

# Working Lives, Praying Lives

## Exploring the interface of religion and economy in contemporary Latin America

This seminar will explore how economic and religious processes are weaved together in contemporary Latin America. Economy and religion have always been intertwined in Latin America. From indigenous worldviews that integrated productive and religious practices, through colonial times when for example, under the “encomienda” system Spanish representatives were forcefully converting natives to Catholic faith, giving their (exploited and forced) labour in return.

Over the last decades, with the advent of the globalized economy, the everyday lives of many Latin Americans are becoming more entangled in the global weave. The flow of people, capital, technology, and goods to, from and within Latin America has intensified. At the same time, a religious resurgence is taking place in the region, a stronger presence of the Protestant Church and an increase of New Age religions have created a more diverse religious scene. At this seminar we intend to explore some of the multiple and complex ways in which economy and religion are weaved together in the lives of Latin Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Relevant questions we hope to address are:

**The productivity of religion and the religion of productivity:** How do religious values and beliefs drive economic activity? And what is the role of religion in shaping people's economic attitudes and behaviour? How are notions of money, value, profit and benefit re-signified in various religious contexts? And how do membership in different religious institutions affect economic behaviour? What kind of labour ideologies and disciplining do different religions promote, and which religious ideologies are being affected or activated by lack of work? And how does different regimes of work (or lack of work) influence Latin Americans religious life?

**A changing world; neoliberal global economics and new religious aspirations and ideologies:** How do new forms of religiosity affect economic practices? And how, in the age of globalized capital, do institutionalized religions and American evangelism interact with global capital in different contexts? Have new regimes of labour, stemming from the neoliberal globalized economy, created new forms of religiosity? Can transnational religious institutions be compared to transnational corporations when it comes to their internal organization and management-structure?

Our seminar will be an arena for the exchange of theories and empirical cases dealing with a topic that has a long history in the study of Latin America. However, what we will add is contemporaneity as we situate the question of religion and economy within the globalized context and investigate the transformation of Latin America in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.