The Research School Religion Values Society (RVS) PhD course

Understanding critique and normativities in empirical research

20–21 April 2020,

MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, Oslo

Monday 20 April, Aud 3

10:00-10:15 Welcome
10:15-11:00 What is critique? Contemporary constellations
    Brigitte Bargetz
    11.00-11:15 Coffee/tea
11:15-12:00 Empirical discomfort. How to deal with data you did not expect and/or did not want?
    Åse Røthing
12:00-13:00 Lunch at MF
13:00-13:45 Latino Immigrant Assimilation and Religious Affiliation: A Window into the Normativizing of Whiteness
    Jonathan Calvillo
14:00-14:45 Group discussions (rooms will be announced)
    14:45-15:00 Coffee/tea
15:00-15:45 Panel discussion (Aud 3)
16:00-18:00 PhD group sessions, parallel groups (rooms will be announced)
19.30 Dinner

Tuesday 21 March, Aud 3

9:00-9:45 Accountability policies and the compression of teachers’ professional values
    Geir Afdal
9:45-10:00 Coffee/tea

**10:00-10:45** Normative theories in interdisciplinary health and disability research

Inger Marie Lid

**11:00-12:00** Response and discussion

**12:00-13:00** Lunch MF

**13:00-13:45** Normativity in normative disciplines – or in all?

Jan-Olav Henriksen

13:45-14.00 Coffee/tea

**14:00-15:00** Response and discussion

**15:00-16:00** A religion-higher education institution in change: MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and society

Leif Vidar Haanes

16.30 Coffee/tea

**16:00-17:00** PhD group session, parallel groups (rooms will be announced)

19.30 Dinner

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**About the course**

Traditionally one separates between empirical/descriptive and normative disciplines, and between for instance education, sociology, psychology and religious studies on one hand and philosophy and theology on the other. This separation is problematic for a number of reasons. It seems clear that descriptive disciplines have implicit and explicit normative dimensions, and that empirical research may voice critique. Furthermore, theology has developed in an empirical direction, and political moral philosophy have empirical assumptions and implications.

This course discusses understandings of critique and normativities in empirical research, involving a number of different disciplines, like political science, education, sociology, health sciences and philosophy. The lecturers offer practical examples of how normativities play out in research and reflections on how one can negotiate in normative fields, including normativities in policy and research communities. The course also discusses what critique in empirical research may mean today.

**Course requirements**

1) send in an abstract for the group discussion before 6 April. This shall be uploaded on Canvas. 2 - maximum 4 pages about critique and normativities in your own research.

2) familiarize yourself with the course literature

3) during the course make a 5-10 minutes presentation of this paper in a group, followed by two responses and approximately 30 minutes discussion and feedback,
4) prepare feedback and respond to other papers in their group. The PhD students will be divided into groups of approximately five paper-presenters, plus 1 or 2 of the lecturers/organizers.

5) To get the credits you have to submit a paper after the course (5 -7 pages). More information on topic will follow later.

ECTS credits: 3

For more details about the programme, contact Gina Lende (rvs@mf.no) or Geir Afdal (geir.afdal@mf.no).

About the speakers

Brigitte Bargetz is post doc researcher at the Department of Political Science at the University of Kiel (Germany) and co-editor of the feminist political science journal “Femina Politica”. Currently, she is finishing her research project (Habilitation) “A Political Grammar of Feelings”, where she engages among other things with theorizing affective politics between fear, solidarity and sentimentality. For the last couple of years, she has also been working on the notion of (feminist) critique and has engaged with the call for affirmative critique and the search for new political imaginaries, transformative potentials, and other futures.

Åse Røthing is a professor at Oslo Metropolitan University at the Faculty of Education and International Studies, where she works within the field of diversity studies. She has her background from the Faculty of Theology and Centre for interdisciplinary gender research, both at Oslo University. For the last 15 years, she has worked with issues of power-relations in a wide sense, within the educational field.

Jonathan Calvillo is ass. prof. at Boston University. His teaching and research interests center on the sociological study of religion, race and ethnicity, and immigration. His scholarly work has focused on how religious affiliation influences the manner in which Latinx immigrants construct their ethnic identities. Currently, Dr. Calvillo is a research fellow in the Latino Protestant Congregations project, a national study examining the practices and experiences of Latino Protestant congregations. In tandem, he has conducted neighborhood based research within urban ethnic enclaves, examining how Latino religions, including formal and “folk” traditions, are lived out in the public arena.

Geir Afdal is professor of education at MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, and leader of the research school RVS. His research interests are accountability systems and teachers’ professional values, the tolerance of the tolerant – liberal tolerance in polarizing contexts, and social practice theories and the study of religion.

Inger Marie Lid is a professor at VID specialized University at the faculty of health studies, where she works within the field interdisciplinary critical disability studies and citizenship. Lid is the leader of the Research Group “Citizenship” and is editor-in-Chief of Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research. Her research interest include political philosophy, bioethics, critical disability studies and human rights.
Jan-Olav Henriksen is professor of systematic theology at MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society, and teaches and does research in all areas of that discipline, although his main subject is Philosophy of religion. His present research topic focuses on different dimensions in the relationship between God and human experience, as well as on religion interpreted from a pragmaticist angle. He also holds a keen interest in the conditions for religion in a post-secular society.

Leif Vidar Haanes is professor of church- and intellectual history and have been Rector/President of MF since 2005. He is engaged in leadership of higher education and have (had) several national and international positions, like President of Universities Norway, member of the General Board IMHE (OECD), advisory Committee for Council of Europe education and research: CDPPE, Council of European University Association. His scholarly interests and research are mainly in the field of intellectual history and the history of theological education, partly in the 19th century, partly in the 15/16th century.

Abstracts lectures

Brigitte Bargetz

Looking at recent debates, one might easily get the impression that we are witnessing not only an economic, political, and ecological crises, but it seems that critical theory has also been in crisis lately. The capacity of critical theory to bring about transformative insights and its overall ability to come up with compelling political alternatives are questioned more and more. In fact, a need for different and new modes of critique is being uttered. The lecture will explore the notion of critique within contemporary debates while taking into account the powerful genealogy of critique that has infused critical scholarship over the last decades.

Åse Røthing

The ‘pedagogy of discomfort’ was first introduced by Boler in 1999 and described as a teaching practice that ‘begins by inviting educators and students to engage in critical inquiry regarding values and cherished beliefs, and to examine constructed self-images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others’ (1999, p. 177). The concept was later developed by Boler and Zembylas (2003) as a pedagogical framework for engaging students and teachers with issues of difference, race and social justice by troubling their emotional comfort zones. The starting point of this pedagogical approach is the assumption that uncomfortable emotions are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices ‘that sustain stereotypes and social injustice and in creating openings for empathy and transformation’ (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017, p. 3). The ambition is, according to Zembylas and Papamichael (2017), to ‘uncover and question the deeply embedded emotional dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines and unconscious complicity with hegemony’ (p. 3).

Discomfort in the educational field has been discussed primarily in relation to students. In this paper, my focus is on how discomfort can be understood as a resource for educators as well as researchers. I argue that discomfort may be seen as a resource for developing critical reflection, ethical awareness and inclusive teaching practices, as well as critical approaches and investigations in research.
Jonathan Calvillo

The study of immigrant assimilation in the U.S., though generally conceived as a matter of social mobility, has traditionally been associated with proximity to white racial identities. The conceptualization of assimilation, then, both socially and academically, has implications for the normativizing of racialized social boundaries. Scholars of immigration have long centered religion as a mediating factor in the experience of immigrant assimilation. Through comparative research of Latino Catholic and Protestant immigrants, this lecture will explore religion’s role in shaping immigrant ethnic identities in relation to whiteness. In the process, we will interrogate the normative values conferred upon whiteness both through analysis of ethnographic data, and through reviewing published scholarship dealing with similar populations.

Geir Afdal

Education is increasingly understood as a mean of national economic development and competition. Consequently, education has become a highly important field of policy and governance, and is understood in terms of input-output rationales. Accountability has become a key concept in educational policy, in the sense of monitoring, measuring, evaluating and making education more effective and outcome-oriented. Simultaneously, international organizations, tests, evaluations, policy and market actors are creating processes of standardization, which may be at odds with national aims for education. The instrumentalization and standardization of accountability-education is contested and have raised discussions on education, policy and values. In this lecture, attention is given to the relationship between the values of accountability-education and teachers’ professional values. How do an instrumental policy and governance effect teachers’ professional values? What role does the values of the research-community play? And what about the role of the financing institution?

Inger Marie Lid

Disability is, in Nordic contexts, often approached as a health issue. However, framing disability as a health issue misses the ethical, cultural and political dimensions of disability. A medical gaze is characterized by normalcy. The person with a disability or chronic illness is thus expected to be healed. Critical normative theory can identify shortcomings of a medical gaze and open up for studying disability a complex and contextual phenomena. Normative theory in interdisciplinary health and disability research enable us to explore health and disability in a human rights and social justice perspective. This lecture will focus on the role of normative theory in disability research. Drawing on the political philosophy of Martha Nussbaum, Capabilities Approach, I will discuss normative theory in empirical interdisciplinary disability research, focusing on social justice and well being.

Jan-Olav Henriksen

There cannot be a question if normativity is part of research in the humanities and the social sciences or not. All scholarly disciplines have a normative component. However, normativity work on different levels, and have a variety of constitutive elements as well as practical consequences. Based on insights in pragmatism, so-called normative disciplines (e.g.,
ethics, theology, philosophy) are not fully separate from other scholarly disciplines. Against this backdrop, special attention is given to the idea that theology is normative, whereas religious studies are not. The lecture will try to spell out more clearly what would be the differences between the two if it is impossible to uphold a sharp distinction between empirical and normative disciplines.

**Literature**

**Bargetz**


**Røthing**


**Calvillo**


**Afdal**


Lid


Henriksen
