



RESEARCH SEMINAR
SRII, Wednesday,
May 14, 2025, 14:00-16:00

Zeynep Kuyumcu (University of Gothenburg)

Queer Muslim Resilience in an Illiberal Populist and Religious Authoritarian Turkey

Anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ+ movements are among the most visible manifestations of today's illiberal populism. The growing anti-gender and anti-LGBTIQ+ political rhetoric, embraced by segments of the public and fostered by religious and political figures in Türkiye, affects not only LGBTIQ+ individuals but also diverse groups such as migrants, non-Turkish citizens, women, and non-Muslim groups. In this context, LGBTIQ+ Muslims—excluded by many Muslim religious groups and often alienated by heavily secular LGBTIQ+ communities—face two-faceted hegemonies. Simultaneously, they construct their own spiritual, sexual, and religious understandings. This talk invites a discussion on understanding illiberal populism in Türkiye by focusing on LGBTIQ+ Muslims' self-making subjectivities of intimacy, sexuality, and spirituality, as well as the resilience strategies they develop against religious authoritarianism and illiberal populism.

Stephanos Efthymiadis (Open University of Cyprus)

The Last Period of Hagia Sophia as a Christian monument

Just as Constantine the Great played in Byzantium the role of *rex perpetuus*, Hagia Sophia was an *ecclesia perpetua*, the foundation stone and icon of an empire that would live for as long as its church existed and would die with its sacrilege and collapse. In the days following the fall of Constantinople in 1204 its conventional picture changed greatly as it knew its first conversion into a papal church. When, in 1261, Constantinople was recaptured by the Byzantines, the Great Church was adjusted to a new set of political and ecclesiastical circumstances. On December 12, 1452, on the eve of the Ottoman capture of the city, its status as a papal church was restored when the last Byzantine emperor proclaimed the Union of Churches within its altar. This was a short-lived second conversion that it will be shortly superseded by Hagia Sophia's conversion into a mosque. New legends will then rise to accommodate a formerly iconic Christian monument to an Islamic context. This talk invites for a discussion of the layers of meaning that Hagia Sophia acquired in its last centuries as a Christian church.