

Call for Abstracts

International Meeting on Comparative Theology 2025

16th & 17th September 2025

University of Paderborn

About the Event

The International Meeting on Comparative Theology is an annual conference aimed at connecting PhD students and young researchers working in the field of Comparative Theology. Since 2016, it provides an interdisciplinary space for the exchange of ideas between researchers in theologies and other disciplines. It is convened by the *Center for Comparative Theology and Cultural Studies* (ZeKK) at the University of Paderborn and the *Center for Comparative Theology and Social Issues* (CTSI) at the University of Bonn in a joint venture with the *Faculty of Theology in Paderborn* (THF) and this year also with the *Paderborn Institute for Islamic Theology* (PIIT). The conference is part of the 'Islamic Theological Colloquia' format of the Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG) at Goethe University Frankfurt.

Annual Theme: Comparative Theology and Social Work

Our upcoming IMoC Conference explores the intersection of religion, social work, social justice, and social inequality, fostering interdisciplinary dialogue among scholars. Social workers and educators support individuals in existential crises from a bio-psycho-social perspective, often engaging with religious dimensions through pastoral care, spiritual care, and theology. Their work extends to community organizing, education, and creating inclusive spaces, contributing to social justice and welfare. They play a crucial role in interfaith collaboration, conflict mediation, and fostering cultural sensitivity. Additionally, comparative theology promotes interfaith dialogue by addressing societal challenges and enhancing peaceful coexistence.

We invite scholars to submit abstracts to explore the intersection of religion, social work, social justice, and social inequality. The conference aims to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and provide a platform for researchers addressing these crucial topics from theological, social, and comparative perspectives.

Conference proposals shall include, but are not limited to these key themes:

- Questions and challenges in Christian, Muslim or Jewish pastoral care that demand the search for interreligious perspectives in learning from each other
- Community outreach and social services: examples of practice and theoretical approaches to collaboration in areas such as community development, counseling, pastoral care, and support services for vulnerable populations
- Interreligious dialogue and social spaces: explorations of how comparative theology can help promote interreligious dialogue and support social inclusion
- Ethics and morality in social work: discussions of ethical principles and moral challenges relevant to both comparative theology and social work
- Societal challenges: analysis and case studies showing how ethical discourses respond to current societal challenges
- Empathy and compassion: explorations of how the teachings of comparative theology and the practice of social work can promote the understanding and application of empathy and compassion
- Education and Training: the development of educational programs and continuing education initiatives that demand and integrate both disciplines
- Comparative Religious Responses to Social Inequality
- The Social Question in the History of Religions (e.g., historical concepts, reforms, and societal structures)
- Religion in Modern Societies – Navigating Tensions (secularization, globalization, migration, and cultural pluralism, etc.)

Guiding Questions could be:

- How do different religious traditions define and conceptualize social justice?
- Which theological principles (e.g., charity, justice, solidarity) shape religiously inspired social work?

- What methodologies are appropriate for comparative theological analysis of social issues?
- How have religious movements historically contributed to addressing social problems?
- What roles do religious communities (e.g., mosques, churches, synagogues) play in responding to contemporary social challenges?
- How do interreligious collaborations influence social engagement and justice work?
- In what ways can religious and secular perspectives be integrated in social work and ethics?

Who Should Apply?

We welcome submissions from Pre-Docs and Post-Docs in the following fields:

Theology and Religious Studies (Islamic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Comparative Theology, nationally and internationally)

Social Sciences and Humanities (sociology, social work, education, history, and related disciplines) focusing on social justice, ethics, and inequality in relation to religion.

As comparative theology is often faced from a Christian side, we are especially searching for desiderata from Jewish and Muslim social or pastoral care.

Contributions from various fields of disciplines such as theologies and religious studies, psychology, sociology, education, ethics, ethnology and law are welcome.

Submission Guidelines:

Abstracts should be 300–500 words, outlining the research question, methodology, and relevance to the conference themes.

Please add a short biography (max. 150 words) that includes the author's name, institutional affiliation, and contact information.

Submit abstracts in PDF or Word format to imoc2025@kw.uni-paderborn.de

Submission deadline: 21st of April 2025

For further inquiries, please contact the following organizers using the mail mentioned above:

Sarah Lebock (ZeKK, Paderborn University)
Gülbahar Erdem (PIIT, Paderborn University)
Tarik Eroglu (PIIT, Paderborn University)

Practical Informations:

Accommodations for the speakers will be provided, and limited funding for travel expenses may be granted if no sources or founding are available.

Further information regarding the coverage of travel expenses, accommodation, and transportation will be provided after the evaluation of the submitted papers. This is expected in early May.

If funding is possible, the best papers presented at the conference will be published in the peer-reviewed series *Comparative Theology, Islam, and Society*.

We look forward to your contributions and exploring the intersections between comparative theology and social work.

AIWG-Format “Islamic-Theological Colloquia”:

Within these smaller events, scholars from various locations have the opportunity to engage with a specific topic and therefore choose the most appropriate discussion format themselves. For more information, visit <https://aiwg.de/forschung/#colloquien>. The Academy for Islam in Research and Society (AIWG) at the Goethe University in Frankfurt conducts interdisciplinary research and knowledge transfer activities, focusing on Islamic religion and Muslim life in Germany and Europe. Founded in 2017, the AIWG has been continuously funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research.

