

Instructor: Dr. Martin Kindermann

Title: Hearts in Hiding. Poetry by Religious Minorities in Victorian Britain
[ENG-6/a, AA-V3a/b, ENG-12, AA7, AA10, LAA9, LAA12, AA-MA1, AA-MA2,
AA-MA6, AA-W, AA-WB]

Course: 53-551, Seminar II

Dates: Thursday, 10-12 (first session 20 October)

Room: Phil 1269

Course Description

The peripheral position of religious minorities in Europe has for a long time been precarious and insecure: Discourses on how to integrate or even assimilate into a society reveal the contested location of religious otherness within the cultural, political and social network of Europe. The 19th century, nevertheless, brings about significant shifts in the cultural hierarchy of Britain: Different Relief Acts improve the position of Catholics, the Jewish emancipation movement strives for social equality, the Jewish Reform movement seeks to re-negotiate religious identity, and, after the first permanent Muslim community opened its doors in Liverpool 1895, it becomes most obvious that Islam is from now on a part of Britain's discursive network.

This course wants to introduce students to the rich and divers poetic voices which articulate religious minority positions in Victorian Britain, focusing on the three Abrahamic faiths. We will analyse texts by Muslim, Catholic and Jewish authors such as W. Abdullah Quilliam, Ameenah E. Lincoln, Gerard Manley Hopkins, Francis Thompson, Grace Aguilar, and Amy Levy. Herein we will discuss how the poems raise questions of belonging, of social participation, of being part of a British "We" and, at the same time, staying true to one's own religious traditions. In addition, the texts negotiate the speaker's relationship to God, to the speaker's own religious community, to the British literary canon, and the religious pretext (i.a. Qur'an, Gospels, Hebrew Bible). The seminar aims to link these different relationships to questions of poetics, to the political discourses of Victorian Britain, as well as to an inter-religious dialogue; and we will ask how this part of Britain's literature can relate to and inform our own understanding of contemporary discourses on religion.

Required texts will be provided via AGORA.

Course requirements:

Studienleistung: Regular attendance and active participation in seminar discussion; a short presentation on one of the poems

Prüfungsleistung: Term paper (16 to 20 pages).