

The Research Training Group “Interconfessionality in the Early Modern Period” serves to strengthen the Faculty of Humanity’s key research area in the field of interdisciplinary early modern studies.

The Group’s innovative methodological and thematic approaches will enrich research on an international scale by contributing a complete and nuanced historical understanding of Europe’s religious profiles. To do so, the Group takes a fresh look at one of the most influential structures of Occidental Christianity: the confessional division that has shaped Europe culturally, religious-politically, and in terms of *mentalités* over the last five centuries. As a result, current and future doctoral projects focus not on states of conflict, but observe instead constellations and phenomena that document the dynamics of interaction between the early modern confessions. This builds upon the thesis of confessionalization, which has undergone continual development since the 1970s, as well as differentiation of its overarching questions. The Group does not focus on the (often-analogous) emergence of discrete confessions shaping the political, the social, and the ecclesiastical within the framework of the emergence of early modern states. While acknowledging the specific characteristics of the confessions, the Group concentrates instead on interconfessional and transconfessional processes.

The scope for research covers:

1. Mechanisms of implicit transconfessionality, such as recourse by the confessions to unchallenged reservoirs (e.g., common Judeo-Christian traditions and sources).
2. Processes of negative interconfessionality, that is, the formation of confessional standpoints through explicit references to one or more different confessions serving primarily to distinguish between the confessions.
3. Concretions of positive, connecting interconfessionality, within which the various parties leave diverging standpoints unarticulated and/or adapt the confessional practices, texts, and ideas of the “other.”
4. Examples of explicit transconfessionality, which occurs when protagonists from two or more confessions communicate with one another to define common religious convictions and/or avail themselves of common religious practices.

This is admittedly a very broad framework. In order to achieve the focus essential for producing outstanding doctoral research projects, we have defined four key areas that reflect the types of primary sources the Group draws upon. Within the following four areas, the Group’s primary interest lies in medial realizations of interconfessionality:

(1) Bi- and transconfessionality

(2) Praxis et exercitium pietatis

(3) Sacred imagery between confessionality and interconfessionality

(4) The transformation of textual and musical genres

These key areas provide numerous thematic points of intersection that have proven fruitful topics of discussion in work to date. The Group is not only interested in reconstructing controversial theological debates from a theological-historical perspective; it seeks above all to explore those media and artifacts that permit us to expand our knowledge of the confessions' profiles, with all their differences and commonalities. The sources the Group draws upon (for example, broadsheets, emblem books, sermons, meditative texts, sacred poetry, Biblical exegesis, theater and epics, oratorios, operas, paintings) cannot be reduced to their function as supposedly transparent "documents," but must instead be analyzed within the context of their individual and specific literary, musical, or iconographical genres. Past and current doctoral projects (see section 3.3) deal with topics relating to the so-called "core regions" of the Reformation. Furthermore—and this is one of the essential aspects of its research profile—the Group carries out studies that attend to European and non-European early modern contexts characterized by various confessional layers (for example, Italy, England, France, the Greek-Orthodox region, Latin America, China).

The Group is governed by an official set of degree program regulations and is part of the Faculty of Humanity's Graduate School, which provides administrative infrastructure and guarantees the quality assurance of doctoral programs. The Group's structured doctoral program offers doctoral candidates individual academic supervision through interdisciplinary supervisory commissions, which ensure intensive advising and performance monitoring as per the supervisory agreements. Experience of past and current supervision on this program demonstrates that the time devoted to supervision is appropriate and does not lead to longer completion times among doctoral candidates. The particular value of the Group's specific supervision concept over that offered within the Faculty's structured doctoral program or its individual doctorate lies largely in the following measures:

- 1) The Group's degree program regulations cover specific courses and events designed to develop candidates' skills in and knowledge of overarching, connected themes in early modern studies, which enables them to better situate their own research projects.
- 2) The degree program regulations stipulate heterogeneous course formats (regular colloquia, two lecture series, two workshops) that not only strengthen interdisciplinary communication among doctoral candidates and between candidates and supervisors, but also encourage academic independence and team work. Doctoral candidates organize one of the workshops and document its proceedings in print.
- 3) The Group's supervision concept not only offers international research activities in Hamburg by extending invitations to visiting lecturers and organizing two project-specific research

colloquia. It also gives doctoral candidates the opportunity to undertake research abroad for up to three months so that they can visit archives, libraries, and other academic institutions relevant to their research projects and present their work at international conferences.

The Group's strategic plan for realizing equal opportunity makes use of the standards currently in place at Universität Hamburg and within the Faculty of Humanities, which are considered to be of the highest standard. With funding from the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, DFG), we will strengthen these measures both quantitatively and qualitatively wherever individual situations demand, for example, with respect to childcare, special coaching courses for doctoral candidates offered by the Career Center, or offering a gender colloquium.