International Workshop

CAPITALIST PATHOLOGIES, RELIGION, AND AUTHORITARIANISM:

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

Friday, 26 June 2026 | Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona
Amphitheatre: Mercè Rodoreda

This workshop examines the intersection between capitalist transformations, religion, authoritarianism in contemporary Europe. Building on influential contributions in the sociology and political theory of religion—such as those by Rogers Brubaker, Olivier Roy, and Christian Joppke—as well as critical diagnoses of late modernity like Zygmunt Bauman's concept of retrotopia and Margaret Atwood's notion of ustopia—the inseparable entanglement of utopian and dystopian imaginaries—the workshop situates Orthodox Christianity within broader debates on populism, nationalism, and the crisis of liberal democracy.

Recent scholarship has highlighted how processes of neoliberal restructuring, social dislocation, and cultural backlash contribute to the rise of authoritarian and exclusionary politics. At the same time, religion—far from disappearing—has re-emerged as a key symbolic and institutional resource in these dynamics. The combined lenses of retrotopia and ustopia allow us to better grasp how nostalgic visions of an idealized past coexist with dystopian anxieties about moral decline, and how both are mobilized within contemporary religious and political discourses.

Yet the specificity of Orthodox contexts—its theological traditions, church-state relations, and historical entanglements with nation-building—remains insufficiently analyzed. The workshop addresses relatively underexplored dimensions such as the role of Orthodoxy among diasporic communities and its relevance for political mobilization across borders. It also brings into focus the role of the body, gender norms, and sexuality in the articulation of religiously inflected nationalist and authoritarian imaginaries. Moral discourses around family, reproduction, masculinity, and femininity are examined as central mechanisms in far-right mobilization.

By placing Orthodox contexts in a comparative framework alongside Catholic and Protestant settings, the workshop explores how distinct ecclesiological structures, moral doctrines, and institutional configurations shape different patterns of engagement with populism, nationalism, and extremist movements. Through single and comparative case studies, it aims to contribute to a more fine-grained and theoretically grounded understanding of religion's role in contemporary authoritarian politics in Europe and beyond.

Scientific & Organizing Committee:
Ana Raluca Alecu, Lavinia Stan, Danilo Burzanovici, Mar Griera, Andrei Miriou, Camil Ungureanu, Mihaela Vancea, Alina Mierlus.

In **collaboration with:** REDIR (Ayuda RED2024-153994-T financiada por MICIU/AEI/10.13039/501100011033; coord. Mar Griera), SNSPA, la Direcció General d'Afers Religiosos de la Generalitat de Catalunya a través de la línia d'ajuts RELIG 25 – 26 (coord. Camil Ungureanu), and Proyecto PID2022-142130NB-I00 financed by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 / y FEDER, UE (coord. Camil Ungureanu and Miguel Beistegui)

In collaboration with:

REDIR Red de estudios sobre diversidad religiosa | Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative | Generalitat de Catalunya | Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades | Agencia Estatal de Investigación

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09:30-09:35 Welcome & Opening Remarks
Camil Ungureanu, Universitat Pompeu Fabra & **Alina Mierluș,** Autonomous University of Barcelona
Mar Griera, Autonomous University of Barcelona

09:35-10:25 Russia, Eurasianism, and the New Imperial Orthodoxy
Sofia Tipaldou, Pantheion University, Greece
Moderates: **Irina Ciornei,** Autonomous University of Barcelona

10:25-11:25 KEYNOTE
Lavinia Stan, European Research Area (ERA) Chair, Universitatea Lucian Blaga Sibiu, România Victor Dahdaleh Chair in Democracy and Governance St. Francis Xavier University, Canada, "Uncivil Church: the case of Romania"
Moderates: **Camil Ungureanu**, Universitat Pompeu Fabra

11:25-11:40 Coffee Break

11:40-12:30 Authoritarian Pathologies and the New Sovereignist Right: Examining the EU-discourses of ACT, SOS, and POT
Ana Raluca Alecu, National University of Political and Administrative Studies, Romania

12:30-13:20 Church, power and misogyny: barriers to sex trafficking and exploitation in Romania
Radu Cinpoes, Kingston University, UK
Moderates: **Danilo Burzanovic**, Autonomous University of Barcelona.

13:20-15:00 Lunch break

15:00-15.50 Retrotopia, Religion, and Authoritarian Imaginaries: a Personal Reflection
Andrei Miroiu, Institute for Political Science and International Relations, Romanian Academy, Romania

15:50-16:40 The Ideological Utopian Foundations of Alternative Medicine in the Serbian Orthodox Church
Danilo Burzanovic, Autonomous University of Barcelona, Spain.

16:40-17:30 Strong Women, Authoritarianism, and Orthodoxy in Romania and the Romanian Diaspora
Camil Ungureanu, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain
Moderates: **Ana Raluca Alecu**, National University of Political and Administrative Studies, Romania

17:30-18:30 Roundtable: Comparative Remarks, Authoritarian Pathologies, Ustopias, and Capitalism
Lavinia Stan, Mar Griera (Autonomous University of Barcelona), **Joseba García Martín** (University of the Basque Country), **Avi Astor** (Autonomous University of Barcelona), **Camil Ungureanu** (Universitat Pompeu Fabra)

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