

## HS 2013: Theory and Method Workshops

The Institute of Advanced Study in the Social Sciences and the Humanities ([IASH](#)), University of Bern, facilitates various types of courses for advanced MA, doctoral and postdoctoral students that are conceptualised and organised by members of its Graduate School, alone or in collaboration with other institutes in Berne or doctoral programmes at other Swiss universities. Further information can be found on the IASH website: [www.iash.unibe.ch](http://www.iash.unibe.ch).

### Call for Participation

#### **Working with *A Secular Age* – Reflections on the Applicability of Charles Taylor's Conception of the Secular**

*Dates: October 5; December 7*

*Chair: [Prof. Dr. Reinhard Schulze](#) & [Florian Zemmin](#), MA (University of Bern)*

**Target group:** Advanced MA students, doctoral and postdoctoral scholars. ECTS: 3

#### **Description**

*Secularity:* Hardly has there ever been a concept that seemed so self-evident in both the academic discourse and the (Western European) social imaginary. Yet (and probably for the very reason of its formerly alleged self-evidence), since the mid-1990s, 'secularity' has become increasingly questioned and deconstructed. In the many-voiced debate about secularity, one contribution clearly stands out: Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*, published in 2007.

Since then, the Canadian philosopher's work has been generating a lively discussion and an ever-growing number of reviews, anthologies, and conferences. While some enthusiastically welcome *A Secular Age* as a breakthrough in the ongoing reconfiguration of secularity, others point to certain weaknesses and limitations of Taylor's work. As important and stimulating the existing criticism and remarks are, they tend to remain on a rather general level.

In this workshop, we want to ask more specifically how *A Secular Age* can be put to work: How do its findings and insights actually make a difference for concrete research projects? After familiarizing ourselves with Taylor's main ideas and the most significant criticism they have generated, participants will connect *A Secular Age* to their current research projects.

#### **Format and goals of the workshop**

##### Saturday, October 5

Through a close reading of the main parts of *A Secular Age*, we will familiarize ourselves with Taylor's main theses.

This will be complemented by short presentations (5 minutes) by participants on individual chapters of *A Secular Age* and selected comments. Thereby, we'll be gaining first insights in the potentials and limits of

Charles Taylor's conception of the secular.

The compulsory reading and additional texts to be distributed among participants will be made available after registration.

### Saturday, December 7

In the second session, participants will present and discuss their own research projects, which in one way or another build upon a theoretical aspect or a phenomenological finding brought forward by Taylor. The explicit reference to *A Secular Age* is a must; a draft version to be approved of is to be handed in by November 25.

## **Application**

As there is a minimum of participants necessary for the course to be held, please enroll as early as possible with Florian Zemmin: [florian.zemmin@iash.unibe.ch](mailto:florian.zemmin@iash.unibe.ch)  
In any case, the final date for enrollment is September 15.

## **Related events – save the dates!**

The workshop is part of a larger series of events on secularity:

### *a) Workshop*

On November 28/29, [Prof. Dr. Volkhard Krech](#) (University of Bochum) gives a lecture on 'secularity' and accompanies a workshop in which PhD students of the IASH present their research projects.

### *b) International and interdisciplinary conference and book project*

On March 6-8, 2014, we hold an international conference on *A Secular Age* – where selected papers from this workshop will be presented as well. Confirmed speakers so far are: [Jonathan van Antwerpen](#) (SSRC, New York) and [Akeel Bilgrami](#) (Columbia University).

We also plan the publication of selected papers. More details to follow soon.

For any questions on these events, please also contact [florian.zemmin@iash.unibe.ch](mailto:florian.zemmin@iash.unibe.ch).