

The Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters

Call for Post-Doctoral Fellows 2019-2020

Violence, the Use of Force, and their Justification in the Abrahamic Religions

The Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters ([CSoC](#)) invites scholars who have submitted their thesis within the last five years and wish to participate in a research group that will take place in the academic year 2019-2020 at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Be'ersheva, to apply for a postdoctoral fellowship.

Fellows will receive our post-doctorate grant of NIS 74,000, to be awarded throughout the academic year, with the option for an additional year, depending on the progress of the research. Fellows will take part in our annual seminar on the theme: "Violence and the use of Force, their Justification and its Meaning, in the Abrahamic Religions" headed by Dr. Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, director of the Center. Fellows will be expected to be present at Ben-Gurion University's Marcus Campus in Be'ersheva and will be allocated a shared work space in the Center located at the University's Aran Library. At the end of the 2019-2020 academic year, a joint seminar will be held in collaboration with students and researchers from the Seminar for Abrahamic Religions at Oxford University.

More Information on the Program for Outstanding Students 2019-2020

Although the first Biblical character to whom violence is attributed is Cain, the first person in the Bible to go to war is Abraham, who went to redeem his nephew Lot from captivity and was the first to employ violence. In all of the Abrahamic religions there is reference to violence, both physical and verbal. Some scholars in the fields of Comparative Religion and Anthropology of Religion argue that the monotheistic Abrahamic religions have a propensity for intolerance, which leads to the justification of violence due to their claim to speak for one irrefutable divine truth. In the three Abrahamic religions, the idea of a holy war or a war aimed at conquering territory and disseminating their message is well known. On the other hand, there are religious mechanisms in these religions whose purpose is to prevent violence, reduce it, or to channel it to "justifiable" purposes. When do religions turn to violence? When and how do they justify it? Who is the victim of this violence, what rationalizations can be exercised from this act, and when and how is violence limited and alternative activities encouraged? In some religious systems, violence is related to sacrifice. In others, violence is directed outside the confines of the religious group. The question of violence and its justification also have a clear ethnic and gender dimension.

In some religions, internal violence was used and justified when directed against heretics and those who were suspected of undermining the authority or ideology held by hegemonic circles. In most religions, exercising violence and shunning social deviations were also justified. The approach towards violence and the question of limiting its justification in the religious context will be at the center of our attention in the coming year.

The Seminar of the Center for the Study of Conversion in 2019-2020 will be devoted to examining a wide range of issues related to violence and its justifications in the three Abrahamic religions. The discussion of the question of violence and its status also invites us to deal with issues related to hegemony and heresy, internal and external enforcement methods, and questions regarding the development and theological adjustments in light of changes in historical circumstances. What, for example, is the place of violence and how can it be justified in societies and religions that are part of the process that Norbert Elias called "the civilizing process" during which the discourse on the legitimacy of violence and the use of force was altered?

As part of our program, members will participate and be asked to present in our seminars throughout the year, learning from each other along with researchers from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and guests from universities in Israel and abroad. The selected candidates will be asked to assist in the Center's academic work (such as editing the Center's publications, supporting the Center's network and community, etc.) in return for full entitlement.

Prerequisites for submitting applications

- Research candidates must hold doctoral degrees who have submitted their thesis in the last five years – since September 2014.
- Additional employment is possible only within the framework of teaching at Ben-Gurion University, and up to a maximum of 8 hours per week, with the approval of the Dean of the Faculty.
- **Application Process**

Researchers who wish to join the Program of 2019-2020 are required to submit the following forms and documents by Thursday April 4th 2019:

- Personal information form: [post-doctoral application form](#) (access via Chrome browser).
- Abstract of your research proposal (up to 2,000 words) dealing with aspects of the issue of violence and its justification in one of the Abrahamic religions or through a comparative analysis.
- Dissertation abstract.
- Updated CV including a complete list of publications.
- Two recommendations, one from your academic supervisor.
- Forms & documents must be sent Raya Even-David (rayaed@bgu.ac.il) by **Thursday 4.4.19.**