

Forum für interdisziplinäre Religionsforschung (FiReF)

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Forum for Interdisciplinary Religious Studies (FIRSt)

# Horizons in Digital Research on Religion, Nationalism and Collective Memory

Thursday, 5 December 2019, 9:00 – 13:00

Lichtenberg Kolleg

The Digital Revolution of the last decade is revolutionizing research in the humanities and social sciences. Computational social scientists and digital humanities scholars are exploring novel techniques to employ traditional textual sources (from pamphlets and newspapers to posters and maps) and also to add new sources to social scientific research (such as big data from social media). The increasing availability of digital technologies and growing cooperation with IT specialists allow scholars to develop (semi)automated text-analysis techniques to work on large-scale bodies of text. Despite rapid technological and methodological advances, however, many theoretical, conceptual, and epistemological issues in applying digital techniques to historically-situated and culturally-laden texts remain unresolved. This workshop addresses the epistemological limitations of machine reading and discusses how and when it should be combined with human reading and what the best practices are for fruitful collaboration between historically-oriented scholars and IT specialists.

Thematically, the workshop focuses on the global resurgence of nationalisms and the role of religion and collective memory in shaping nationalist movements and policies. Religious boundaries have historically played a key role in forging modern notions of nationhood, and religious heritage intricately relates to collective memory construction. To develop new insights into how religious difference affects nationalist exclusion or leads to more inclusionary modes of citizenship, scholars have developed corpora of a wide range of sources, from constitutions and laws to history textbooks and travelogues. To facilitate the intellectual and methodological exchange about the state of the art and future projections regarding the digital techniques for social scientific research on religion, nationalism, and collective memory, the workshop brings together researchers working at the University of Göttingen, the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity and the Georg-Eckert-Institute for International Textbook Research.

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