

Title: Religionen und Ethik im Makrokontext der Globalisierung
Religions and Ethics in a Globalized World (REGloW)

German partner: Prof. Wilhelm Gräß
Humboldt-Universität Berlin (HUB)

South African partner: Prof. Nico Kopman
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Event: Lecture series starting 22 October 2012, Berlin, Germany
Conference, Stellenbosch/South Africa, 26-28 February 2013
Conference, Pietermaritzburg, Durban/South Africa, 4-7 March 2013

Brief description:

Since 2008, the partnership between the theology departments and institutes of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the University of Stellenbosch (US) and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (HUB) has not only involved regular student and lecturer exchanges, but also the "Religion and Culture" Joint Master's programme. The importance of religion against the backdrop of present-day globalisation is one of the main focal areas of the scientific relationship maintained by the institutes. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between religion and human rights: the Christian tradition – primarily in its interpretation that man was created in God's own likeness – played a significant role in the emergence of human rights debates at the time of the Enlightenment. This is of particular importance for the academic collaboration, as the battle against apartheid in South Africa was supported to a great extent by church initiatives and other religious communities, who also based their arguments on human rights. Even after the end of apartheid, churches and religious communities in South Africa still play an important role.

During the 2012/13 winter semester at the HUB theology department a series of public lectures was held on the subject of "Religion and human rights" by lecturers from the three universities and the external expert Prof. Hans Joas, who held the closing lecture. The lectures focused on a broad range of issues, such as the importance of Christianity in the development of human rights, the role of the churches in the human rights discussion in South Africa and in the different conceptions of justice in South African society, as well as the significance of AIDS/HIV as a challenge for human rights and the anthropological view of the terms "dignity" and "identity" in the human rights discussion.

Two successive scientific conferences are scheduled to take place in February and March 2013 and will also include public lectures in Stellenbosch and Pietermaritzburg/Durban. Under the mottoes "The ethics of religion and the ethics of globalisation" and "The shared responsibility for one world in a religiously active and global society", the conferences focus on the ethical challenges and the question of the responsibility and role of religion in a globalised world, as well as the importance of religious communities and religion-based organisations in the fight against poverty, violence, HIV/AIDS and social disintegration processes. Last but not least, the lecturers will address the perspectives of freedom, justice and human dignity in different religious traditions.