

IN THIS EDITION

NEWS FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
ONCE MORE: A NEW WEBSITE  
ONLINE MODULES AVAILABLE !  
MASTERCLASS WITH JOHN D CAPUTO  
MEMBERSHIP FEES - A REMINDER  
AGENDA PROMOTION COMMITTEE - IMPORTANT  
UPCOMING EVENTS  
COLOFON

PostGradPostGradPostGradPostGradPostGradPostGrad



NEWS FROM THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

When more than twenty-five years ago I worked on my PhD at Durham University, England, I used to lock myself up in my own private cave - a dusty room filled with physical books, saw no daylight, and had only minimal contact with the academic world around me except by regular mail. There were no email facilities, no internet and no VUnet IDs. And, to be honest, that's still the way I like to carry out my research. *But these days are over now.* Research takes place in an open community, with all the tools easily accessible wherever you are and whenever you like. The Graduate School of Theology and Religious Studies aims to further explore this new reality by developing new online courses, stimulating blended learning, and so on. An exciting experience! We want to provide our PhD candidates with excellent research facilities, in close contact with fellow researchers all over the world.



The global context in which we work is already visible in the large diversity of countries where our current PhD students come from: Armenia, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, China, Colombia, Croatia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Ghana, and Greece, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Myanmar, Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, and Tanzania, United Kingdom, United States of America, Zambia, and undoubtedly some other countries. Many of these students have their residence in the Amsterdam area or elsewhere in the Netherlands, but the large majority are located in their home countries, in their own communities, combining high-level academic work with teaching jobs at universities, seminaries and colleges, or with a pastoral ministry, social work, and other services "seeking the welfare of the city" (the biblical equivalent of what we nowadays call *valorisation*).

The Graduate School is probably the most invisible part of our faculty. But without it there probably would not be a Faculty of Theology at all: this is where it all happens (at least that is what I like to think). That's why we invest in training and supervision projects. That's why we invest heavily in IT facilities, in online learning and e-learning. We hope you'll appreciate our efforts to make all this work!

Dr Arie W Zwiep  
Director Graduate School

#### ONCE MORE: A NEW WEBSITE

The website of the [Graduate School](#) has recently been restyled and, we hope, has become more accessible. Please take a look at it. We hope you like it! If you have any questions, comments or recommendations, please let our office know ([grad.school.the@vu.nl](mailto:grad.school.the@vu.nl)).

#### ONLINE MODULES AVAILABLE

As part of the training and supervision programme some new online courses have been launched recently. Leon van den Broeke and his team have developed (and are still developing) a series of online courses which - we hope - will enable PhD students to meet the requirements of our programme in a suitable way. There is a special email address to register for these courses and to ask any questions about it: [online-courses.grad.school.the@vu.nl](mailto:online-courses.grad.school.the@vu.nl). Further information will be found on the website of the Graduate School under [Training Programme](#).



#### MASTERCLASS WITH JOHN CAPUTO: CALL FOR PAPERS

We are happy to announce a masterclass conducted by Prof. John D. Caputo on 27 October 2017, organised by Prof. Willie van der Merwe and his team. Here you will find the call for papers.



27 October 2017, 10:30-12:30  
(arrival from 10:00)  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,  
Main Building,  
room 2E-31 (Senaatszaal)

John D. Caputo is the Thomas J. Watson Professor of Religion Emeritus at Syracuse University, where he taught from 2004-2011, and the David R. Cook Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Villanova University, where he taught from 1968-2004.

Prof. Caputo, known to his friends as "Jack," is a hybrid philosopher/theologian who works in the area of radical theology. He has spearheaded a notion he calls "weak theology," by which he means a "poetics" of the "event" that is harboured in the name (of) God, or that "insists" in the name (of) "God," a notion that depends upon a reworking of the notions of event in Derrida to theological ends.

In his major works he has argued that interpretation goes all the way down (*Radical Hermeneutics*, 1987), that Derrida is a thinker to be reckoned with by theology (*The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*, 1997), that theology is best served by getting over its love affair with power and authority and embracing what Caputo calls, taking a phrase from St. Paul, *The Weakness of God: A Theology of the Event* (2006). In *The Insistence of God: A Theology of Perhaps* (2013) he argues that God does not exist, God insists, and that God's existence depends upon us.

Prof. Caputo's recent work includes *Hoping Against Hope: Confessions of a Postmodern Pilgrim* (2015), a personal and intellectual autobiography, with a preface by Pete Rollins, which has been translated into Dutch (to be presented at a symposium on and with Caputo later the day).

During this masterclass, graduate students will be invited to present from their own research. Prof. Caputo will then respond to their presentations.

Graduate students from all disciplines in theology at the Vrije Universiteit and elsewhere are invited to submit proposals for 10-15 minute papers. Proposals should include a title and a 300-word description of the paper. Papers for inclusion in the program will be selected on the basis of this description. VU students may be preferred. Papers engaging with (aspects of) Caputo's work may also receive preference. Proposals also should include the name of the author, the author's academic affiliation and e-mail address. Proposals are due by 10 October 2017 and should be sent by email to Prof. Willie van der Merwe ([w.l.vander.merwe@vu.nl](mailto:w.l.vander.merwe@vu.nl)) and Marius van Hoogstraten ([marius.hoogstraten@uni-hamburg.de](mailto:marius.hoogstraten@uni-hamburg.de)) with the subject line, "Caputo Masterclass Submission." Successful submissions will be contacted by 15 October.

Participants in the masterclass are also encouraged to attend the symposium "The Existence of God: On The Very Idea of Radical Theology," 13:00 -17:30, PThU Filmzaal, Main Building, VU.

#### MEMBERSHIP FEES – A REMINDER

According to the [VU doctorate regulations](#) which took effect on 1 September 2015, all PhD candidates are members of a Graduate School. For each PhD-candidate a team of supervisors is appointed that is accountable to the Graduate School of Theology. These developments – stronger supervision teams, free PhD-courses, and better overall quality assurance – require us to charge a [fee for membership](#) in the Graduate School. For the academic year 2017/18, the fee is € 500.

Apart from the yearly fee, you can also purchase a VUnet ID, which gives you full access to our e-library facilities (€ 524 per year). See the website for more information (under [fees](#)). If your VUnet expires, you will be notified in advance. *Please revalidate your VUnet ID in time.*

A gentle reminder! Please note that as from 1 September 2018 *all registered PhD students will have to pay the yearly membership fee*, including candidates who started before 1 April 2015. This, to be sure, has been communicated in an email d.d. 14 July 2016 and can be found also on our website. But if – despite all our efforts to reach you – you missed this email-communication for some reason, please let us know.



#### AGENDA PROMOTION COMMITTEE – IMPORTANT

The agenda on the website announces promotions and inaugurations to come. It also contains the dates the Doctorate Board (promotion committee) convenes. Please note (both candidates

and supervisors!) that (completed) research proposals must be turned in *two weeks in advance*, and should be turned in to the Director of the Graduate School (AWZ), not to the Dean of Research (BJLP). Research proposals that come in later will be scheduled for the next session of the promotion committee. Occasionally this may also be the case when there are too many research proposals to be given adequate attention. All proposals should have been presented to one of our research groups before submission to the Doctorate Board (including research proposals that have been prepared in the online course of Research Design).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

The agenda on the website of the Graduate School shows upcoming events, such as PhD ceremonies, seminars, meetings of the Doctorate Board and PhD committee, and so on. For details and more activities, consult also the agenda on the homepage of the [Faculty of Theology](#).

## COLOFON

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