



Universiteit Leiden

We have never been secular. Towards a history of religious coping strategies during pandemics

Applicants

Eligible proposals must have at least two applicants from Humanities, preferably with an interdisciplinary approach.

Supervisor Name	Discipline
Dr P.W. (Paul) van Trigt	Social History / Disability Studies, Institute for History
Dr T.E.M. (Tom-Eric) Krijger	Cultural History of Christianity, LUCSoR / LIAS

Project description

Provide a brief description of the project (max. 300 words)

In the debates about the question of how to handle the Covid-19 pandemic religious coping strategies barely receive attention. However, in some fierce debates religion does play a remarkable role. Research about so-called social influencers for instance shows how their critical stance towards strict government measures is inspired by spiritual gurus. This project aims to understand religious coping strategies from a humanities perspective and to enrich the current (scientific) approaches to the pandemic in light of the lasting significance of religion both in the Netherlands and globally.

Theoretically the project builds on the anthropology of ethics, a research tradition that has enabled scholars to articulate the productive potential of vulnerability, disease, and uncertainty for believers. Empirically the project will draw on historical data and will compare the Covid-19 pandemic with the Spanish flu pandemic in 1918-1920.

It consists of two closely related subprojects with a (pragmatic) focus on Dutch Christianity:

1. From a historical-ideological perspective, subproject 1 deals with the social responsibility of religious organisations. It does so by focusing on interpretations of pandemics within church life and (contested) meanings attached to group rituals like churchgoing, days of national prayer, and processions, in particular vis-à-vis government measures and in the context of public debate. Sources to be studied range from sermons and public statements of religious professionals, to minutes of municipal and church councils in a selected number of local cases, to press coverage.
2. From a historical-anthropological point of view, subproject 2 centres on the individual responsibility of religious people towards their God, their neighbours, and society at large by investigating the various ways in which they have tried to cope with the pandemics in their personal lives and quotidian life. In this regard, sources include egodocuments like diaries and biographies, and, relating to the current Covid-19 pandemic, interviews.

Research Trainee Profile

Each proposal requests two Research Trainees. Describe the general tasks of the research trainees, how these tasks are academically challenging to the research trainees, whether they need any preliminary knowledge (regarding the topic and/or research methods) and which skills the research trainees should have. Also specify which type of students are eligible to apply (3rd year Ba, Ma, ResMa).

- The research trainees should be acquainted with historical methodologies and eager to explore the religious, social, and political history of the Netherlands since the early twentieth century. Affinity with interdisciplinary research is recommended. As the trainees are supposed to conduct in-depth research in a limited amount of archives and several digital databases (subproject 1) and oral history interviews (subproject 2), preliminary experience with this kind of research is an asset.
- Moreover, the trainees have the ability to work both independently and in cooperation with others.
- The trainees, who should be able to communicate in both Dutch and English, will write a blog post for an international audience and a book chapter with their supervisors. Together with their supervisors they will be involved in the organisation of an interdisciplinary workshop.
- In our project, we will tailor the envisioned tasks to the trainee's capabilities and plans for the future. Within our project they will have the opportunity to explore various aspects of academic life: writing for different audiences, interdisciplinary exchange, working on grant proposals (since both supervisors will use this project to strengthen grant proposals they are working on).
- Third-year bachelor and (research) master students in History and Religious Studies are invited to apply.

Collaboration

If applicable: Describe how your research improves collaboration and cross-pollination between the disciplines involved (max. 300 words)

The project will be a cross-centre collaboration, involving the research programme Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence 1350-2000 at the Institute for History, where Paul van Trigt is working as a university lecturer and postdoctoral researcher, and the School of Religious Studies (LUCSoR) at the Leiden Institute for Area Studies, where Tom-Eric Krijger is employed as an assistant professor. The applicants have complementary knowledge and expertise, Van Trigt in the (social) history of health and disability and Krijger in the (political) history of religion, and will apply in the project anthropological theory and different historical methods, varying from the analysis of digital data to oral history interviews. If possible, the supervisors intend to use the project as the basis of a new elective course on the history of pandemics that will be open to both MA History and MA Religious Studies students.

The project specifically aims to contribute from a humanities perspective to the Leiden Delft Erasmus (LDE) alliance and more in particular the Medical Delta Cluster of Delft University of Technology, Leiden University, Erasmus University Rotterdam, the LUMC, the Erasmus MC, and four universities of applied sciences in South Holland. It does so by analysing and historicising the social effects of large-scale outbreaks of infectious diseases on the well-being of religious people. In addition, the project will put present-day judicial and public discussions about the social responsibility of religiously inspired citizens into historical perspective. The scientific contribution this project entails will enrich the existing LDE Health expertise and opens up new collaborations such as already explored by the applicants with colleagues from the Leiden anthropology department. An interdisciplinary workshop will be organized under the LDE umbrella, following up the invitation of the professors Wim van der Doel and Andrea Evers to contribute from a humanities perspective to the LDE alliance.

Deliverables

Enumerate intended project results: papers, research proposals or otherwise. (max 200 words)

* Development of a project blog, on which the trainees and supervisors will share their findings; blogposts will if possible be cross-posted on well-read blogs such as the Leiden Anthropology Blog;

- * Co-written book chapters in the 2021 *Jaarboek voor de geschiedenis van het Nederlands protestantisme na 1800*, of which the two supervisors will be editors-in-chief. In the 2021 *Jaarboek*, the outcomes of both subprojects will be integrated into a single synthesis;
- * Interdisciplinary Workshop in June 2021;
- * This project will strengthen grant applications (VIDI and smaller grants) of the two supervisors.

Planning

Provide a breakdown of the project into phases with tentative timing (max 150 words)

	<i>Months 1-2</i>	<i>Months 3-4</i>	<i>Month 5-7</i>
Trainee 1	Literature review, selection historical sources, organizing workshop	Analysing sources, organizing workshop	Writing paper and blog, organizing workshop
Trainee 2	Literature review, preparation interviews, organizing workshop	Taking and analysing interviews, organizing workshop	Writing paper and blog, organizing workshop

Student Application

Provide information on how to apply e.g. required documents for application (resume, motivation letter etc.) and an email address where student applications should be sent to.

Interested students are encouraged to apply with a motivation letter in which they elaborate on the way in which they would like to execute their responsibilities as research trainees, a short CV, and the name and contact details of one referee. Applications have to be submitted to t.e.m.krijger@hum.leidenuniv.nl and p.w.van.trigt@hum.leidenuniv.nl.