



Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - Exchange programme Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam - 2024-2025

Exchange

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam offers many English-taught courses in a variety of subjects, ranging from arts & culture and social sciences, neurosciences and computer science, to economics and business administration.

The International Office is responsible for course approval and course registration for exchange students. For details about course registration, requirements, credits, semesters and so on, please [visit the exchange programmes webpages](#).

Religion, Violence and Fundamentalism

Course Code	G_BATRSAL084
Credits	6
Period	P2
Course Level	300
Language Of Tuition	English
Faculty	Faculty of Religion and Theology
Course Coordinator	prof. dr. H.D. Peels
Examiner	prof. dr. H.D. Peels
Teaching Staff	prof. dr. H.D. Peels
Teaching method(s)	Seminar

Course Objective

After finishing this course, the student

- has studied and compared different types of fundamentalism and fundamentalist movements;
- has examined the complex relation of fundamentalism with related phenomena, such as nationalism, extremism, radicalisation, and (terrorist or extremist) violence;
- is able to recognize the methodological differences in the multidisciplinary field of fundamentalism studies;
- is able to recognize various approaches to explain fundamentalism;
- is able to critically reflect on the concept 'fundamentalism', the different ways to conceptualize and define it, and the aptness of the concept;
- has improved critical reading, presentation, and writing skills.

Course Content

This course focusses on fundamentalism. Since the beginning of fundamentalist movements in the early 20th century, public and academic discourse has viewed fundamentalism as harmful to our societies. It is seen as reactionary, anti-democratic, anti-pluralistic, anti-scientific, and militant. Much research has focussed on violent forms of fundamentalism, and has associated the phenomenon with violent extremism and terrorism. In spite of this negative verdict on fundamentalism, it is far from clear what the term 'fundamentalism' actually means. Nor is it clear how it relates to phenomena such as nationalism, extremism,

radicalisation, and (terrorist or extremist) violence, how to best explain why fundamentalism occurs, or how to engage with fundamentalists.

The course starts by scrutinizing various definitions and conceptualisations of 'fundamentalism.' It then zooms in on fundamentalist movements from the Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions, and considers Hindu and Buddhist variants of fundamentalism. In due course, the complex relation between fundamentalism and nationalism will be scrutinized. We will then turn to the question how to explain fundamentalism, and what we mean by 'explaining' such a phenomenon. Moreover, we will reflect on the question how fundamentalism relates to adjacent phenomena such as radicalization, extremism, and terrorism. The course concludes by addressing epistemological and ethical questions regarding fundamentalism: what is the role of indoctrination, education, or echo chambers for fundamentalist convictions, and how should we engage with fundamentalists?

Additional Information Teaching Methods

The course will consist of lectures, group discussions, and student presentations.

Method of Assessment

- Reflections on the obligatory readings (50% of the final grade)
- (Group) Presentation (pass or a fail)
- Final paper (50 % of the final grade)

Literature

To be announced (see syllabus on Canvas)

Additional Information Target Audience

BA students from any discipline, as long as you are interested in fundamentalism.

The module is part of the minor Religious Dimensions of Global Challenges.

Explanation Canvas

Check Canvas regularly.

Recommended background knowledge

An open mind, curiosity, and a bit of common sense.

