

## **Seminar Series: Populism and Religion**

### **Spring 2022 — online**

#### **Looking at populist rhetoric from a ‘Biblical’ point of view**

**Maria Armida Nicolaci**

**February 2, 16h15-18h00**

**Zoom:** <https://lu-se.zoom.us/j/67579862136>

Meeting ID: 675 7986 2136

Some so-called ‘tribal’ or premodern traits of modern populisms prompt us to evaluate populist rhetoric in light of the way in which the Christian Bible represents the identity of the ‘people of God’. Prophetic speech, especially, is depicted as a relentless fight against the various fetishes of the “people of God” and its idolatrous absolutization – as if it was a monolithic, ahistorical, untouchable, and abstract entity. Even the Scriptures, therefore, display a dynamics of identity comparable to the morphologies of some populisms. A glimpse at the ways in which the Christian Bible also unveils and challenges similar dynamics can provide useful insight for elaborating a non-idolatrous and, indeed, inclusive and open notion of a ‘people’.

**Marida Nicolaci** is Professor of New Testament Exegesis at the Theological Faculty of Sicily. Her research focuses on Johannine literature, Catholic epistles, the origins of Christianity, and Biblical Hermeneutics. Among her recent publications are: ‘The “People of God” and its Idols in “The One and the Other Testament”’: How Sacred Scripture Challenges Populist Rhetoric’ (2019); ‘Le “parole di Dio” nella Chiesa. Tradizione in tensione’ (2019); and ‘Oltre i muri. Identità e differenza come dono’ (2021).

#### **Populism in the Buddhist World**

**Charlie Carstens**

**April 13, 16h15-18h00**

**Zoom:** <https://lu-se.zoom.us/j/67579862136>

Meeting ID: 675 7986 2136

In the wake of its meteoric rise in public and scholarly circles, “populism” has accumulated an expansive—and at times dizzying—array of meanings, conceptualizations, and applications. We have become relatively comfortable with discussing this phenomenon in present-day, historically Christian settings (e.g., Europe, North America). But how tethered is populism to this setting? This presentation will consider the viability and analytical value of populism for three case studies from the pre-modern Buddhist world. Our aim is to draw upon this disparate cultural setting both to probe the limits of populism and to draw attention to its historical situatedness.

**Charlie Carstens** is a Ph.D. candidate in the study of religion at Harvard University. He holds a Masters of Theological Studies from Harvard Divinity School and a BA in Economics from Carleton College. His dissertation investigates theories and practices of power expressed through historical, poetic, administrative, and ritual texts of pre-colonial Burma. His research interests include historiography, governance, secularism, aesthetics, identity, and ethics.

# Apocalyptic Hope and Political Defeatism

Jayne Svenungsson

May 11, 16h15-18h00

Zoom: <https://lu-se.zoom.us/j/67579862136>

Meeting ID: 675 7986 2136

The increased presence of apocalyptic motifs in populist discourses have attracted large scholarly interest in recent years. This seminar will focus on how these tendencies are mirrored within contemporary political-theological thinking. While some political theologians depict apocalypticism as a liberating or progressive force, others see it as a dangerous or reactive phenomenon. Departing from the premise that apocalypticism *per se* is neither nor, the seminar will explore and ponder the potential promises as well as perils related to the notion of apocalyptic hope.

**Jayne Svenungsson** is Professor of Systematic Theology at the Lund University. Her research focuses on political theology and philosophy of history. Among her most recent publications are 'Radical Incarnation: The Dangers and Promises of Christian Universalism in the Wake of Badiou's *Saint Paul*' (2021), and 'Secularization' in *Bloomsbury History: Theory and Method* (2021).

## About the Seminar Series

These seminars on populism and Christianity focus on the theoretical, philosophical and theological aspects of populism. The worldview and the conception of politics — political community, political processes and political decision-making — are typically issues that characterise populist thought. One fundamental conviction is that precisely this kind of questions is necessary to deal with if we want to deepen the dialogue about how society is organised beyond straightforward descriptions and explanations of certain facts. Descriptions and certain facts cannot exclusively account for all the questions society constantly poses, let alone the answers.

Both senior and junior scholars, as well as doctoral students and beginners are welcome to the seminar. In order to reach as many as possible, the main language is English, but in the future occasional seminars in Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, French or German, are not precluded, if that is appropriate.