

Lecture Series

Censorship and Theories of “Forbidden Knowledge”

Prof. Oliver Krüger et al.

Chair for Religious Studies, Department of Social Sciences, Fribourg University

Thursdays, 10.15-11.45

Fribourg, Bd. de Pérolles 90, Hall G 120

I. (20.02.2020)	Oliver Krüger: <i>Introduction</i>
II. (27.02.2020)	Oliver Krüger: <i>The History of Censorship</i>
III. (05.03.2020)	Jürgen Kaumkötter: <i>Censorship, Persecution, Murder – The Art of Catastrophe</i>
IV. (12.03.2020)	Oliver Krüger: <i>Control instead of Censorship – the new Supertotalitarianism</i>
V. (19.03.2020)	Jan Schenck: <i>The Nazi Book Burnings – Open Data as Tool of Digital History</i>
VI. (26.03.2020)	Denis Masméjan: <i>Reporters without Borders. History and current challenges</i>
VII. (02.04.2020)	Catrinel Motoc / Marco Perolini: <i>Amnesty International – Political Freedom endangered</i>
VIII. (09.04.2020)	Oliver Krüger: <i>From Censorship to Conspiracy Theories</i>
IX. (23.04.2020)	Andreas Anton: <i>The Sociology of Conspiracy Theories</i>
X. (30.04.2020)	Michael Hagemeister: <i>The “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” in the Court: The Bern Trials (1933-1937)</i>
XI. (07.05.2020)	Sabine Reiter: <i>The Antivaccination Movements. History, Roots and Impact</i>
XII. (14.05.2020)	Oliver Krüger: <i>Review and summary</i>

Censorship and the conspiracy of "forbidden knowledge" (Lecture Series, FS 2020)

Since Greek and Chinese antiquity, censorship is used to systematically suppress unwanted works, ideas and their originators: In Greece censorship was most visible in the trial against the philosopher Socrates (5th century BCE) who was executed for "corrupting the minds of the youth" and impiety. In China the first emperor Qin Shi Huang (3rd century BCE) burned all scriptures of the "Hundred Schools of Thought" and buried their scholars alive to maintain his power. Censorship was always intensified when the alliance of religious and political rule was challenged. Thus, the Roman Empire first persecuted Christians, later the new Christian rulers and the church turned the tables and persecuted pagans, their works and icons. From the middle age through the counter reformation the Roman Catholic Church was eager to go after heretics, scientists and philosophers and their ideas. The *index librorum prohibitorum* listed such works (as of Kant and Sartre) until the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), while Protestants were driven by iconoclastic movements and the suppression of music and dance.

In early modern times censorship was extended to political issues and institutionalized in the United Kingdom and pre-revolutionary France. Later, censorship targeted revolutionary and independence movements in all major European monarchies as well as in the colonies (e.g. in Russia, Austria, Prussia/Germany, North America, India, South Africa). While totalitarian states relied heavily on censorship and propaganda in 20th century (e.g. the Soviet Union, Germany), liberal democracies used political and cultural censorship to fight unwanted political positions (the McCarthy era in the United States or Switzerland in WWII). Parallely, cultural censorship targeted written and pictured nudity and sexuality as obscenity.

Today, as online environments guarantee anonymity, hate speech is widespread and actual violence is displayed on social media (beheadings or even live broadcastings of terrorist attacks as in Christchurch 2019) a new debate on the limits of free speech was initiated. This lecture series with contributors of various disciplines firstly introduces historical case studies. In the second part it focuses on recent phenomena connected to social media, practices of internet censorship, new technological forms of social control and the debate on political correctness. Finally, the lecture deals with conspiracy theories that view mainstream agreement on scientific insights as a result of censored "forbidden knowledge" (e.g. theories of climate change, the use of vaccination or the truth on the Egyptian pyramids).

The lecture aims at the German and French speaking student bodies as well as international students.

Guest lecturers

Dr. Andreas Anton (IGPP Freiburg i.Br. / Freiburg University) is a sociologist and historian. He has published works on the sociology of knowledge and recently a book on conspiracy theories: *Konspiration: Soziologie des Verschwörungsdenkens*. Berlin 2013 (with. M. Schetsche / M. Walter).

Website: www.igpp.de/eks/andreas_anton.htm

Dr. Michael Hagemeister (Slavic Studies, Bochum University) is one of the leading experts for the so-called *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. Major works: *Die «Protokolle der Weisen von Zion» vor Gericht. Der Berner Prozess 1933–1937 und die «antisemitische Internationale»*. Zürich 2017.

On Wikipedia: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Hagemeister

Jürgen Kaumkötter M.A. (*Zentrum für verfolgte Künste*, Solingen) is the head of the *Centre for Persecuted Art* in Solingen (Germany) since 2015. He organizes exhibitions on historical and current cases of suppressed art in Europe and beyond.

Website: verfolgte-kuenste.com

Dr. Denis Masmajan (Geneva) is journalist and actually figures as General Secretary of *Reporters without Borders* (Swiss Section). Masmajan worked as journalist for the *Nouveau Quotidien* and *Le Temps* and also serves as member of the of the *Swiss Press Council* and as adviser on committees of the United Nations in Geneva. As Ph.D. in law he published frequently on questions of media.

On Twitter: <https://twitter.com/dmasmejan?lang=de>

Catrinel Motoc is *Amnesty International's* senior campaigner on shrinking space and on human rights defenders at risk.

<https://twitter.com/catrinelmotoc?lang=de>

Marco Perolini, Ph.D. candidate at Goldsmiths University, London, is regional researcher for human rights for Amnesty International.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/esteban80paris?lang=de>

Dr. Sabine Reiter, Federal Ministry of Health (Berlin, Dep. for Communicable Diseases, Protection against Infection). Dr. Reiter is responsible for communicable diseases in the German Ministry of Health and is a renown specialist in the structure and origins of today's anti-vaccination movement.

Jan Schenck is a German historian / photographer who started the project *Verbrannte Orte* ("burned places") in 2013.

Website: verbrannte-orte.de

From Fribourg University

Oliver Krüger, professor for Religious Studies with 20 years of research in historical and current media in relation to religion.

Website: www3.unifr.ch/sr

Blog Zeitlupe: blogs.taz.de/zeitlupe