

# SOS2700 – Religious fundamentalism, extremism and violence

## Course content

This course provides a theoretical and empirical introduction to religion as a sociological phenomenon, religious fundamentalism, extremism, and violence. We will discuss theoretical perspectives, which will be combined with current debates and research on these issues.

The course provides knowledge and insight into the sociological study of religion and religious extremism and religious violence. Which aspects of all world religions can be used to justify the use of violence? How do extreme groups recruit new participants? Are the participants ideologically convinced before they join or is ideological conviction a result of participation? What do we actually know about radicalization processes? How do sectarian conflicts erupt? What are the similarities and differences in stereotypical portrayals of religious minority groups, and how is race, culture and difference linked to islamophobia and antisemitism? And which role do women typically have in extremist religious groups? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in this course.

In order to understand religious fundamentalism, extremism and violence, we will discuss different perspectives that have been used in empirical studies: social psychology, cultural analysis, and social movements.

This course will provide useful knowledge and skills for people who work in education, research, the media, public administration, the health and social services, business, politics, and international affairs.

## Learning outcomes

### Knowledge

The course will provide:

- Key sociological concepts and theories used in the study of religion and religious extremism
- Analytical perspectives in explanations of fundamentalism, religious extremism and violence
- Empirical knowledge of different extreme religious movements around the world

### Skills

You will develop the skills to:

- Use relevant concepts, theories and empirical knowledge in analyses of religion
- Provide a critical analysis of different theories in the study of extreme religious movements
- Provide a critical analysis of the empirical studies included in the syllabus
- Discuss and write such analyses, following the basic rules of social scientific inquiry

**Competences**

- Think analytically about religious phenomena
- The ability to distinguish between academic knowledge based on empirical studies versus personal perceptions
- Respect for ethical considerations involved in scientific work in general and sociological studies of religion in particular