

RELIGION

in Peace and Conflict

Master
Programme

Alumni Newsletter Autumn 2021

Short News

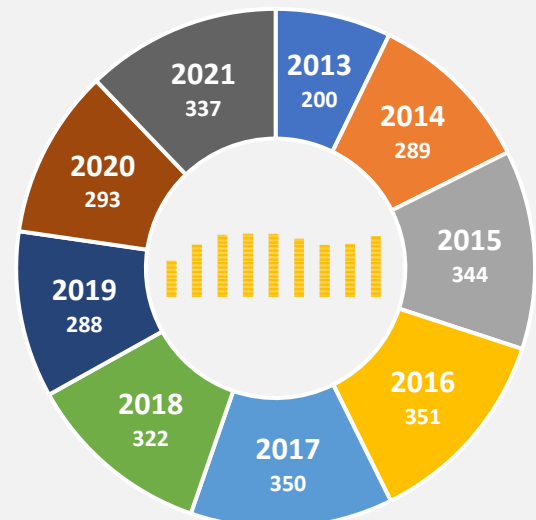
The RPC programme is getting increasingly popular

We have changed a lot over the years: many courses have been changed, some courses have been replaced by new ones, we have two campus weeks instead of one, we have a new learning platform, we have founded an alumni association and publish this newsletter, finally we have student representatives in each group who take part in RPC meetings.

RPC listens to the suggestions and criticisms of its students and tries to apply them carefully.

If you have any suggestions or comments, we would love to hear them! rpc@teol.uu.se

Statistics on applicants from 2013 to 2021



UHR - Antagningsstatistik

Did you know that Uppsala University has a blog?

If not, take a look! [#taggedforuppsala \(uu.se\)](https://www.uu.se/en/tagged/foruppsala)

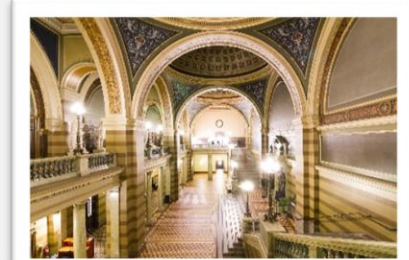
Recent posts include a letter to international students, some tips on how to survive writing a thesis and balance your life and studies!

We were delighted to meet our students again in Uppsala!



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This year Campus Week was held in a hybrid form. Those who visited Uppsala enjoyed the Peace Walk and dinner. The 1st year students were welcome to attend lectures and seminars held in the main university building and online. The 2nd year students attended the conference "Current Debates in Religion and Society 2021" both in Uppsala and via zoom.



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Campus Week is back on campus!

Dr. Oliver Li

Today we will meet one of the RPC supervisors, Dr. Oliver Li.

Could you tell us a few words about yourself?

I am a philosopher of religion and a part-time researcher at the Center for Religion and Society (CRS) in the project Artificial Intelligence, Democracy, and Human Dignity. One of my major interests lies in interdisciplinary research. Other major interests pertain to conceptions of the divine and the plurality of religions.

What kind of project are you currently working on?

Currently, I am working in the interdisciplinary project Artificial Intelligence, Democracy, and Human Dignity together with another philosopher of religion, two scholars in the studies of Law, and two scholars in Political Science. I am also working on a book project in the Swedish language about Panentheism.

Why are you interested in this field? Was there something in your life that helped you find this path?

I have always had broad interests. Thus, I have a natural affinity for doing research in an interdisciplinary setting. Combining ideas from different topics, areas of research, or the like seems to be both inspiring and fruitful.

What do you like most about being a university teacher?

There is a great diversity of students in studies of religion. Commonly students will have different interests, backgrounds, topics in their choice of research, and so forth. I find this diversity both inspiring and instructive. In that sense, teaching at a university, in particular in the setting of RPC, is enriching and developing also for me as a teacher.

For how long are you teaching at RPC?

I have been teaching at RPC since spring term 2020

How do you evaluate teaching/supervision at distance?

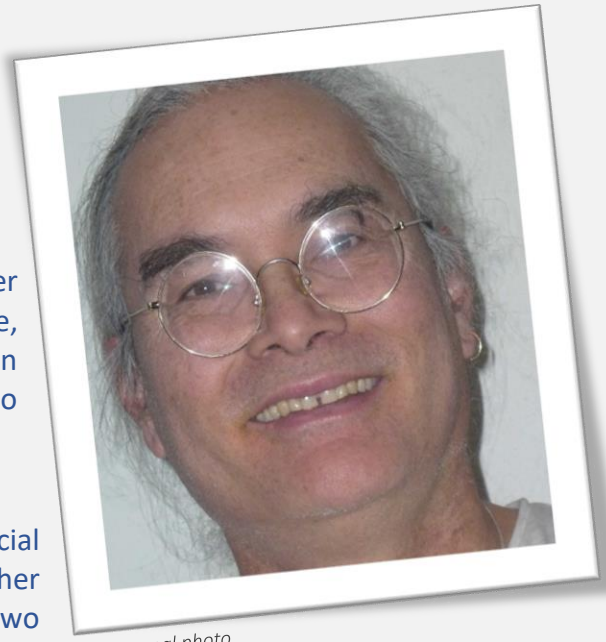
Since I have only been supervising students within the RPC program, it has not been part of my work to evaluate the course in total. However, for my own personal evaluation, I regularly reflect upon the students' progress, on how they receive my advice, and whether they achieve the results I have expected.

What is the biggest difference for you between teaching/supervision on campus and online?

Although it is easy to establish sufficient contact for supervision online with the technology available, I still believe that one of the major differences is that the supervisor and the student can establish a closer connection on campus. This may at least sometimes affect the progress of the work.

Could you give some advice to our current students on how to choose a topic for a master's thesis and what to consider when deciding?

This is a tricky question and depends so much on the field the student intends to work in. However, some general advice would be to think of a topic in terms of focus. A topic for a thesis should always have sufficient focus, and – at least in my opinion – it should be possible to summarize the basic idea in one sentence or one question. Also, I would always recommend that the student should have some personal interest in the specific topic. Choosing a topic about what one believes others might think is an interesting or relevant topic may lead to problems when it comes down to the detailed studies a master's thesis requires. Having said that, a topic should obviously be of some relevance to the field of research in question.



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What should our alumni consider when planning an academic career?

Never give up! There is a lot of competition in academics. However, if you wish to pursue an academic career, you shouldn't give up in the first place.

Do you have any strategies for coping with a sunless and cold November in Sweden? :)

Oh yes, don't miss the hours at lunch when the sun is up. Go for a walk for half an hour or so in the middle of the day to clear your mind regardless of the weather. Walks – in particular in nature – are contemplative, meditative, and re-creative!

Our administrators

Let's meet our second administrator, who is sharing her duties with Emma Ericsson (see Autumn 2020 issue) in doing magic!

are people without whom RPC couldn't function just as without teachers and students.

Majlinda Juniku



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Could you tell us a little bit about your involvement with the program? (When did you start, what were you doing, what were your tasks, etc.)

I began administrating the programme in April 2020, around when I first started working at Uppsala University. Before that I had mainly worked in the private sector.

What do you do now?

I still administrate at the Department of Theology but have main responsibility for another master programme, in Human Rights. I am now second administrator for the RPC-programme after Emma.

Going back a bit, how did you become a university administrator and why did you choose this profession?

I studied at Uppsala University myself and have admired it ever since. Administration fits me since I like being involved in many aspects of the workplace, am a problem solver and very service-minded. I am very proud of what I do and my workplace.

What do you consider to be the best thing about your job as an administrator and specifically in the RPC program?

That I get to help so many students and teachers. They need to concentrate on their studies and teaching so I like making the administrative hiccups smoother for them.

What is the most challenging?

One of the challenges is that it is a distance programme so most of the contact is by e-mail. Which works fine most of the time, but some issues are just better resolved face-to-face.

Do you remember your most memorable working day while working with the programme?

Meeting new students is always exciting, whether it is on Zoom or live campus week. Also seeing them graduate is very satisfying.

As a keeper of many stories from your work, do you remember any funny stories that you could share with us?

Emma and I fooled our boss that the learning platform (Studium) will be changed again after two years. I even made a fake link (that looked legit) which led to Wikipedia April fool's day – page. He was just about to call the head of the Department and complain when he clicked on the link and realized our prank :)

Meet our Alumni!

Today **David Frost is coming back** to hold an interview with one of our alumni.

Georgia N. Gleoudi

Georgia graduated from the RPC in 2018. She also has a master's degree in Religious Roots in Europe from Lund University and a bachelor's degree in International Relations and European Studies from Panteion University, Athens. She resides in Greece.

How did you find the RPC programme and what prompted you to join the RPC community?

I started thinking about a master's program in Greece, but unfortunately, I couldn't find what I was really looking for. The problem for me was that I was working, I couldn't afford to go abroad to support my studies and my living there. So, I had to find an alternative. Someone told me about distance studies in Sweden. I found the RPC

program and when I read the syllabus, I said: "That's it!" And I also searched for Brian Palmer on Google, and I saw his TED talks about courage, and I really wanted to meet him, and I wanted to have him as my teacher. So, I applied and thanks to God, they accepted me. I don't know how was/is at other years, but my group was a group of professionals, with brilliant ideas, very well educated. I think it was the best choice I've ever done.

Would you tell us about your path to interest in religious studies?

In 2012 I didn't know what I want to do with my life. So, I decided to apply for ERASMUS studies. I went to Istanbul to study. There I met some friends, actually Greeks friends, who had a close connection to the Ecumenical Patriarchate (of Constantinople). So, when I started meeting them, I started to meet other cultures, as Jews from Istanbul, Sunni Muslims. I will never forget it because it was a rainy day and those friends who were Greek Orthodox, but they were very open to other cultures, told me: "We will take you somewhere to a very special". They took me to a Sufi Mosque. There were original Sufis who were in white clothes of whirling dervishes. So it was that time when I said: "This is what I want to do in my life! I want to go and meet cultures, write about those cultures, interview those cultures and bring all those people together."

So, it was the day when my life changed.

Why did you choose one year of the master's programme rather than two?

Actually, it was a personal choice because I studied, and I worked at the same time. It is something that I did for many years. So, I had a burnout, I was very tired. So, I decided to finish earlier.

What have you taken with you from your studies at RPC? What is the best thing you have learned here?

Campus week was an interesting experience. The walk was an eye-opening experience. I wish I could do smth similar here. Most of the things were really good. Campus week and Brian Palmer :) But what I also wanted to highlight about the RPC, that it wasn't only a theory, but all those things could be put into action. When we learned about humanitarian work and about social activism. Those we could immediately put into action. How to do something on your own – this is what I learned from the program.

Why did you decide to write your thesis on the Jews in Greece? ([NEVER AGAIN THESSALONIKI – AUSCHWITZ : THE FIRST MEMORY WALK FOR THE JEWS OF SALONICA AND THE REACTIONS OF THE LOCAL PRESS. : A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS \(CDA\) AND REFLECTION. \(diva-portal.org\)](#))

Even before I started my master's I was interested in Jews minorities because here in Greece with a total population of 10 million where 98% we are Greek Orthodox. So very few know the history of Jews in Greece, about Holocaust



So, I started visiting the Jews Museum, I learned the history and they informed me that they started their memory marches in 2015. I found it very interesting because those marches have political dimensions, so I've decided to work more in-depth on this subject. Thanks to those people who accepted to be interviewed. I think they had a very good say on what happened and what is still happening. Because the memory marches were held until now. We didn't have it due to Covid19 for two years, but it's going to be repeated next year.

You have written several journalistic articles on the subject. Have you written journalistic articles before? Has the RPC given you courage?

No, I didn't write anything before. The RPC provided me with the courage and the vision to do something. What I thought was – ok, as a country, we don't have any religious literacy and my goal for those articles was to raise their awareness about religious literacy to Greeks, mainly to adults. I tried to write very simple, to give them history and to give them quotes from other people. When I wrote about Jews, I didn't write for Jews. I wanted other religions to read about Jews in Greece. I tried to give them some positive aspects of religion, the human side of religion. IT gave me the courage to do this project of my life because it's my life's project.

Now that it has become a big interest of yours, do you still engage in it?

Yes, I continue, I continue. Now, because of Covid19 I didn't have a chance to visit places, but now I am planning to work with Jews and Muslim communities to publish an interfaith calendar.

Is journalism a profession or a hobby for you?

It is a hobby. It started as a hobby, but it gave me a good basis for my profession right now. When I finished my master's, I didn't leave it. I continued working and it provided with very good knowledge and intercultural skills. How to respect other religious places, how to behave, how to choose the right words, etc. It provided me with a very good set of skills for my profession.

What do you work right now?

I work as a course moderator at the International Dialogue Center. I moderate the course for interreligious dialogue and the course for the religious sustainable development goal. We have participants from all over the world, mostly religious and community leaders.

I'll steal a question from Brian Palmer and ask you: if you could have dinner with anyone from any historical period except your own family, who would it be and why?

Agatha Christi. I love reading her fictional characters. I would love to travel back in the 1930th and have dinner with her at her house.

Talking about anyone from our time, it would be [Eboo Patel](#)

Any words of encouragement for our current RPC students?

Follow your inner desires, find the courage to follow your vision. If you give your heart to something, it will also give its heart to you, it will reward you. Do not always expect to be paid for something. For example, I have never been paid for my articles or many things that I did. But it gave me back a lot of love from other people, lots of respect and a sense of fulfillment.

Podcast:

A new podcast discussing engagement in online learning, encourages teachers and students. The topic is 'engaged learning and online education'. You will hear educational researchers and developers talk about the impact of distance, hybrid and online learning on student engagement in learning.

<http://files.webb.uu.se/uploader/1302/Podd.mp3>

Join us!

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INSTAGRAM: rpc_uu