
ORGANISATION

Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics”

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VENUE AND BOOKING

Arthouse cinema “Schloßtheater”
Melchersstraße 81, 48149 Münster

To participate, please register at:
veranstaltungenEXC@uni-muenster.de

Admission is free.

ANNUAL THEME FOR 2023/24 “THE DIGITALIZATION OF RELIGION”

Digitalization is changing society, including religion and the study of religion. This is the focus of the Cluster of Excellence’s annual theme for 2023/24. Whether digital prayers, online confessionals, or fatwas on the internet – traditional religious communities are trying out new forms of religion on the web and social media, in apps and AI. And non-religious movements are using the internet to spread conspiracy theories that have religious elements. Very little research has so far been done on these forms of religion.

In the study of religion, digital methods are opening up new insights into historical sources, religious writings and material culture. The Digital Humanities (DH) explore, edit and analyze these. The annual theme presents interdisciplinary research from the Cluster of Excellence in workshop reports and web-quests, lectures, and film and discussion evenings, as well as bringing researchers into dialogue with religious groups and the general public.

CLUSTER OF EXCELLENCE “RELIGION AND POLITICS”

The Cluster of Excellence has been investigating the complex relationship between religion and politics across eras and cultures since 2007. The 140 researchers from 20 disciplines in the humanities and social sciences focus in the funding phase (2019 to 2025) on the “dynamics of tradition and innovation”. They analyze in transepochal studies ranging from antiquity to the present day the conditions and factors that make religion an engine of political and social change, with their focus being above all on the paradox that religions often develop their innovative potential precisely by drawing on their traditions. The research network is the largest of its kind in Germany; and, of the Clusters of Excellence, one of the oldest and the only one to deal with the issue of religion. It will receive funding of 31 million euros from 2019 to 2025.

Copyright: General graphic: Stefan Matlik; Pictures from “Blade Runner”, and “Her”, Warner Bros. Entertainment; Pictures from “Ex Machina”, Universal Pictures Int.; Pictures from “Le tout nouveau testament”, infp Marketing & Distribution



Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” film series

DIGITAL AND TRANSHUMAN?

Of humans and gods in the age of digitalization



ANNUAL THEME FOR 2023/24
THE DIGITALIZATION
OF RELIGION

DIGITAL AND TRANSHUMAN?

Of humans and gods in the age of digitalization

It is not only science that is fascinated by digitalization and artificial intelligence, but also art and popular culture. This raises profound religious and philosophical questions: Can humans themselves become creators – and how do they then deal with their artificial creations? Will human and machine even merge in the long term? Will the idea of ‘God’ become superfluous, and be replaced by the human?

Cinema films have always addressed such questions, and the lineage of works on artificial beings, cyborgs and transhumanism can be traced back at least as far as Fritz Lang’s Metropolis. More recently, growing digitalization and recent developments in artificial intelligence have fired the imagination of filmmakers, who deal with the relationship between human beings and faith in times of increased digitalization in creative, challenging and sometimes disturbing ways.

The four-part film series organized by the Cluster of Excellence “Religion and Politics” as part of the annual theme “The digitalization of religion” picks out exemplary works that illuminate different aspects of the topic in a creative way. A short introductory lecture by a Cluster of Excellence researcher provides a context for each film, before participants have the opportunity to discuss their thoughts further in the “Schloßtheater” foyer.

PROGRAM

Tuesday, 9 April 2024, 7 pm

Blade Runner (1982; Director: Ridley Scott)
Introduction: Marcel Bubert
112 minutes | Rated: 16 | Original with German subtitles



The film “Blade Runner” is set in a dystopian future in Los Angeles: Earth is overpopulated, animals are almost completely extinct, and humans hope for a better life on distant planets. They have constructed a group of replicants to open up these new worlds. The group manages to return to Earth, the place of their creation, in search of answers to questions about their existence and mortality. Given the task of pursuing the replicants, former policeman Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) is himself confronted with questions about his own humanity. The science fiction film from 1982 addresses the relationship between creation and creator, and raises existential questions about what it means to be human. With its philosophical subtext, this classic film invites us today more than ever to reflect on and discuss artificial intelligence, the nature of humanity, and the ethics of human-robot interaction.

Tuesday, 14 May 2024, 7 pm

Her (2013; Director: Spike Jonze)
Introduction: Thorsten Quandt
126 minutes | Rated: 12 | Original with German subtitles



Love in the digital age: “Her” tells the story of the lonely writer Theodore, who falls in love with an artificial intelligence developed as an operating system for computers called Samantha. The two quickly develop a deep emotional bond as Samantha progressively displays human-like abilities. They experience highs and lows together – but does their relationship have a future? Her is a moving reflection on love, loneliness and social connections between humans and the beings that they create digitally, as well as on the impact of technology on interpersonal relationships.

Tuesday, 11 June 2024, 7 pm

Ex Machina (2015; Director: Alex Garland)
Introduction: Thorsten Quandt
108 minutes | Rated: 12 | Original with German subtitles



The young programmer Caleb is invited by his ingenious and eccentric boss Nathan to take part in an experiment. He is to test the abilities of a female avatar called Ava in a remote research facility. During their conversations, Caleb begins to feel attracted to Ava. But the more Caleb learns about Ava and Nathan’s true intentions, the more he becomes entangled in a dangerous web of manipulation and intrigue. Caleb must decide whom he can trust. “Ex Machina” explores the boundaries between human and machine, and the consequences of a technology that has spun out of control. The film offers a profound insight into the ethics of technology and the ethical aspects of human-robot interaction in a world increasingly shaped by technology.

Tuesday, 9 July 2024, 7 pm

Le tout nouveau testament (2015; Director: Jaco Van Dormael)
Introduction: Dorothea Schulz
113 minutes | Rated: 12 | Original with German subtitles



The film “Le tout nouveau testament” is a humorous exploration of the relationship between digitalization and religion. The surrealistic comedy revolves around the Christian God who lives as a cynical tyrant in Brussels and torments people on earth. His daughter Ea, who is disgusted by his behaviour, hacks into his computer and sends everyone in the world a message on their mobile phone with the date of their death. She then sets off in search of six new apostles to help her create a new divine order. The film deals with themes such as the fight against oppression, the search for identity, and the value of human relationships. In the end, Ea creates a world where people can make their own decisions and God becomes a better, less tyrannical being.