi fondamentali dello Stato di diritto. L'obiettivo è identificare cornici teoriche e strumenti interpretativi capaci di illuminare le interazioni – talvolta sinergiche, talvolta conflittuali – tra leadership religiosa, neutralità statale e protezione dei diritti fondamentali.

**Speakers:**

- Prof.ssa Carmela Ventrella - Ordinaria di Diritto e religione, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro
- Prof.ssa Simona Attollino - Associata di Diritto e religione, Università LUM
- Dott. Vito Gassi - Ricercatore tenure track di Diritto e religione, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro
- Dott.ssa Patrizia Piccolo - Assegnista di ricerca in Diritto e religione, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro
- Dott. Laura Mai - Dottoressa di ricerca in Diritto ecclesiastico e canonico, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro
- Sac. Giangiuseppe Luisi - Giudice del Tribunale Ecclesiastico Interdiocesano Pugliese, Cultore della materia di Diritto canonico

**Proponent:** Alessandro Ferrari

**Institution:** Università degli Studi dell'Insubria

**Title:** *Dynamics of religious freedom across the two shores of the Mediterranean through the Giappichelli–Routledge editorial series Religion, Law and Economics in the Mediterranean Space*

**Abstract:**

In its five years of existence, the Giappichelli–Routledge editorial series Religion, Law and Economics in the Mediterranean Space has begun to offer an insightful panorama of the dynamics of religious freedom across the two shores of the Mediterranean. Economic and

social transformations have a significant impact on core aspects of this right: the role of freedom of conscience, relations among religious communities, the place of religious phenomena within constitutional frameworks, the status of women, questions of security, and, more broadly, the geopolitical position of the Mediterranean region within the international arena. This panel aims to take stock of these issues by presenting four volumes of the series, each of which seeks to build a bridge of analysis, research, and reflection between two worlds that are increasingly intertwined.

**Speakers:**

- Alessandro Ferrari - UNINSUBRIA-REDESM
- Antonio Angelucci - UNINSUBRIA-REDESM
- Flavia Cortelezzi - UNINSUBRIA-REDESM
- Jinan Limam - Université de Carthage-REDESM
- Wasim Salman - PISAI-REDESM
- Ilaria Valenzi - UNISAPIENZA-REDESM

**Proponent:** Sien Devriendt

**Institution:** Open University, The Netherlands

**Title:** *The Margin of Appreciation and Freedom of Religion: European Standards, National Diversity*

**Abstract:**

This contribution examines the Dutch Bill mandating pre-slaughter stunning as a salient example of how the margin of appreciation is currently exercised to navigate the tension between animal welfare and freedom of religion. Drawing on the recent validation of the Belgian legislation by the CJEU (17 December 2020) and the ECtHR (13 February 2024), the Bill, initiated by the Dutch Party for the Animals, promotes reversible, non-lethal stunning as a proportionate alternative that seeks to balance animal welfare objectives with religious rites.

On 20 October 2025, the Advisory Division of the Dutch Council of State confirmed that such a Bill is, in principle, compatible with freedom of religion (opinion W11.25.00148/IV). Referring to the above-mentioned case law of the ECtHR and the CJEU, the Advisory Division emphasised that Member States enjoy a broad margin of appreciation in giving precedence to animal welfare objectives.

However, this reliance on the margin of appreciation warrants critical scrutiny. As observed in the concurring opinions of Judge Koskelo (joined by Judge Kūris) and Judge Yüksel in the case of *Executief van de Moslims van België et autres v. Belgique* (see above; ECtHR, 13 February 2024), the Court's recent approach signals a departure from established case law. Whereas previous scrutiny focused primarily on whether the State had exceeded its margin in balancing competing interests, the emphasis now appears to shift towards the availability of a 'least restrictive measure', specifically, reversible, non-lethal stunning. This shift merits close examination, as it fundamentally redefines the parameters of State discretion in religious freedom disputes.

**Speakers:**

- Jessica Giles - The Open University (UK)
- Mirjam van Schaik - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Leon van den Broeke - Theologische Universiteit, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Carla Zoethout - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Probably one more member (to be confirmed by Jessica Giles)

**Proponent:** Mirjam van Schaik

**Institution:** Open University, The Netherlands, Associate Professor of Constitutional Law

**Title:** *The Margin of Appreciation and Freedom of Religion: European Standards, National Diversity*

**Abstract:**

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Mirjam van Schaik, Sien Devriendt & Carla Zoethout

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- Jessica Giles - The Open University (UK)
- Mirjam van Schaik - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Sien Devriendt - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Leon van den Broeke - Theologische Universiteit, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Carla Zoethout - The Open University (The Netherlands)

**Proponent:** Maksymilian Hau

**Institution:** Maksymilian Hau, PhD Candidate, University of Warsaw, Poland

**Title:** *Transatlantic models for religious freedom protection*

**Abstract:**

Contemporary debates on religious freedom frequently assume that Western liberal democracies share broadly similar legal concepts for protecting religion. Yet a closer look at transatlantic jurisprudence complicates this picture. The United States and Europe have developed not merely different doctrinal pathways but distinct conceptual architectures — divergent understandings of what religious liberty is, what it protects, and how the state ought to position itself in religion-related conflicts. Rather than a single “model” of protection, we find competing frameworks shaped by contrasting constitutional histories, political cultures, and theological inheritances.

This panel brings together legal, philosophical, and theological perspectives to interrogate these differences and to ask what, if anything, can be meaningfully described as

“transatlantic” in the governance of religious freedom. Using the case law of the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) as interpretive anchors, the papers explore how judicial methods, religious traditions, and political theology interact to generate distinct models of protection—which sometimes converge, though often diverge sharply.

**Speakers:**

- Maksymilian Hau - PhD Candidate, University of Warsaw, Poland
- Edward A. David - Lecturer in Ethics & Values, King’s College London, United Kingdom
- Nathaniel Hodson - DPhil Candidate, University of Oxford, United Kingdom

**Proponent:** Javier Garcia Oliva

**Institution:** University of Manchester

**Title:** *Religion as a factor in legal proceedings: shield it Achilles heel*

**Speakers:**

- Helen Hall - Chair in Law-Nottingham Trent University
- Javier Garcia Oliva-Chair in Law-University of Manchester
- Teresa Garcia Berrio

**Proponent:** Leon van den Broeke

**Institution:** Theologische Universiteit Utrecht, the Netherlands, Full Professor Theology of Law and Church Law

**Title:** *The Margin of Appreciation and Freedom of Religion: European Standards, National Diversity*

**Abstract:**

Relations between a state and the religions practiced within its borders have traditionally been a closely guarded aspect of national sovereignty. This can pose particular challenges for the European Court of Human Rights when it is adjudicating the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The application of the margin of appreciation to cases that arise in this field is consequently key from a number of perspectives.

This panel examines how the European Court of Human Rights employs the margin of appreciation in cases concerning freedom of religion or belief, and how this interacts with the principle of State neutrality and forms of cooperation with religion. The Court has repeatedly stated that States enjoy a certain discretion in balancing competing interests in religious freedom disputes. At the same time, the Court has emphasised that neutrality and equality are essential to preserving the autonomy of both the secular and the religious spheres. The question of how far this discretion may extend remains unresolved and has significant consequences for religious minorities.

The panel brings together legal, theological, and comparative perspectives. The first contribution locates the margin of appreciation within the increasing internationalisation of the rule of law, offering a theological analysis to explore the tension between individual, communal, national and global interests in relation to FTICR. The second contribution offers an overview of the development of the margin of appreciation in religion-related case law, with a particular focus on recent judgments on ritual slaughter. The third contribution examines how national courts navigate religiously motivated claims concerning the human body – particularly in the Dutch context – highlighting how questions of bodily integrity,

vulnerability, and parental or communal authority are assessed within the framework of the margin of appreciation.

Together, the papers illuminate the interaction between neutrality, cooperation, and discretion, and invite reflection on the appropriate limits of the margin of appreciation in contemporary Europe.

**Speakers:**

- Jessica Giles - The Open University (UK)
- Mirjam van Schaik - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Sien Devriendt - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Leon van den Broeke - Theologische Universiteit, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Carla Zoethout - The Open University (The Netherlands)

**Proponent:** Jessica Giles

**Institution:** The Open University

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The panel brings together legal, theological, and comparative perspectives. The first contribution locates the margin of appreciation within the increasing internationalisation of the rule of law, offering a theological analysis to explore the tension between individual, communal, national and global interests in relation to F/TCR. Based on the premise that F/TCR is foundational for embedding and maintaining the rule of law - which causes an interdependence between them, the paper explores how the application of the margin of appreciation is capable of alleviating tensions that can arise between unique national approaches to state/religion relations whilst at the same time supporting the internationalisation of the rule of law into the ECHR framework. The second contribution offers an overview of the development of the margin of appreciation in religion-related case law, with a particular focus on recent judgments on ritual slaughter. The third contribution examines how national courts navigate religiously motivated claims concerning the human body – particularly in the Dutch context – highlighting how questions of bodily integrity, vulnerability, and parental or communal authority are assessed within the framework of the margin of appreciation. The fourth contribution considers religious educational institutions and the margin of appreciation under the ECHR.

Religious education and religious educational institutions have long been understood to sit at a point of tension within the ECHR: on the one hand, these can be seen as promoting as important institutions for enhancing autonomy and promoting the right to manifest religion.

Moreover, for parents, religious intuitions support parental choice concerning the upbringing and development of their children. On the other hand, religious education can infringe upon the negative freedom, also recognised by the ECHR, not to be subject to religious indoctrination. For children, this is of acute importance because of their relative vulnerability and their developing capacity to make decisions for themselves. This paper utilises a systems theoretical account of law and society to situate the ECtHR's approach to the margin of appreciation in this context in order to deconstruct the tensions between the law and religion. This paper uses this analytic framework to examine the Court's attitude to religious education and its impact on institutions that provide religious instruction – with a particular focus on reforms within the UK - as an example of how the ECtHR's approach to the margin of appreciation gives latitude to the manner in which religious education is provided and the autonomy of religious institutions within a framework that also promotes other human rights values including non-discrimination.

Together, the papers illuminate the interaction between neutrality, cooperation, and discretion, and invite reflection on the appropriate limits of the margin of appreciation in contemporary Europe.

**Speakers:**

- Jessica Giles - The Open University (UK)
- Mirjam van Schaik - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Sien Devriendt - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Leon van den Broeke - Theologische Universiteit, Utrecht, The Netherlands
- Carla Zoethout - The Open University (The Netherlands)
- Tristan Cummings - The Open University (UK)

**Proponent:** Anne Fornerod

**Institution:** University of Strasbourg Senior researcher

**Title:** *Reusing religious heritage (subject n°13)*

**Abstract:**

More and more European countries are experiencing a decline in the religious use of buildings constructed for worship or to house religious personnel. This would be a manifestation of the secularization process that characterizes contemporary Western societies. This issue affects both places of worship and monastic complexes. Without definitely questioning the symbolic attachment to these buildings, preserving a religious building no longer automatically means maintaining its original use. Reassignment can appear as an alternative to destruction, allowing, in a heritage-based approach, the physical presence of a witness to past practices to be preserved in the landscape while serving new purposes of social utility. This panel will cover three national contexts (Belgium, France, Italy), with various legal answers to this challenge.

**Speakers:**

- Davide Dimodugno - PhD, Università degli Studi di Torino, Dipartimento di Giurisprudenza
- Anne Fornerod - Senior researcher CNRS, University of Strasbourg
- Jean-François Husson - Professor, UC Louvain
- Francis Messner - Senior researcher CNRS, University of Strasbourg

**Proponent:** Miriam Abu Salem

**Institution:** Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"

**Title:** *Rethinking Religious Pluralism in the Italian School System: A Legal Perspective*

**Abstract:**

Schools constitute the primary public institutions in which the legal implications of religious pluralism are most clearly manifested. The panel will examine how the boundaries of school neutrality are defined in relation to religious symbols, religious dress, ritual practices and requests for accommodation. It will analyse the legal instruments employed to prevent conflicts and to manage religious claims concerning diet, holidays, the use of school spaces and the organisation of the school day. Further consideration will be given to the legal allocation of rights and obligations among students, schools and parents, and to the participation of religious communities in cooperative schemes compatible with the principle of administrative impartiality. The discussion will also assess the impact of anti-discrimination law and educational soft law, including the risks of indirect discrimination arising from regulations that appear neutral. The panel aims to identify coherent legal models for governing religious pluralism in schools, ensuring institutional secularism, effective protection of religious freedom and a stable balance between educational autonomy and fundamental rights.

**Speakers:**

- Antonio Fuccillo - Full Professor, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli" (chair)
- Livia Saporito - Full Professor, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
- Veronica Caporrino - Associate Professor, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
- Ludovica Decimo - Associate Professor, Università di Sassari
- Francesco Sorvillo - Associate Professor, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
- Miriam Abu Salem - PhD, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
- Federico Gravino - PhD, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
- Rogeria Azevedo - PhD candidate, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
- Antonio Ventrone - PhD candidate, Università della Campania "Luigi Vanvitelli"
- Serena Esposito Russo - PhD candidate, Università di Padova

**Proponent:** Maria Luisa Lo Giacco

**Institution:** Professoressa Associata, Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro

**Title:** *State religious neutrality and freedom not to believe (Panel DiReSoM in partnership with UAAR)*

**Abstract:**

The right not to believe, not to adhere to, and not to practice a religion is an essential aspect of religious freedom (known as negative religious freedom), recognized and protected as such both at the supranational level in human rights instruments and at the national level, at least in the Western world. It includes all forms of non-belief (atheism, agnosticism, skepticism, indifference, etc.) and must be guaranteed not only to individuals but also to any organizations in which non-belief is expressed. While in theory this is a widely accepted principle in Western society, in practice it still struggles to find full affirmation, and discriminatory aspects towards atheism, agnosticism, and, in general, forms of non-belief still remain in legislation and jurisprudence. There are states that openly discriminate against non-

believers and non-believer organizations in their legislation, even within formally secular legal systems.

The panel intends to address the issue of negative religious freedom and investigate possible cases of discrimination against “non-believers” in the Italian legal system and in other legal systems, including from a comparative perspective. Papers will preferably concern the following aspects of the general topic:

1. Freedom not to believe
2. Forms of non-belief, between theory, history, and law.
3. The principle of equality and the prohibition of discrimination against non-believers
4. The protection of freedom not to adhere to a religion and not to practice it
5. Interactions between the principle of state neutrality and the freedom of non-believers
6. Legal recognition and protection of non-believer organizations
7. The principle of cooperation/bilateralism and the position of atheist organizations
8. Case law on atheism.
9. The protection of non-belief in the family.
10. The protection of non-belief in schools.
11. Moral assistance for non-believers in separate communities.
12. Religion without God: religious atheism and religion without God.

**Chair:** Pierluigi Consorti - Professore Ordinario, Università degli Studi di Pisa

**Speakers:**

- Marco Croce - Università degli Studi di Firenze
- Fabio Franceschi - Sapienza Università di Roma
- Maria Luisa Lo Giacco - Università degli Studi di Bari
- Adelaide Madera - Università degli Studi di Messina
- Federica Marigonda - Dottoranda nel National PhD in Peace Studies
- Giuseppina Scala - Università degli Studi di Pisa
- Daniela Tarantino - Università degli Studi di Genova
- Alessandra Viani - Sapienza Università di Roma

**Proponent:** Susan Kerr

**Institution:** OSCE/ODIHR - Head, human rights department

**Title:** *State Neutrality and Cooperation with Religion: Protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief without Discrimination*

**Abstract:**

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) encompasses 57 participating States and more than a billion people with extraordinarily diverse religious landscapes, constitutional, and legal traditions, and historical trajectories and experiences of state-religion relationships. This diversity presents both an analytical challenge and a unique opportunity for comparative scholarship on secularism. While OSCE commitments affirm freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief as a fundamental human right, the conceptual –and institutional– understandings of "secularism" and “state neutrality” vary across participating States. As a result, any uniform definition remains elusive, especially since not all European states are secular or neutral in their approaches to religion or belief. The increased religious diversity, brought about by significant immigration movements in recent decades and the rise of populist nationalism, has also engendered new challenges for states.

This panel brings expertise from members of the ODIHR's Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief to critically examine the scope, meanings, and implementation of secularism and state neutrality as pathways to a full and equal implementation of freedom of religion or belief in this unique geopolitical context. Drawing on comparative research and own country experiences, panelists will address three interrelated dimensions that can complicate any unitary understanding of secularism and state neutrality, and their relationship to freedom of religion or belief, and other related human rights within the OSCE region.

First, the panel addresses the conceptual difficulties inherent in defining secularism and state neutrality across vastly different cultures when it comes to freedom of religion or belief. Scholarly consensus acknowledges the existence of multiple secularisms and state neutralities, rather than a single model.

Second, the panel addresses the variety of Church-State separation regimes across OSCE participating states. The empirical reality contradicts any assumption that secularism and state neutrality absolutely entails strict separation or neutrality: nearly one-third of Western democracies maintain an official religion, have a special status or agreement with the majority faith or grant disproportionate support for, or advantages to, one or a small number of traditional religions. Almost all democracies in the OSCE region officially or unofficially have, in fact, some forms of preferences of one religion over others in policies and practices. Some of these policies and practices do not sit comfortably with a state's obligations under freedom of religion or belief. The panel will also highlight trends in (mainly) Europe, which suggest there is some regression in the implementation of freedom of religion or belief in the region, driven in part by growing nationalism and opposition to immigration.

Third, the panel will explore how citizens perceive secularism and state neutrality, and how the concepts are implemented in practice. Survey data reveals significant variation within Europe itself: Eastern and Southern European populations report higher degrees of religiosity and a greater importance of religion as a core component of national identity compared to Western Europeans. The so-called "crisis of secularism" perceived by scholars like Habermas, Bhargava, and Roy reflects anxieties about post-immigration ethno-religious diversity, particularly the presence and accommodation of Muslim and other non-Christian religious minorities, rather than any sort of Christian religious revival. The panel will examine how perceptions of secularism and state neutrality interact with debates over multiculturalism, religious accommodation, and the "post-secular" condition, wherein secular societies must become more reflexive about the continued presence and relevance of religion and the accommodation of religious minorities.

The panel invites everyone to engage with the following questions: How do historical legacies continue to shape contemporary understandings and implementations of secularism in OSCE states? What are the possibilities and limits of cross-contextual learning about secularism between different state-religion models? How should freedom of religion or belief, a core OSCE commitment, be balanced with other principles such as state neutrality, non-discrimination, and social cohesion? What role do majoritarian nationalisms, whether religious or secular, play in reshaping state-religion relations across the region? How are European institutions responding to a perceivable backlash that appears to be restricting freedom of religion or belief for members of some religious minorities? How do citizens themselves understand secularism, and state neutrality and to what extent do their perceptions align with constitutional and legal frameworks and the respect for religious or belief minorities?

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Fernand de Varennes
- Prof. Eugenia Relaño Pastor

- two other members of the OSCE/ODIHR Panel of experts on freedom of religion or belief (tbd).

**Proponent:** Michael Moreland

**Institution:** University Professor of Law and Religion, Villanova University

**Title:** *Free Exercise of Religion and Education: Cooperation and Neutrality in the US Supreme Court*

**Abstract:**

Several major cases at the intersection of freedom of religion and education have been decided by the US Supreme Court in recent years, including on issues such as funding of religious schools and the right of religious parents to exempt their children from aspects of the public school curriculum. This panel will explore these decisions and their implications for controversies about parental rights, educational choice (including religious charter schools), unconstitutional conditions on government benefits, and related First Amendment doctrines.

**Speakers:**

- Richard Garnett - Paul J. Schierl Professor of Law, University of Notre Dame
- DeGirolami - St. John Henry Newman Professor of Law, The Catholic University of America
- Mark Movsesian - Frederick A. Whitney Professor of Contract Law, St. John's University

**Proponent:** Lauren Bakir

**Institution:** Research Engineer in Law and Religion, Université de Strasbourg/CNRS (France)

**Title:** *Freedom of religion in the workplace and in the public service: between the requirement for neutrality and the risk of discrimination*

**Abstract:**

Restrictions on freedom of religion can affect individuals employed in both the public and private sectors. This panel aims to facilitate dialogue between the French and Belgian approaches to the relationship between freedom of religion, neutrality and non-discrimination. Contributions relating to the French legal framework will focus on three distinct areas: companies, where striking a balance between restricting freedom of religion and combatting discrimination is particularly challenging; the voluntary sector, where tensions are arising between an openness to pluralism and a growing demand for religious neutrality in the name of public interest missions; and the public service, where the effects of the principle of neutrality are being questioned and rethought in light of the requirements of the principle of non-discrimination. Contributions relating to the Belgian context will highlight the differences between the restrictions on religious expression in the workplace in Belgium and the criteria developed by European law to justify discrimination and restrictions on freedom of religion.

**Speakers:**

- Lauren Bakir - Université de Strasbourg/CNRS, Research Engineer in Law and Religion
- Louis-Leon Christians - UCLouvain, Professor and Head of the Chair for Law and Religion

- Françoise Curtit - Université de Strasbourg/CNRS, Research Engineer in Law and Religion
- Mélanie Schmitt - Université de Strasbourg, Professor of Labour Law
- Léopold Vanbellinghen - UCLouvain, Research Fellow

**Proponent:** Mattia F. Ferrero

**Institution:** Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Lecturer

**Title:** *Il diritto a costituire e mantenere luoghi di culto sicuri quale profilo della libertà religiosa (The right to establish and maintain safe places of worship as an aspect of freedom of religion or belief)*

**Abstract:**

The panel aims to examine the right of religious communities to establish and maintain safe places of worship as a dimension of freedom of religion or belief, from the perspective of both international law and Italian domestic law. Particular attention will be devoted to cooperation between the public sector and religious communities in ensuring the security of places of worship, in terms of both operational collaboration and financial support.

Within the panel, Prof. Bettetini will deliver an introductory speech; Dr. Perego will address cooperation between religious communities and non profit organizations in the management of places of worship; Dr. Caprara will examine the management of places of worship in relation with the security needs of religious communities; and Dr. Ferrero will analyze the phenomenon of anti-religious hate crimes and their impact on the security of religious communities, particularly with regard to places of worship.

**Speakers:**

- Prof. Andrea Bettetini - Full Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)
- Dr. Alessandro Perego - Researcher of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)
- Dr. Leonardo Caprara - Junior Expert for SASCE 2 - Safer and Stronger Communities in Europe Project at Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan)
- Dr. Mattia F. Ferrero - National Point of Contact on Hate Crimes, Permanent Mission of the Holy See to the OSCE

**Proponent:** Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves

**Institution:** Professor of Law, Federal University of Uberlandia; The Brazilian Center of Studies in Law and Religion (CEDIRE)

**Title:** *Religious Voices in Global Governance: From Interfaith Dialogue to Policy in the IF20 Experience*

**Abstract:**

This panel examines the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20) as an innovative model for constructive engagement between religious communities, governments, and international institutions. Over more than a decade, the IF20 has emerged as a unique platform where religious actors engage with government officials, academics, and policy experts to develop recommendations on global priorities, including the Sustainable Development Goals. This panel analyzes the IF20 experience to address fundamental questions about the role of the state in facilitating interfaith dialogue and incorporating religious perspectives into policy-making processes.

The panel explores how the IF20 model navigates the tension between state neutrality and active cooperation with religious communities. Unlike traditional interfaith dialogue focused on theological questions, the IF20 concentrates on shared policy priorities—such as poverty reduction, climate change, sustainable development, human trafficking, and education—creating incentives for collaborative engagement rather than highlighting sources of contention. This approach offers important lessons for understanding how states and international organizations can facilitate productive religious engagement while promoting freedom of religion or belief without compromising neutrality principles.

Drawing on the experience of recent IF20 forums, the panel examines the institutional structure, policy outputs, and impact of the IF20 on global governance discussions. The panel also addresses the IF20's engagement with sensitive issues such as combating religious discrimination, as well as questions of representation, inclusivity, and the challenge of moving from dialogue to concrete policy impact. The analysis considers how the IF20 model—with its focus on religion and sustainable development—might inform national and regional approaches to state-facilitated interfaith cooperation.

**Speakers:**

- Cole Durham, President of the G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20)
- other panelists TBD

**Proponent:** Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves

**Institution:** Professor of Law, Federal University of Uberlândia; The Brazilian Center of Studies in Law and Religion (CEDIRE)

**Title:** *Religious Freedom Laws in Comparative Perspective: Legislative Approaches to State Neutrality and Cooperation with Religion*

**Abstract:**

This panel examines how different countries have developed specific legislation on freedom of religion or belief, analyzing the diverse legislative approaches to regulating state-religion relations, protecting religious freedom, and establishing cooperation mechanisms. While constitutional provisions establish general foundations, it is through ordinary legislation that states define the concrete parameters for the exercise of religious freedom, the legal status of religious organizations, and the forms of permissible cooperation between public authorities and religious communities.

The panel addresses core questions central to the conference theme: How do religious freedom laws define the boundaries between state neutrality and cooperation with religion? What legislative models exist for granting legal personality to religious organizations, and how do these models affect religious minorities? How do different jurisdictions regulate matters such as religious education, chaplaincy services, tax exemptions, and the preservation of religious heritage? What role do general laws on religion play in ensuring equal treatment and preventing discrimination?

The comparative analysis draws on legislation from multiple jurisdictions, examining both the content of these laws and their practical implementation. The panel considers how legislative choices affect the balance between neutrality, cooperation, and equality in the protection of freedom of religion or belief, and how different legal traditions have addressed common challenges such as the registration of religious organizations, the definition of "religion" for legal purposes, and the accommodation of religious practices in public institutions.

By bringing together scholars with expertise in different legal systems, the panel aims to identify legislative best practices and common challenges, offering insights relevant to

lawmakers, religious communities, and civil society organizations engaged with religious freedom issues worldwide.

**Speakers:**

- Gary Doxey - Associate Director of The International Center for Law and Religion Studies (ICLRS), Brigham Young University (BYU)
- other panelists TBD

**Proponent:** Anna Sammassimo

**Institution:** Professore associato Università degli Studi di Padova

**Title:** *Neutralità Cooperativa: Modelli di Partnership tra Stato e Religioni nell'Europa Contemporanea*

**Abstract:**

Il panel esplora il principio di neutralità cooperativa quale paradigma giuridico capace di conciliare autonomia religiosa, obblighi di non discriminazione e forme di partnership strutturata tra Stato e confessioni religiose nei settori dell'educazione, del welfare e della governance pubblica. Il primo contributo, Uguaglianza di genere e autonomia religiosa: la sfida della neutralità cooperativa (Gas Aixendri), analizza le tensioni tra tutela dell'identità confessionale e garanzie di eguaglianza, mostrando come le istituzioni pubbliche possano promuovere politiche sensibili alle differenze senza interferire indebitamente nelle scelte dottrinali. Il secondo intervento, Le organizzazioni di tendenza tra autonomia religiosa e non discriminazione (Sammassimo), affronta il nodo delle ethos-based organizations alla luce della normativa europea e della giurisprudenza CEDU/CGE, proponendo criteri di proporzionalità e trasparenza che permettano di bilanciare libertà istituzionale e diritti dei lavoratori. Il terzo contributo, Dai Concordati all'amministrazione condivisa: il Codice del Terzo settore italiano e la neutralità cooperativa nel welfare di stampo religioso (Dell'Agli), esamina l'evoluzione italiana dai modelli concordatari a quelli di amministrazione condivisa, evidenziando come il Terzo settore offra un terreno privilegiato per sperimentare forme innovative di cooperazione tra enti pubblici ed enti religiosi.

Nel loro insieme, i tre interventi delineano un quadro europeo in cui la neutralità dello Stato non coincide con separazione rigida, ma con una cooperazione regolata, inclusiva e rispettosa sia delle specificità religiose sia dei diritti fondamentali. Il panel mostra così come la neutralità cooperativa possa costituire un modello capace di rafforzare il pluralismo democratico e migliorare l'efficacia delle politiche pubbliche nei contesti multireligiosi contemporanei.

**Speakers:**

- Manlio Miele - Professore ordinario Università degli Studi di Padova
- Montserrat Gas Aixendri - cattedratica Universitat Internacional de Catalunya
- Anna Sammassimo - Professore associato Università degli Studi di Padova
- Aurora Dell'Agli - dottoranda Università degli Studi di Padova

**Proponent:** Iain T. Benson

**Institution:** Univ of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney; Professor of Law (full Professor with Permanent Contract)

**Title:** *Aspects of the Freedom of Religion and the Protection of Privacy and Family Life at a Time of Technological Change*

**Abstract:**

The panel of noted and highly published experts from the United States (Prof. Adolphe), South Africa (Prof. Shaun de Freitas), Poland (Profs. Aleksander Stepkowski, and Rev. Prof.

Piotr Mazurkiewicz), Italy (Prof. Fulvio di Blasi) and Australia (Prof. Iain Benson) will examine how respect for private and family life depends, in part, on prior conceptions of the relationship between the State and the family. These conceptions are both under theorized and in flux. Part of this examination will involve an evaluation of subsidiarity and “sphere sovereignty” as well as background “liberal conceptions” in relation to technological developments in digital identity and artificial intelligence.

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Iain T. Benson, FRSN - Professor of Law, University of Notre Dame Australia, Sydney; Extraordinary Professor, University of the Free State, South Africa; Panel Chair
- Dr. Aleksander Stepkowski - Professor, Faculty of Law and Administration, and Chair of Sociology of Law, University of Warsaw, Poland
- Rev. Msgr. Piotr Mazurkiewicz - Professor of Political Science, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, and Director of the Institute of Political Science, Chair of Social and Political Ethics in the Department of Historical and Social Studies, Warsaw, Poland
- Dr. Shaun de Freitas - Professor of Law and Academic Head of the Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law, University of the Free State (UFS), South Africa
- Dr. Fulvio di Blasi - Di Blasi Law, Independent Scholar, Palermo, Sicily, Italy
- Dr. Jane Adolphe - Professor of Law, Ave Maria School of Law, Naples, Florida, USA; Executive Director, International Catholic Jurist Forum, Florida, USA

**Proponent:** Francisca Pérez Madrid

**Institution:** Universitat de Barcelona (Catedrática)

**Title:** *Women’s Equality in Religious Legal Orders: Between Autonomy and State Oversight*

**Abstract:**

This panel examines how women’s equality is negotiated within religious legal orders, focusing on the evolving balance between internal autonomy and state oversight. It explores the ways in which confessional norms shape women’s rights in areas such as family life, personal status, religious authority, and community participation. The discussion will consider points of friction between religious self-governance and constitutional or international standards on gender equality, as well as emerging legal and institutional responses. Bringing together diverse jurisdictions and traditions, the panel aims to identify key challenges and possible pathways for harmonizing women’s rights with religious autonomy.

**Speakers:**

- Francisca Perez Madrid - Universitat de Barcelona
- Montserrat Gas Aixendri - Universitat Internacional de Catalunya
- Ana Vega Gutiérrez - Universidad de La Rioja

**Proponent:** Zoila Combalía

**Institution:** University of Zaragoza. University Professor

**Title:** *Legal pluralism and jurisdictional boundaries between State and religion*

**Abstract:**

The panel will examine various aspects related to limits on religious freedom in a pluralistic context. Specifically:

- Prof. Dr Ana Vega: The context of limits: whether they constitute ‘necessary measures in a democratic society’.
- Prof. Dr Jaime Rossell: Security as a limit on religious freedom.
- Prof. Dr Zoila Combalía: Freedom of expression v. religion.
- Two more speakers to be confirmed.

**Speakers:**

- Ana M. Vega Gutiérrez - Professor of Law, University of La Rioja
- Jaime Rossell Granados - Professor of Law, University of Extremadura
- Zoila Combalia - University of Zaragoza
- María del Mar Leal - University of Sevilla
- Rafael Valencia - University of Sevilla

**Proponent:** Maria d'Arienzo

**Institution:** University of Naples "Federico II" - Full Professor of Ecclesiastical and Canon Law

**Title:** *Pluralismo religioso e dinamiche ordinamentali. Modelli e tensioni nella gestione delle diversità*

**Abstract:**

Il consolidarsi di una società connotata da articolate forme di pluralismo sollecita gli ordinamenti statali a ridefinire gli assetti giuridici deputati alla regolazione del fenomeno religioso, cercando di equilibrare le interazioni tra poteri pubblici e attori confessionali. La secolarizzazione, che si riflette anche nei modelli di appartenenza alle comunità fideistiche e la presenza di nuove realtà religiose incrementano forme di disomogeneità tra i diversi soggetti confessionali, che investono tanto la dimensione regolatoria degli ordinamenti civili – intese, autorizzazioni, riconoscimento di personalità giuridica – quanto quella di giustizia endoconfessionale. Tale scenario impone di ricercare un bilanciamento tra laicità, libertà religiosa, uguaglianza sostanziale, esigenze di ordine pubblico e garanzie di non discriminazione.

Il panel intende analizzare le soluzioni normative e giurisprudenziali adottate nei diversi sistemi giuridici per governare tali dinamiche: dai modelli di neutralità, alle forme di cooperazione istituzionalizzata tra Stato e confessioni religiose, fino ai diversi strumenti di tutela dei diritti individuali e collettivi, in una prospettiva di gestione anche interculturale del pluralismo religioso.

**Speakers:**

- Mario Ferrante – Full Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law – University of Palermo
- Marta Tigano – Full Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law – University of Messina
- Beatrice Serra – Full Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law – University of Rome “Sapienza”
- Antonio Ingoglia – Associate Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law – University of Palermo
- Fabiano Di Prima - Associate Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law, University of Palermo
- Stefano Testa Bappenheim - Associate Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law, University of Camerino
- Vasco Fronzoni - Associate Professor of Law and Religion, Telematic University “Pegaso”

- Nico Tonti - Tenure-Track Research Fellow of Law and Religion, University of Bologna “Alma Mater Studiorum”
- Francesco Salvatore Rea - Post-Doctorate Fellow of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law, University of Naples “Federico II”
- Davide Dimodugno - Post-Doctorate Fellow of Law and Religion, University of Turin
- Mariangela Galluccio - Lawyer of Roman Rota

**Proponent:** Mario Ferrante

**Institution:** Full Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law – University of Palermo

**Title:** *Artificial Intelligence and the Religious Factor: Potentials, Risks, Prospects*

**Abstract:**

Artificial intelligence (AI) represents one of the most complex challenges of contemporary society, influencing not only social and cultural organization but also the symbolic, ethical, and legal dimensions of human experience. This panel aims to critically examine the interaction between AI and the religious factor, exploring its applicative potentials, emerging risks, and future regulatory prospects. On the positive side, AI provides innovative tools for the analysis of sacred texts, the management and enhancement of religious cultural heritage, the promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, and new forms of access to and participation in spiritual experiences. However, these opportunities coexist with significant legal and anthropological risks. The automation of interpretative or ritual processes may lead to moral and cognitive delegation, undermining individual and collective responsibility; the use of algorithms in religious contexts can introduce discriminatory biases against faith minorities or generate pseudo-religious content that threatens freedom of conscience and worship. Furthermore, the increasing “technologization” of the sacred raises crucial issues regarding the protection of sensitive religious data, the safeguarding of online religious freedom, and the urgent need to regulate the use of AI in accordance with the principles of human dignity, pluralism, and non-discrimination recognized by national and supranational legal systems (particularly European law and international human rights frameworks). From a forward-looking perspective, the panel seeks to foster an interdisciplinary dialogue—across law, theology, philosophy, and the social sciences—to outline new normative and cultural paradigms for the ethical governance of AI, ensuring respect for the complexity of the religious phenomenon and contributing to the construction of a more equitable, transparent, and human-centered digital ecosystem.

**Chair:** Mario Ferrante – Full Professor of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law – University of Palermo

**SPEAKERS:**

- Ignazio Barbetta – University of Napoli “Federico II”
- Davide Calantoni – University of Palermo
- Marieclaire Brigitta Catalano - University of Napoli “Federico II”
- Martina Del Priore – Sapienza University of Roma
- Stefano Foglia – University of Pisa
- Salvatore Malluzzo – University of Enna "Kore"
- Rosangela Micciché - University of Pisa
- Desiree Pappalardo – University of Napoli “Federico II”
- Ramatoulaye Sow – University of Napoli “Federico II”

- Marco Spina – University of Napoli “Federico II”

**Proponent:** Barbara A McGraw

**Institution:** Ctr for Engaged Religious Pluralism, Saint Mary's College of California

**Title:** *Is State Neutrality Neutral?: State 'Neutrality' in Comparative Perspective*

**Abstract:**

Panel Title and Abstract: “Is State Neutrality Neutral?: State 'Neutrality' in Comparative Perspective.” The panel will explore, in U.S., Italy, and France contexts, whether, or the degree to which, state neutrality preserves “the reciprocal autonomy of the secular and religious spheres” and thus is “a condition for the guarantee of freedom of religion or belief on equal conditions.” Or, instead, does state neutrality actually preserve cultural assumptions that limit “freedom of religion or belief on equal conditions.”

**Speakers:**

- Barbara A. McGraw J.D. - Ph.D., Director of the Center for Engaged Religious Pluralism and Professor of Social Ethics, Law, and Public Life, and of Politics, Saint Mary's College of California, United States
- Francesco Alicin - Ph.D., Director of the School of Law and Professor of Public Law and Religion and of Constitutional Law, University of LUM (Casamassima, Bari, Italy)
- Anne Fornerod - Ph.D., Directrice de Recherche, Rights and Religions, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique/French National Centre for Scientific Research, DRES, (CNRS/Université de Strasbourg) and Faculty Member.

**Proponent:** Dmytro Vovk

**Institution:** Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

**Title:** *Conscientious Objection to Military Service and State Neutrality in Times of the Conflict*

**Abstract:**

The panel will address international-law and comparative aspects of the right to conscientious objection to military service. Drawing on examples of Ukraine, Israel, Armenia, and South Korea, panelists will delineate how the situation of conflict and, especially, of the war can affect both the understanding and the realization of this right. The panel will specially focus on conscientious objection and state neutrality issues which plays differently in each of the above-mentioned countries.

**Speakers:**

- Dmytro Vovk - visiting associate professor at Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law.
- Elizabeth A. Clark - associate director at BYU Law's International Center for Law and Religion Studies
- Moshe Jaffe - Constitutional law adjunct professor at the Academic Center of Law and Science in Israel and an SJD candidate at the University of Michigan Law School
- Armen Harutyunyan - Professor at American University of Armenia, Former judge of the ECtHR from 2015-2025
- Young-joon Kwon, Justice of the Supreme Court of Korea

**Proponent:** Maria Cristina Ivaldi

**Institution:** Università della Campania Luigi Vanvitelli

**Title:** *Religion in the Global Sports Legal Order: Between Neutrality and the Prohibition of Discrimination*

**Abstract:**

Alongside territorial-based legal orders, one encounters a variety of functional normative systems, among which the sports system represents a paradigmatic example. It operates on the basis of membership and affiliation rather than territorial sovereignty and is structured as a transnational, consensual, and self-regulating order. At the global level, this system exhibits its own regulatory architecture, decision-making bodies, sanctions, and institutional purposes, all fundamentally oriented toward the governance of athletic activity. Nevertheless, meaningful points of interaction with national, supranational, and international legal orders persist—particularly in areas involving violations of fundamental rights, anti-doping enforcement, and matters of criminal or civil relevance. Within this framework, international sports law—often referred to as global sports law— may be conceptualized through the notion of *lex sportiva*, a comprehensive and evolving body of norms produced by individual sports federations. At its apex lies the *lex olympica*, grounded in the Olympic Charter, which may—albeit with a measure of conceptual caution—be characterized as a para-constitutional framework structuring the institutional and normative identity of the Olympic system. Central to the international sports order are the principles of non-discrimination, neutrality, and the corresponding prohibition of propaganda, including that of a religious nature. Accordingly, this panel aims to scrutinize the relationship between sport and religion, considering potential dialectical tensions arising between overlapping normative systems and the diverse modalities of religious expression manifested in sporting contexts. Such analysis will include, though not be limited to, a systematic examination of the varying attitudes adopted by religious denominations toward athletic participation—ranging from classifications of permissible and impermissible sports to the creation of religiously inspired sporting practices, the establishment of faith-based competitions, and adherence to religious norms governing holy days and dietary obligations. Moreover, the inquiry will extend its analytical scope to the deployment of sport as a vehicle for religious propaganda and proselytism, as evidenced by the presence of chaplaincies at major sporting events such as the Olympic Games and the World Championships, the formation of athlete-driven religious initiatives, and the role of religious organizations in promoting and administering sporting activities. The panel seeks to contribute to the scholarly discourse by presenting the findings of a research initiative involving several Italian universities, drawing upon the expertise of both established researchers and scholars whose engagement with these issues has more recently emerged. In so doing, it aims to delineate the contours of a complex and increasingly salient intersection between sporting governance and religious normativity.

The panel discussion will coincide with the release and the presentation of the book edited by Antonio Angelucci, Alessandro Cupri and Enrica Martinelli, entitled *Tra podio e altare: Olimpiadi, sport, identità religiosa*.

*Itinerari giuridici, pluralismo e sfide emergenti*, published as part of the new legal series of the journal *Coscienza e Libertà*.

**Chairs:**

- Maria d'Arienzo - Full Professor, University of Napoli Federico II
- Alessandro Ferrari - Full Professor, University of Insubria

**Speakers:**

- Angelucci Antonio - Associate Professor, University of Insubria
- Balsamo Fabio - Associate Professor, University of Napoli Federico II
- Cupri Alessandro - Adjunct Researcher, University of Insubria
- De Oto Antonello - Full Professor, University of Bologna
- Durisotto David - Associate Professor, University of Cagliari

- Gagliardi Caterina - Assistant Professor, University of Napoli Federico II
- Guzzo Luigi - Associate Professor, University of Pisa
- Ivaldi Maria Cristina - Full Professor, University of Campania Luigi Vanvitelli
- Martinelli Enrica - Associate Professor, University of Ferrara
- Osnato Sofia - Research Fellow, University of Ferrara
- Rimoldi Tiziano - Full Professor, Adventist University Institute of Florence and Adjunct Professor at the University of Florence

**Proponent:** Ana María Celis Brunet

**Institution:** Facultad Derecho Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

**Title:** *La educación como ámbito de cooperación en el panorama latinoamericano*

**Abstract:**

Dentro del tema sobre educación y enseñanza (15) se observa el dinamismo del contexto latinoamericano respecto de un adecuado pluralismo en los centros escolares sean públicos o privados. Hay crecientes tensiones en cuanto a obligatoriedad del curriculum, la contratación de profesores, el sostenimiento de idearios confesionales, el financiamiento y autonomía de los centros educativos y lo relativo a las clases de religión, tanto respecto de su contenido como de los profesores que lo imparten.

**Speakers:**

- Carmen Domínguez - Professor de la Facultad de Derecho de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
- M. Elena Pimstein - Professor de la Facultad de Derecho de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
- Ana María Celis - Professor de la Facultad de Derecho de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile

**Proponent:** Louis-Leon Christians

**Institution:** Université catholique de Louvain, Full Professor

**Title:** *New Forms of Dialogue and concertation between public Authorities and Religions and Philosophies*

**Abstract:**

How to analyse the initiatives of various public authorities aimed at organising multilateral structures for dialogue with religions. What is unique about these multilateral rather than bilateral forms? What are the legal issues at stake, between guaranteeing rights and limiting abuses? The aim is to examine new themes and new experiences, both national and international. Davide Dimodugno (University of Turin) will discuss a comparison with Italy; Leopold Vanbellinghen (Catholic University of Louvain) will analyse the composition of national bioethics committees; and Joel Baraka will compare public dialogue with religion based on a concept of hybrid heritage; Louis-Leon Christians (Catholic University of Louvain) will address some theoretical issues.

**Speakers:**

- Louis-Leon Christians - University of Louvain
- Davide Dimodugno - University Turin
- Leopold Vanbellinghen - University of Louvain
- Joel Baraka Akilimali - University of Louvain

**Proponent:** Elena López Ruf

**Institution:** UCA - Profesor adjunto

**Title:** *El aporte de las organizaciones basadas en la fe en el panorama latinoamericano: bases para su estudio*

**Abstract:**

La crecientes desigualdades económicas y sociales en Latinoamérica desafían a los Estados en sus políticas de desarrollo y mitigación de la pobreza, erosionando el tejido y la cohesión social, así como la confianza pública y el debilitamiento de las democracias en la región. Los Estados no alcanzan a cubrir las necesidades de sus ciudadanos para hacer frente a estos grandes desafíos que necesariamente requiere ser afrontados en colaboración y articulación con distintos actores y organizaciones de la sociedad. Dentro de ellas, las organizaciones religiosas y otras instituciones basadas en la fe, contribuyen de forma sostenida y desinteresadamente al bien común. Sin embargo, en su misión, encuentran diversas trabas administrativas, de financiamiento, entre otras. El panel brindará marcos de análisis y casos concretos como bases para continuar profundizando su estudio.

**Speakers:**

- Prof. Dra. Ana María Celis Brunet (PUC, Chile) - Profesora Ordinaria Asociada de la Facultad de Derecho de la Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Doctora en Derecho Canónico por la Pontificia Universidad Gregoriana (Italia). Nombrada por la Santa Sede como miembro del Dicasterio para los Laicos, la Familia y la Vida
- Prof. Dr. Rodrigo Vitorino Souza Alves - Professor of Law at the Federal University of Uberlandia (Brazil). He leads the Brazilian Center of Studies in Law and Religion, CEDIRE
- Prof. Elena López Ruf (UCA, Argentina) - Profesora Adjunta de la Facultad de Derecho de la Pontificia Universidad Católica, Argentina

**Proponent:** Laura Sabrina Marucci

**Institution:** University of Bari

**Title:** *Attori e pratiche dell'Islam quotidiano: intererazioni istituzionali e criticità della governance para-regolativa*

**Abstract:**

Nel Panel ci si propone di presentare gli esiti del Progetto PRIN2022 su “Islam and Muslims in Italy: Actors, Social Space and Relations between Religious Communities and the State” che ha visto collaborare le Università di Padova (Capofila), Bari, Palermo e Verona. Nel corso della sessione di lavoro, verrà rappresentato l’“islam quotidiano come categoria interpretativa idonea a ricostruire – in una dimensione interdisciplinare - le modalità attraverso cui i musulmani in Italia vivono, praticano e rielaborano la propria appartenenza religiosa nello spazio pubblico e di diritto. Più che una dimensione esclusivamente dottrinale o istituzionale, l’Islam emerge come insieme dinamico di pratiche sociali, relazioni, micro-negoziazioni e produzioni di significato che si articolano tanto nei contesti urbani quanto nei processi interni alle comunità. In questa prospettiva l’esperienza religiosa si intreccia con dispositivi di governance che risultano spesso condizionati da logiche emergenziali e securitarie, le quali tendono a comprimere la pluralità delle espressioni religiose entro cornici di controllo e gestione del rischio. La ricerca ha inteso evidenziare come il pluralismo religioso si giochi in pratiche minute e diffuse, che interrogano il rapporto tra diritti religiosi, cittadinanza e sicurezza. L’islam quotidiano diviene così una lente per comprendere le tensioni e le opportunità che attraversano la società italiana contemporanea, evidenziando la necessità di

modelli di governance più inclusivi, capaci di riconoscere la complessità delle diversità religiose oltre la logica della “para-regolazione” emergenziale o estemporanea.

**Speakers:**

- Mohammed Khalid Brandalise Rhazzali - Prof. Associato Università di Padova
- Laura Sabrina Martucci - Ricercatore e Prof. Aggregato Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro
- Carlo De Angelo - Prof. Associato Università Orientale Napoli