

# RELIGION

in Peace and Conflict

Master  
Programme



Alumni Newsletter May 2020

## Short News

Due to the situation with Covid-19, this semester's theses will be defended only in the online format.

Summer Closing Ceremony for International Master's students at Uppsala University will take place in a digital form on June 3, 2020. More information will follow. As a consequence, our new tradition of having an RPC fika for graduates before the ceremony is canceled.

Let's stay in touch!

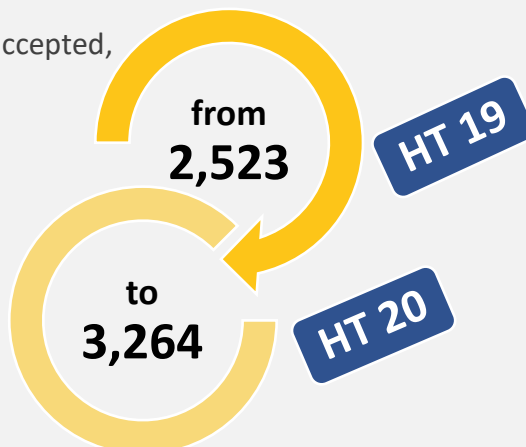
FACEBOOK: Religion in Peace and Conflict Master's Programme  
INSTAGRAM: rpc\_uu

## Statistics

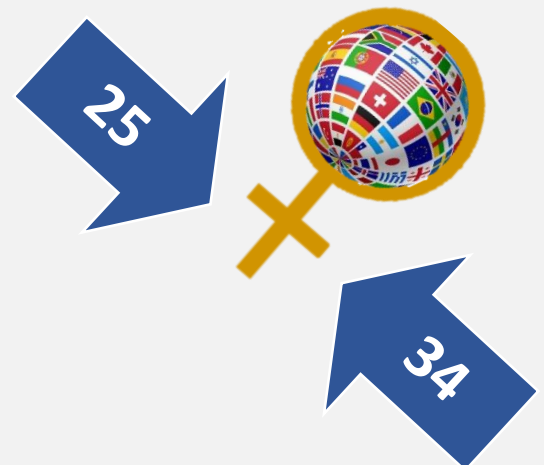
The number of students admitted to the master's programmes at Uppsala University increases by **29** per cent compared to

the autumn semester 2019. A total of **19** universities and institutes in Sweden have increased numbers for this coming autumn compared to the autumn semester 2019, but Uppsala University accounts for the largest increase in number by an

increase of **741** accepted,

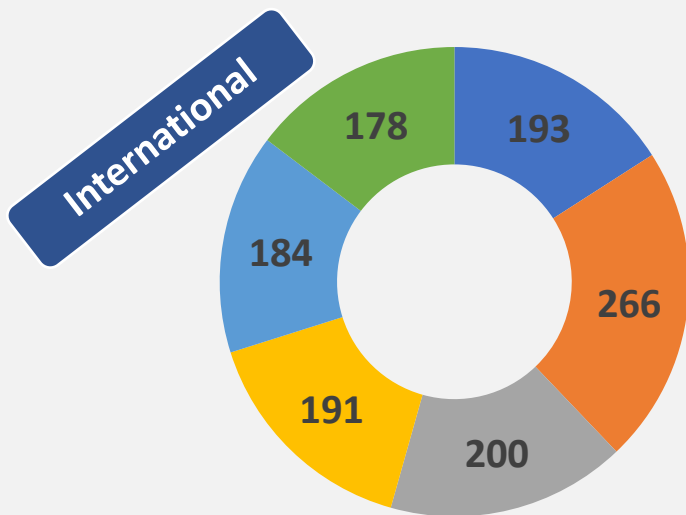


An average applicant to RPC during past 5 years is:

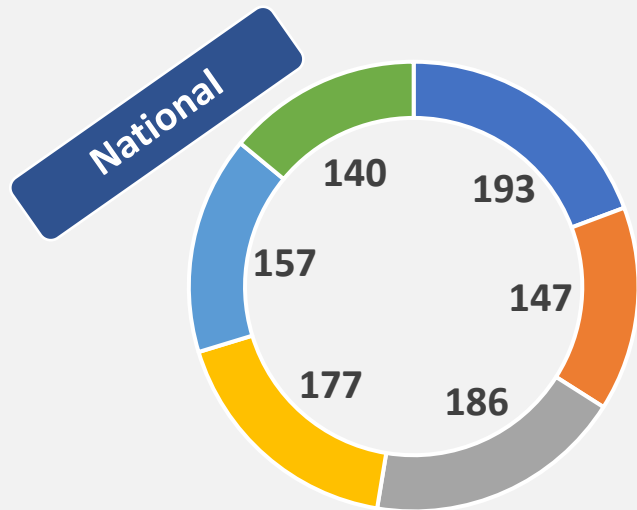


A female between 25 and 34 years old who is an international student

## Number of applicants 2015-2020:



■ HT 15 ■ HT 16 ■ HT 17  
■ HT 18 ■ HT 19 ■ HT 20



■ HT 15 ■ HT 16 ■ HT 17  
■ HT 18 ■ HT 19 ■ HT 20

## RPC New Coordinator

We are pleased to introduce the new RPC director Johanna Romare, who started her new position in January 2020. We asked Johanna to tell about her academic interests, career and what she wants our students and alumni to know about her. Please join us to give a warm welcome to Johanna!

### Who am I, and what is my professional background?

I am a senior lecturer of ethics and a PhD in applied ethics. My academic discipline is Ethics, especially Applied Ethics. I have been working at Uppsala University, teaching Ethics, and Human Rights since February 2018. Before that, I worked at Linköping University teaching Ethics and Philosophy since 2002, starting as junior lecturer in 2002 (without a PhD). In 2014, I defended my thesis titled "Ethics and Economic Action: An inquiry of morality and self-interest" (title translated from Swedish).

After defending my thesis, I did a post doc in an EC project called SATORI on Research Ethics. The project had a rather practical goal: to improve respect for ethics principles and laws in research and innovation, especially in relation to the evolution to new and emerging technologies and to societal concerns. In addition, the project looked into the possibility of harmonizing different research ethics frameworks, in Europe and beyond, with the aim to develop an ethics assessment framework based on commonly accepted ethical principles, participatory processes and engagement with stakeholders, including the public.

### My research interest?

My research deals with aspects of Moral Agency in relation to Human Rights, and in relation to distributive justice. I also have a research interest in Research Ethics and Good Research and Innovation Practice.

### My background?

I came into contact with Philosophy in 1996 when I studied Art History. My first academic dream was to study Art. But one day we had a guest lecture in Aesthetics. The professor was truly amazing, and I just felt that Aesthetics is that what wanted to do. So I asked what I should study if I wanted to know more about aesthetics, and got the answer that I should study philosophy. I started studying philosophy, and got to know Logics, Ethics, Analytical Philosophy, etc. The rest may not be history for the world, but the lecture by the professor was a decisive moment for me.

I also have a background as a horse-riding teacher – something not even many of my colleagues know.



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### What is significant for me?

I love to lecture and teach! I loved it when I was a horse-riding teacher, and I love it as an academic teacher. Just love it!

### My personal interest?

Is there more to life than work? Of course there is. I have two dogs (whippets) and I love to hike. What else? Oh, yes, I ran a marathon in 3 hours 30 minutes and 18 sec.

## This is not Goodbye: An Interview With our Former Coordinator

Håkan joined the program in 2016. He was RPC coordinator for almost two years, when he resigned to focus on his research, but he is still a teacher at the program. The whole team would like to express our gratitude to you for your hard work. We appreciate all the knowledge and skills you've imparted to us. We sincerely thank you, Håkan, for being a fantastic program coordinator!

### When did you join the RPC program as a teacher?

It must have been 2015 or 2016 when Nils Billing was coordinating the programme. Mella was also there at that time, of course. I started as a supervisor for a couple of theses. It was quite demanding.

### When did you become RPC coordinator ?

That was about two years ago, in the summer of 2018. I was happy and proud to coordinate the only international Master's programme on-line.

### What is the most remarkable thing from your experience as a program director?

There is a lot of positive energy in the team and in the students. The students want to learn, they know why they registered to study Religion in Peace and Conflict. The fellow colleagues are also committed to their tasks.



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### What was the most difficult part?

It is a rather complex programme with a lot of options, also the number of students was increasing. The most difficult thing was to think ahead and plan for improvements when there were so many day to day issues with registrations and changes in the curricula etc. It was too much on too many levels.

### What are you doing now?

Lying on a beach... No, I wish was. I teach half-time a bunch of classes and the rest of the time I am writing about Jewish-Christian relations before and after the Second World War. My aim is to have a book ready next year about the pre-history of the Swedish Theological institute in Jerusalem.

### Tell us more about your project, which now takes so much time and energy, and which was an occasion for you to leave your post.

For quite some time I wanted to take a closer look at the Jewish-Christian relations in Europe and in Israel during the 20th century. The Swedish Theological Institute celebrates its 70th anniversary next year and I was asked to write about the woman who founded the institute, Greta Andrén. She worked in Vienna during the Nazi takeover and later she founded the first Christian institute in the state of Israel. It is a fascinating history, but quite complicated with at least three contexts: the Swedish, the Austrian and the Israeli. They were all quite different from each other, but still there is a clear development in order to regard Judaism a relevant religion and not just as a kind of preamble to Christianity.

### How would you describe the development of the program after many years working in the RPC team?

The number of students has increased. And it seems to continue this way. This is a token of the relevance of the RPC concept and we became aware of the importance of the programme. At the same time many things need to be improved.

### Which one of these is most visible to you?

It is the significance of the programme, not only for the students, but for our Faculty as such.

### How does coronavirus affect our program and what do we do to help students in this situation?

Some of them fell ill, unfortunately. Many more, especially those related to the Italian, Spanish or American contexts have had family members who died or suffered. Many were locked inside and still are, I believe. It is sad. What we could do was to allow more time for handing in the assignments. I realized that we should perhaps have had more simultaneous chats or meetings on Zoom, in order to encourage and support each other. After all, we are in the same boat.



**Do you think that our distant learning experience can be useful to our alumni now, in the coronavirus times, when many have to work/study from home?**

Yes, I do. Even if I have a lot of experience with on-line teaching, I discovered the need for more social interaction at the courses. The corona closure made us more wanting for contact and social interaction. We could use a bit more of that in the future also.

**At our faculty before coronavirus, we were the only online Master's Program, weren't we?**

Yes, I believe so. But it was not the only interdisciplinary programme, there are HR, NOHA and Euroculture and they have many years' experience of cooperation. The students at these programmes are also focused and realize the benefits of learning academic methods. What the RPC programme shows is that it is possible to build a new programme and combine online learning with a good fellowship with the students.

**Do you think our experience can help other programs in our department and if so, how?**

Indeed. And vice versa. RPC can learn from the other programmes so that we don't have to build everything from scratch. There is valuable experience that must be shared. The recent external evaluation confirmed my opinion that the RPC programme needs to be more at the core of the Faculty's activities, together with the other programmes. Let's hope for that.

**This is not a farewell interview, as you are part of the RPC and continue to teach here, but we would like to thank you wholeheartedly for your wonderful work as a program director, for your dedication, energetic work and kind attitude to the students and the RPC team!**

I enjoy being part of the programme and to teach and to supervise. I would like to thank all the students and colleagues who make the work so interesting. It was a pleasure to hand things over to Johanna who has energy and visions for the programme.

## RPC alumni

We asked several RPC alumni, who are doing doctoral studies after graduation from the program, to share their experience with us:

### Tomas Poletti Lundström

**When did you start studying at RPC and when did you graduate?**

I started the RPC programme in the autumn of 2014 and finished in the spring of 2016.

**Where are you doing/did your PhD?**

I am currently employed as a PhD student at the Department of Theology and Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism.

**What area/field do you work in and what is your project?**

My subject is History of Religions, and I have been teaching courses on religion and politics. That broad area is also my main research interest. My dissertation project concerns how the category religion has been negotiated within the radical nationalist milieu in Sweden during the past three decades.

**Is it related to your Master's thesis at the RPC?**

Very much so. In my Master's thesis I analyzed how one radical nationalist author discussed religion in his collected works, so my dissertation is an expansion of what I did back then.

**Does/did your experience with the RPC or RPC degree help you in your further academic career and if so, how?**

Yes, indeed. Both theoretical and methodological knowledge gained through the programme, and contacts with staff at the Department of Theology, has been key for me in pursuing a PhD.

**Can you mention one thing you learned during your studies at RPC that helps/helped you in your PhD studies and academic career?**

For me personally, the courses on theory and method has been very useful. I still go back to literature that was introduced to me during these courses.

**Can you give advice to current RPC students who are considering an academic career and want to do a PhD after graduation?**

A useful strategy is to write a Master's thesis during the second semester (15 credits), and also write one during the fourth semester (30 credits). This way, you will get more training in academic writing. It also makes you eligible to apply for most PhD programmes in Sweden during your final year, since the requirements usually are 60 credits in advanced studies and a Master's thesis. This was what I did, and I therefore didn't have any gap between the end of my Master's studies and the beginning of the PhD programme.



## Rafał Jennek

**When did you start studying at RPC and when did you graduate?**

I started in 2016 and graduated in 2017.

**Where are you doing/did your PhD?**

I am doing it now, at IE Business School in Madrid. I'm in my second year of coursework - research master.

**What area/field do you work in and what is your project?**

My major is in marketing and minor in organizational behavior and human resources management. My current project is in differences between maintenance and attainment goals.

**Is it related to your Master's thesis at the RPC?**

No

**Does/did your experience with the RPC or RPC degree help you in your further academic career and if so, how?**

Maybe. I practiced writing essays.

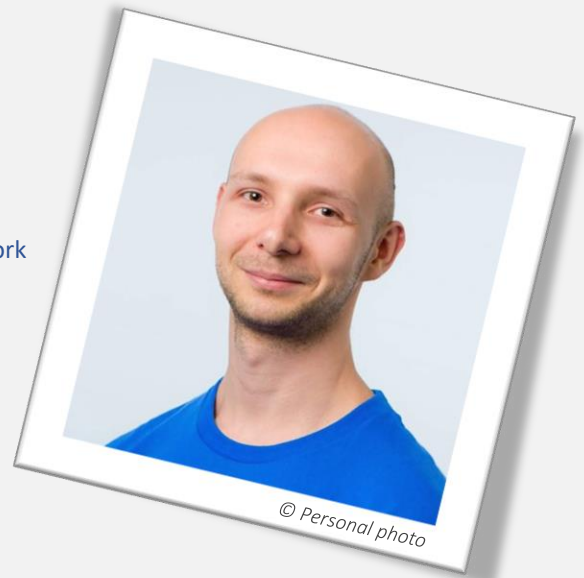
**Can you mention one thing you learned during your studies at RPC that helps/helped you in your PhD studies and academic career?**

I improved my writing skills.

**Can you give advice to current RPC students who are considering an academic career and want to do PhD after graduation?**

Yes.

Don't be afraid to criticize religion, someone has to.



## Richard Latham Lechowick

**When did you start studying at RPC and when did you graduate?**

I started in 2015 and I graduated in 2017.

**Where are you doing/did your PhD?**

I'm in the third year of my PhD at the University of Exeter in the UK.

**What area/field do you work in and what is your project?**

My PhD is in Ethnopolitical Studies. My project is looking at how gender roles have changed in the Ezidi community of Sinjar after the 2014 genocide by the Islamic State.

**Is it related to your Master's thesis at the RPC?**

Yes, it is directly related. I started traveling to northern Iraq and working with Ezidis during my time at Uppsala and even wrote my MA thesis on how the Ezidi religion was changing due to the genocide.

**Does/did your experience with the RPC or RPC degree help you in your further academic career and if so, how?**

It's directly tied to what I do now. I would not be able to pursue my PhD without the work I did in the RPC program at Uppsala. I mean that literally.

**Can you mention one thing you learned during your studies at RPC that helps/helped you in your PhD studies and academic career?**

Aside from the extensive fieldwork I did that would've eaten up at least a year of my PhD that I did during my MA in the RPC program, I'm very aware of what I think helped me most. The self-reflection required by Dr. Palmer and Dr. Billings in certain modules - originally nerve-wracking - allowed me to prepare for the sensibilities, subjectivities, and self-awareness needed for the sensitive ethnography I now do and which I began in the RPC program.

**Can you give advice to current RPC students who are considering an academic career and want to do a PhD after graduation?**

Look outside of the field you think you are 'supposed' to go into. I came from a religious studies background but I'm now doing ethnopolitical studies and it's actually a mix of ethnography and gender studies. Don't feel pigeon-holed by what you think you're 'supposed' to do.

