

## Religious Education

**Also relevant for Catholic Theology, Protestant Theology, Islamic Theology, Jewish Studies, Educational Science/Pedagogy**

Course: Religious Education

Group of courses: Humanities

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## Course objectives:

Students should get an introduction to gender theories. Based on this basic knowledge, they should be able to identify relevant gender issues and questions in the context of religious education in various areas (such as kindergarten, school, community, adult education, etc.). They should get to know gender as a reflective category that raises awareness for the relevance and effects of different gender concepts for religious teaching and learning (both at school and outside school). Thus, it is important that students acquire knowledge of current (empirical) research findings on gender in religious teaching and learning processes and become sensitive to implicit gender bias. In order to be able to comprehend children, young people and adults in their daily lives students must acquire knowledge of gender diversity and theological interpretations.

Gender must also be identified as a central criterion in religious-spiritual socialisation and identity building.

Students should become familiar with concepts and strategies of gender-conscious/gender-equitable religious education as part of developing a professional habitus. At the same time, they should become aware of the category of gender and its crosslinks with other areas of diversity. Ways of thinking, patterns of action and power relations that can be found in the various professional fields are to be analysed on a case-by-case basis. Students should be enabled to examine didactic materials with regard to androcentric restrictions and gender-biased attributions and to develop alternative approaches. They should also be able to identify gender-specific power dynamics and to make gender-neutral didactic decisions and pedagogical interventions.

## Teaching content/subject-specific gender studies content:

Religious teaching/learning processes – from elementary pedagogical settings to community work and adult education – require, not least due to the development of plurality in our societies, increased attention to various categories of differences, of which gender is a leading category alongside ethnic and religious affiliation, social affiliation, age and sexual orientation. Gender must be treated intersectionally, especially in religious educational contexts, since several categories of differences (religion, gender, authority) are interwoven here.

The historical lines that can be drawn between religion, gender and education must also be taken into account. In the ancient ideal, the educated human was the adult free male. In contrary, the Fathers of the Church already emphasised that all people are equal before God and therefore no one can be denied access to education. Therefore, school education in the Middle Ages was regarded as an ideal for clergymen and partly also for noble women. Monasteries played a central role in education, including the education of women, although educational efforts were gender-specific. Until the Enlightenment, educational concepts were always in line with religion and in relation to God. With the Enlightenment, the autonomous individual, liberated from domination, came into focus of the educational idea (which in reality focused on the male citizen). The results can be traced up to today in the structure of grammar schools.

In the course of the first women's movement, in addition to equal rights (such as the right to vote), access to education was also fought for, even though it was initially a women's education that was conceived as complementary. The male world remained the main point of reference. Clear separation of the spheres of life in public and private along gender-specific classifications and the associated

concepts of women, men, marriage and families were supported by the church. Religious education was therefore carried out by women, i.e. mothers and grandmothers. Religious adult education has to take up the effectiveness of these concepts and the resulting gender-specific orientations and tasks and to reflect on how living together in a gender-equitable way in different areas of life can be realised based on religious and biblical foundations.

The introduction of coeducation opened up the opportunity for equal access to higher education for everyone. Yet, socially based and gender-specific mechanisms continue to have an effect today. Currently, fair and equal access to education is less endangered by the exclusion of girls. Instead, the different ability self-concepts that pre-structure access to certain subjects and help determine whether one can experience oneself as talented or successful are relevant. Similarly, education policy efforts and goals that follow ideals of growth and competition and thus traditionally derive from male life concepts also contribute to unequal educational biographies. Special attention should also be paid to the current debate on boys as educational losers (especially migrant boys), which calls for a differentiated, intersectionally oriented debate.

Religious education theory building and practice that aims at initiating and accompanying gender-equitable religious educational processes must take these historical and socio-political contexts into account. The following topics should be examined in more detail:

- Gender theories:
  - In order to be able to perceive religious developments, concepts and educational processes comprehensively, basic theoretical knowledge is required. Knowledge of the different theoretical approaches, which may themselves form specifications in different contexts, are a necessary prerequisite in order to be able to reflect upon the associated different perceptions, interpretations, mechanisms of effect and possibilities. These include approaches on differences, equalities and (de)constructivism, diversity/heterogeneity, queer studies as well as approaches on subordination and complementarity especially for the theological field.
- Gender concepts that are important for theory building and fields of practice in religious education:
  - Reflective coeducation: on the basis of empirical studies, the pros and cons, structures of preference and disadvantage for religious educational processes in different settings (kindergarten, school, sacrament preparation, child and youth work, etc.) must be worked out and criteria for reflective coeducation must be provided.
  - Identity: Identity building is primarily influenced by socialisation instances and groups (family, peers, ...). But also the different settings of education claim to have an effect on identity building. Children, young people and adults are influenced by their biographical as well as their milieu-specific backgrounds. They find themselves confirmed or even irritated in their previous self-perceptions by the educational impulses of a respective educational context, which can set change processes in motion. In religious educational processes, it is important to ensure that the respective target group receives offers which do not limit it to certain characteristics or normative (gender) specifications, but rather opens up the utmost possible individual freedom in the concept of self-presentation and self-image. A pedagogical examination of the habitus concept proves to be helpful.
  - Doing gender: Interactions involve gendered processes of representation and production, which is why religious education and training processes need to be analysed in this regard.
  - Doing gender is reinforced or overcome by other interaction constellations such as doing

student, doing peer (group), doing religious teacher, doing religion class, etc. Therefore, these levels of interaction must also be considered in the analysis. It is necessary to reflect upon and work out how undoing gender can be encouraged: for example, through alternative (theological) views of being woman, man, human, plural images of God transcending gender duality and the unconditional acceptance by God regardless of achievement and normative adaptation.

- Power and gender: Gender concepts always reflect power relations. They work in different ways in contexts of school, family, community and other social settings. The concept of hegemonic masculinity can be used to analyse mechanisms of supremacy and subordination. The double hierarchies (authority, gender) can also be found in educational contexts and must also be taken into account, as they have an impact on the teacher as well as on the teaching content and the dynamics within the group. From postcolonial studies, the concept of othering can be used to identify power relations with regard to cultural and religious affiliation.
- Development in schools – religion – gender: Concepts of doing gender must be expanded beyond the interactional level to include systemic and structural aspects in school. It is necessary to be able to reflect upon levels on which modes of action are located in order to be able to make targeted interventions and professional action possible.
- Religious socialisation of women and men: In addition to family, school and/or community, images, metaphors, works of art, and architecture, which deal with religious themes, as well as letters of instruction and public presentations by religious authorities have effects on the individual. Biography work, for example, can raise awareness for these influences at different levels.
- Religious didactic theories on gender-equitable education:
  - Throughout the centuries androcentrisms have been inscribed into the biblical and theological history of tradition and reception as well as in the history of the church, structures of education and work and in curricula and teaching materials. In order to enable gender-neutral teaching is necessary to detect these androcentrisms and to explain them to the learners. Gender-equality is not only a matter of the supply of good didactic materials, but depends on the ability to recognise and identify androcentric views, binary ideas and gender inequalities and to develop and test ways of how to change them. Learners can be involved in this process by reflecting upon how they perceive androcentric structures and by being actively involved in analysis and change processes. This applies in particular to dealing with:
    - figures and texts in the Bible and the history of theology
    - ethical questions
    - textbooks and curricula
    - marriage and family models
    - concepts of God
    - religious language and art
    - gender diversity
- With regard to inclusion, religious education can make an essential contribution to a broad discourse on inclusion if it strengthens religion and gender by paying attention to the various forms of impairments and disabilities as well as to specific talents.

From a theoretical point of view, an interdisciplinary approach is required, as it is generally the case in religious education. In particular, gender theories, developed in philosophy, sociology and educational sciences, must be integrated into concepts of religious education in addition to theological concepts. Both empirical and hermeneutic approaches are necessary. The reception of the (religious) educational

inclusion discourse must also be taken into account.

Methodologically, against the background of theoretical debate, it is important to work towards enabling future teachers to develop a professional habitus in dealing with the different genders, ascription and interaction practices as well as the educational and church/religious historical heritage. In addition to the reflective examination of theories and facts on a cognitive level, biographical experiences, subjective theories and effects of actions and statements with pedagogical intent will have to be examined. Through active involvement in processes of analysis and appropriation students can learn how to accompany learning and educational processes later, how to identify possible critical areas and where to pay particular attention.

## **Integration of gender studies content into the curriculum:**

Integrating subject-specific gender studies is most sustainable both as a cross-cutting topic in the individual religious education courses and in the other theological disciplines as well as in the form of gender modules, so that a systematic and subject-specific examination of gender theoretical positions can take place. Explicit implementation in the form of concrete courses or entire modules must be ensured in order to guarantee that these elements are structurally anchored. Seminars and exercises should (also) be provided so that a discussion of concrete fields of practice can take place in two respects: to recognise social and church practice as settings where gender-oriented research questions can be generated and where gender-theoretical considerations, didactic planning and decisions must prove to result in gender-equitable coexistence.

## **Degree Stage:**

Already at Bachelor's level, students should acquire basic knowledge of gender theories, which can be provided in concrete exercises such as text, situation or case analyses. They should learn to analyse religious educational processes from a gender perspective with regard to content, interactions, interventions and didactic decisions. It is particularly necessary for future teachers not only to acquire subject-specific gender-oriented knowledge, but to be able to uncover the subtle power mechanisms that can be implied in language, concepts, contents and behaviours.

The following topics may be the basis for specific modules (possibly in line with the university's focus):

- reflective coeducation in religion, approaches of supporting girls and promoting anti-sexism in the education of boys outside of school
- development of religious and gender identity, dealing with physicality
- empirical findings on the role of the (religious) teacher, religious education, curriculum analyses, religious development in family and community, development of concepts of God, gender-specific socialisation and lifestyle, development of moral judgement and gender diversity
- critical analysis of didactic materials (reflection of androcentrisms in traditional texts and stories and in current contexts)
- criteria of gender neutrality in religious educational processes
- the importance of gender and religion in inclusive educational processes
- gender and violence (prevention) in church and educational institutions
- gender and religion in school development
- gender in interreligious and intercultural educational processes

- gender discourses and gender performance in social media

At Master's level, students should be able to work in depth in selectable courses on special questions. In particular, subject-related didactic courses with a gender focus should be offered.

## Basic Literature/Recommended Reading:

- Eckholt, Margit (Ed.). (2017). Gender studieren: Lernprozess für Theologie und Kirche. Ostfildern: Matthias Grünewald Verlag, der Schwabenverlag AG.
- Heller, Birgit (Ed.). (2017). Religion, Transformation and Gender (= Interdisciplinary Journal for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society – J-RaT, Bd. 5). Göttingen: V & R Unipress.
- Qualbrink, Andrea, & Wieser, Renate. (2014). Gender und Intersektionalität, in: Gärtner, Stefan, Kläden, Tobias, & Spielberg, Bernhard (Hrsg.). Praktische Theologie in der Spätmoderne: Herausforderungen und Entdeckungen, Würzburg: Echter (=Studien zur Theologie und Praxis der Seelsorge 89), 73-79.
- Roggenkamp, Antje, & Wermke, Michael (Ed.). (2013). Gender, Religion, Heterogenität: bildungshistorische Perspektiven gendersensibler Religionspädagogik. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt.
- Qualbrink, Andrea, Pithan, Annebelle, & Wischer, Mariela (Hrsg.). (2011). Geschlechter bilden: Perspektiven für einen genderbewussten Religionsunterricht. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus.
- Pithan, Annebelle, Arzt, Silvia, Jakobs, Monika, & Knauth, Thorsten (Ed.). (2009). Gender, Religion, Bildung: Beiträge zu einer Religionspädagogik der Vielfalt. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verl.-Haus.
- Leicht, Irene, Rakel, Claudia, & Rieger-Goertz, Stefanie (Ed.). (2003). Arbeitsbuch Feministische Theologie: Inhalte, Methoden und Materialien für Hochschule, Erwachsenenbildung und Gemeinde. Gütersloh: Kaiser, Gütersloher Verl.-Haus.

## Journals:

- Wirelex | [Website](#)
- Schriftenreihe „Geschlecht – Symbol – Religion“, hrsg. von Prof. Dr. Bernhard Heining, Prof. Dr. Ruth Lindner (†) und Prof. Dr. Elma Klinger, LIT-Verlag.