

**Workshop:****Critique of Religion; Framing Jews and Muslims in public debate and political theory today, in the light of the intellectual and anthropological genealogies of such framing**

21-24 June 2017

This is the closing workshop for a research project (NWO 2013-2017) in which we try to understand recent controversies concerning Jewish and Muslim religious practices in Europe. These controversies are usually framed in terms of shifting relations between secular cultures and (orthodox) religion, both in public and in academic debates about them. The central research question of our research project is how the framing of these controversies, in terms of the relationship between secular critique of religion and (orthodox) religion, is related to how Jews and Muslims have been historically, and still remain, the objects of cultural stereotyping, racialisation and discrimination.

During this final workshop, we want to pick up on the central questions that have occupied us throughout the project, and that have also become more salient in the course of the last years, with the attacks on Charlie Hebdo, on Jewish persons and locations, the killings on November 23 2015 in Paris, the reported increase of both anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim racism/Islamophobia, the simultaneously increased chances of terror attacks in Europe and the securitization of religion, Islam in particular. The workshop will address five broad themes that seem central to us today and that will be addressed in five sessions, after which we will discuss the interconnections between them in a sixth session.

**21 June**

**20.00-22.00 uur: Public event in De Nieuwe Liefde with Gloria Wekker and Ella Shohat (in collaboration with Menasseh Ben Israel)**

**22 June (Universiteitstheater)**

**Registration 9.00-9.30**

**9.30-9.45 Introductory remarks Yolande Jansen and Thijl Sunier**

**9.50-12.00 Session 1. Drawing the fine lines between Critique of Religion, Blasphemy, Hate Speech and Humor. Exploring the relations between current legal and cultural-historical perspectives in the European context**

Critique of Religion, Blasphemy, Hate Speech and Humor seem to be the four categories covering the semantic field of specific contested enunciations at the intersection of critique of religion and discrimination. While the fine lines between them are notoriously difficult to draw, the categories rubricate the specific enunciations in terms of highly differently valued speech acts: they can be evaluated as belonging to a worthy and longstanding Enlightenment tradition, as insulting or discriminating, or as just funny and/or nicely provocative. In session one, we address the contemporary juridical and cultural complexities of these categories in the light of their historical transformations.

**12.00-13.30 Lunch Atrium**

**13.30-15.30 Session 2. Muslims and Jews as Europe's Interrelated Others (non-Christian, non-Enlightened, non-liberal, Oriental, non-spiritual, Semitic etc, but also Arab or Jew, internal or external, 'black' or 'white' etc.)**

Over the last years, a lot of work has been done concerning the intertwined genealogies of Muslims and Jews in European discourses and imaginaries. It has become more and more clear how theological, biological, linguistic, anthropological and governmental discourses and practices have been intertwined in their formation. In this session, we want to discuss which of these lines of intertwinement are the most relevant to highlight in the European context today. We ask this question in the light of the fact that on the one hand,, in the legal and governmental spheres, there are relatively succesful alliances between Jews and Muslims in Europe today concerning religious practice, while on the other hand, media images and daily realities in Israel/Palestine seem to drive them apart, in a context of rising anti-Muslim populism and an increasingly strong emphasis on the so-called Christian, Judeo-Christian, or secular (Enlightenment-related) dimensions of Europe.

**15.30-16.00 Tea**

**16.00 – 17.45 Keynote lecture Gil Hochberg; 'Remembering the Semite in/and Europe today'.**

**17.45-19.30 Dinner: De Jaren**

**20.00-22.00 Public evening session in Spui 25 with the theme of session one: Drawing the fine lines between Critique of Religion, Blasphemy, Hate Speech and Humor – and how can Jewish and Islamic perspectives be included?**

- Column
- Interview
- Roundtable

**Friday 16 or 23 June (Universiteitstheater)**

**9.00-9.30 Coffee**

**9.30-12.00 Session 3: The Jews, Muslims and Christians in Liberalism's Category of Religion**

Over the last years, it has been established quite well in the literature that liberalism's category of religion has a genealogy which entangles it with (1) a conceptual privileging of Protestantism as the ultimate form of religion, especially of religion seen as compatible with the Enlightenment and with individual religious freedom, (2) with colonial history and (3) with Post World War II American foreign politics. In this session we will deal with the ways in which this complex genealogy effects today's debates about religion and secularism, and about religion in the public, in mainstream liberal political theory. We will focus especially on whether and if so how the legacies of liberalism's entanglements in religious hierarchy and justifications of geographical expansion are traceble in today's liberal conceptualisations of religion in the public sphere.

**12.00-13.15 Lunch Atrium**

**13.15-15.30 Session 4: Exploring the context today: securitization of religion, the global rise of jihadism and of terrorism, global imaginaries related to terror and war, of populist nationalism, new masculinities, the Israeli-Palestine conflict and how (not) to address it**

A panel in which we try to identify contemporary factors that intersect in complex ways with the genealogies of religion, secularity and specific religious groups in Europe. How, for example, in the public fear of jihadism or takfirism, and/or salafism, or in the debates on circumcision, or in the debates on the Israeli-Palestine conflict do the genealogies of Jews and Muslims (the Semite, the Saracen, etc.,) intersect with affective reactions to actual acts of terror in the name of Islam, or to actual violence in the Middle East, and Israel in particular? And how do new global media and new techniques of journalism effect the perception of Muslims and Jews in Europe today? What is the gender dimension of the new violent imaginaries and practices surrounding religion in political history in Europe? We will anticipate here the second keynote lecture in which we will be seeking to understand what kind of everyday ethics we might be looking for, or hoping for, in the current context analysed during this session.)

**15.30-16.00 Tea**

**16.00-18.00**

**Keynote Ella Shohat:**

**'Ambivalent Indigeneity: Genealogies of the Split Arab/Jew Figure' / 'Orientalist Genealogies: Rethinking the Split Arab/Jew Figure'**

**Comments**

**17.30-18.30 Drinks with snacks**

**Saturday 24 June**

**9.30-10.00 Coffee**

**10.00-12.30 Panel 5: 'The European Question': Legacies of orientalism, supersessionist theology, racism and the Holocaust; what does it mean to inherit deep historical stereotypes of Judaism and Islam (and Christianity and the Enlightenment) in the European context today, and what can we do/not do with them for an everyday ethics?**

This panel will be organised for collectively wrapping up the themes discussed earlier and for bringing up new ideas, lines of research and projects for collaboration. To open up the format, the panel will be organised as a roundtable in reaction to brief interviews with three participants.

