

Religion in Peace and Conflict Master Programme

Short News

We will miss the presence of our friendly and dynamic program administrator Mella Köjs, who is leaving RPC and the department of Theology for the Center for Integrated Research on Culture and Society (CIRCUS) within Uppsala University. More information and an interview with Mella will be in the next newsletter.

We are happy to announce that on May 29 at 14:00 we will have a closing “fika” for those who graduate this year or have graduated earlier. Please come also those of you who will graduate next year or so. There is a piece of cake for every one of our RPC students and alumni! Save the date and see you there!

Facts

Uppsala University - founded in 1477

The first and the oldest university in Scandinavia

40,000 students

Uppsala University – №29 in Europe in 2019 (according to Times Higher Education)

In the first 100 at World University Ranking

15 Nobel Prize laureates among the University's alumni

2013 - the RPC in English was founded

Our Alumni Were/Are Based In

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Austria

Belgium

Colombia

Great Britain

Denmark

Finland

Germany

Ireland

Greece

Hungary

Italy

Iraq

Netherlands

Lithuania

Mexico

Norway

Poland

Nigeria

Slovakia

Switzerland

Spain

Portugal

South Sudan

USA

Vietnam

Taiwan

West Africa

**The United
Arab Emirates**

The Moon



Lecturer's Voice



AD: We know that you, Professor Kajsa, at the beginning of your career, while writing a doctoral dissertation, you were a priest for foreign students. Was your work with international students a coincidence or a conscious decision?

KA: I think it was very practical. I liked to work with students from abroad. I liked that kind of chaplaincy work. And it also happened to be at that time a position that wasn't filled in the parish. They asked me if I can do it and I said "yes. I'd be happy to do that"

RPC program. Was it from the beginning addressed to international students?

KA: No, not originally.

A: Why did you expand it?

KA: The faculty wanted to have one master's program in English and most of the literature was in English anyway. Then they said: "Oh, this is a small master's program, can't do too much damage if we do it in the English language." And Brian Palmer had been already on board at that time. That's fine, they'd be very happy to transform it into an English language Master's Program.

A: So once again fate pushed you into the arms of international students?

KA: Right [laughing]

A: Was the creation of the program the result of the demand for it, or the program itself generated so much interest?

KA: I think it was a small program when we started, and it has grown over the years, students have recommended it to other students and yes.. it has really expanded at the time.

A: What makes it so popular?

KA: I think it's a combination of things. One is that you don't have to be here for more than one week in a year. You can still be in a more pleasant climate and pursue your studies where you are. The fact that it is an online program that contributes to it. But also, yes, you are here for a week during the first semester, you get to know the lecturers, the students and the city of Uppsala. So you are really an Uppsala student when you are here. It's not just an online university, it's a real university and you are a student here. But I think this combination of both coming here and being able to live with your family or some pursued as combined with their jobs.

A: What distinguishes it from other similar programs?

KA: Well, there aren't too many similar ones. So that is one thing. It's quite unique and I think that both focus on religion and not only peace and conflict, but religion as a factor. That distinguishes this program from other programs in mediation or negotiations, or humanitarian action. And it's also I think this fact that you can do most of the program online, but still, interact with both teachers and fellow students. I think that is we found the way of doing this, where you are not isolated while working on this. That has worked quite well.

A: If you were starting this program again today, what would you do differently?

KA: Not too much I think. The program is evolving and it's not the same as it was the first year. But some things remained the same. For example, this week in Uppsala and we made it compulsory. Then that first semester where you interview a ghost [smiling]. I think it is quite shocking to some students, but it's good for a student to be shocked into new ways of thinking.

A: What do you feel is the general impression of RPC internationally?

KA: Oh, that is.. It's hard to say.. I think there is some kind of confusion whether this is mainly peace and conflict studies, because Uppsala is famous for Peace and conflict studies, or is it religious studies? There is awareness of this program in European universities. As for what students say about it, I have no idea. But they seem to say good things as we get students who have heard by word of mouth about this program.

A: How could you briefly evaluate RPC from the first year of its existence to the present?

KA: Yeah, I think the first students were really "guinea pigs" [laughing]. We didn't know what would work and what would not work. So for example, the campus week was not as well structured as it is now. And some of the courses we were excited about and maybe not the students.

A: So, where do you see this program going over the next five/ten years?

KA: I hope we'll get more students from abroad. It's also very good to get students who are based maybe working for an NGO or living with their family in a different part of the world. Also, it would be good to have students from Asia, South Asia, and Africa, for example. And what also would be interesting is to have some kind of follow up after five years, what has happened to our alumni from the program. How are they using what they've learned in this program in their current jobs?

A: Could you tell us about your involvement with it?

KA: Yes, my involvement at the moment is very peripheral. I am a so-called examiner that means that I will confirm the grades that the grading teachers have given. And I am also a sounding board for some ideas regarding the program. I try to follow what happens internationally in the field of religion, peace, and conflict, and see how we can develop the program further. For example, it could be good to have closer cooperation with universities such as Trinity College Dublin or Groningen University in the Netherlands, where there are programs not quite the same, but still in the same area. And also to get to know programs in other parts of the world.

A: What advice can you offer our alumni?

KA: Yeah.. Stay open and curious and focus on your task [smiling].