CALL FOR PAPERS
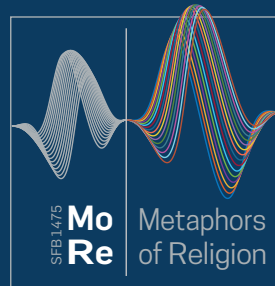
International Conference: "Metaphors of Religion: Comparative Perspectives, Theoretical Potential, and Methodic Innovation"

Hosted by **CRC 1475 – Metaphors of Religion**: Religious Meaning-Making in Language Use
Ruhr University Bochum, Germany | **October 27-29th, 2025**

Keynote Lectures by:

Eve Sweetser (University of California, Berkeley)

Gerard Steen (University of Amsterdam)

The Collaborative Research Center 1475 (CRC 1475) at Ruhr University Bochum is pleased to announce a Call for Papers for its upcoming international conference on **Metaphors of Religion**. This event will bring together scholars from diverse disciplines to explore how metaphors function as foundational elements in religious language.

Religious traditions are steeped in metaphor. Deities are often depicted as celestial bodies, animals, and also human beings, while the faithful may be likened to a flock, a ship's crew, or children. Their spiritual journey is envisioned as a path, an apprenticeship, a struggle. These metaphors permeate religious texts, undergoing continuous reinterpretation in commentaries and doctrinal teachings. For a long time, scholars have explored these metaphorical expressions, highlighting their essential role in shaping and advancing religious thought within each tradition

The CRC 1475 "Metaphors of Religion" is an interdisciplinary research network comprising 16 subprojects and over 40 scholars. Bridging religious studies, various philologies, and linguistics, it examines the pivotal role of metaphors in shaping religious meaning from historical-diachronic and culturally comparative perspectives. The **CRC's research program** situates metaphor not merely as a literary device but as a core mechanism through which religious meaning is generated across diverse historical, cultural, and linguistic contexts. Metaphor is intrinsic to religious expression, a necessary bridge for engaging with the transcendent in human experience. We invite contributions across a range of disciplines including religious studies, linguistics, area studies, philologies, sociology, anthropology, digital humanities, and beyond, to engage in a comprehensive dialogue on the role and impact of metaphor in religion.

Key Topics and Questions

We welcome submissions on themes that engage with, but are not limited to, the following topics:

1. **Religious Metaphor and Meaning-Making:** What role do metaphors play in the emergence of religious language? How is metaphor connected to notions such as 'holy languages?'

2. **Comparative Metaphor Studies:** How do different religious traditions (e.g., Buddhism, Christianity, Daoism, Islam, Zoroastrianism) utilize similar or divergent metaphors to address themes of salvation, conduct of life, or imaginaries of the divine? For example, to what extent do we find metaphors of Light, Way, or the Human Body across different traditions?

3. **Cognitive (and) Linguistic Approaches to Religious Metaphor:** How do cognitive linguistic theories of metaphor (e.g., mapping and blending theories) illuminate the unique challenges of religious language?

4. **Historical and Cultural Shifts in Religious Metaphors:** What historical and, in particular, interreligious factors shape the development and transformation of specific religious metaphors? How do metaphors adapt or reconfigure in response to cross-cultural encounters?

5. **Digital and Computational Approaches to Metaphor Analysis:** Which new methods can be employed to analyze religious metaphors at scale, particularly across languages and cultures? How can digital humanities tools enhance our understanding of metaphor in religious contexts?

6. **Materiality and Visuality in Metaphors:** How do metaphors extend beyond language to religious artifacts, images, and other media? What are the methodological challenges in analyzing metaphors in non-verbal religious contexts?

Special Panels and Methodological Workshops

CRC 1475's commitment to methodological innovation will be reflected in special sessions dedicated to advancing computational approaches to religious metaphor analysis. Workshops will address tools and techniques, such as the *Thesaurus of Religious Metaphors*, a CRC 1475 project integrating metaphor annotation, a cross-language repository, and a taxonomical system.

Submission Guidelines

We invite proposals for the following formats:

- **Individual Papers**: Please submit a 300–400-word abstract detailing your research question, methodology, and anticipated findings.
- **Panels:** Organized panels with 3–4 presentations centered on a cohesive theme. Panel proposals should include an overview (300 words) and abstracts for each paper (300–400 words).
- **Roundtable Discussions:** Proposals for roundtable sessions should outline the central theme, key questions, and expected contributions of each participant (300–400 words).

Submission Deadline

28 February 2025

Submission Process

Submit all proposals by email to the CRCs Coordination team: sfb1475-coordination@ruhr-uni-bochum.de. Include the following in your submission:

- Title of the paper, panel, or roundtable discussion
- Author(s) name(s), affiliation(s), and contact information
- Abstracts (300-400 words as specified above)

Conference Details

The conference will take place at Ruhr University Bochum. There is no registration fee, and both the program and catering during the event will be fully covered. However, participants are responsible for arranging and covering their own travel and accommodation expenses. Detailed information about registration, travel assistance, and accommodation options will be provided upon acceptance.

To encourage wider participation, we offer limited funding opportunities, particularly for Early Career Researchers and scholars from the Global South. If you lack access to funding from your home institution, we warmly encourage you to contact us directly to explore potential support options.

Publication Opportunity

Selected papers from the conference will be considered for publication in a CRC 1475-sponsored volume or special journal issue, showcasing diverse research on religious metaphors.

Contact Information

For further inquiries, please contact: CRC 1475 Conference Committee
Email: sfb1475-coordination@ruhr-uni-bochum.de
Website: sfb1475.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/en/