

Workshop 5

Motherhood, Religions and Spirituality

Aims:

Workshop 5, 'Motherhood and Religions', will discuss a range of contexts, concepts and experiences in relation to the connections between motherhood, religions and spirituality. In the late twentieth- and early twenty-first century, Europe (as elsewhere) has seen a 'return' to religion, in relation to identity. This workshop aims to explore these new or re-connections in terms of a broad range of religions –Judaism, Islam, Christianity, and beyond – in order to ask what kinds of impact they are having on mothers as individuals, and to try to understand how they are being experienced by women as mothers in the European context.

Research questions:

1. What are the key contemporary issues which impact on motherhood in connection with different religions, and how have they evolved since 1968?
2. What specific problem areas arise in debates about religion, spirituality and motherhood?
3. What kinds of mystical or religious writings are being produced by women in Europe in relation to motherhood?
4. How are motherhood and religion connected in specific national contexts?
5. What particular insights can be gained from cross-cultural comparisons of motherhood and religion?
6. To what extent do religion and politics interact in their impacts on motherhood?
7. How do mothers' religious or spiritual beliefs impact (i) on their mothering; and (ii) on their sense of self, as mothers?
8. In what ways does religion and spirituality either help or problematize the practice of mothering?
9. How are the contemporary connections between motherhood and religion being theorised and approached within different disciplines?
10. How do literary texts respond to and/or shape debates on or experiences of motherhood, religion and spirituality, or vice versa?
11. What kinds of literary techniques and effects are employed to convey meaning in relation to this topic?
12. What insights can literary narratives and representations relative to the topic offer to interdisciplinary discussion?
13. What kinds of relationships are there between literature and real life experience, and between literature and contemporary social issues regarding the topic?