

*UNIVERSITY OF BERN*

# TO VACCINATE OR NOT?

*Historical, Religious, and Social Aspects of  
Vaccination Hesitancy*

LECTURE SERIES AND GRADUATE SEMINAR  
FALL / WINTER 2021



# LECTURE SERIES AND GRADUATE SEMINAR

In the last weeks of 2020, the forthcoming distribution of a vaccine against COVID-19 was hailed in various media as “the light at the end of the tunnel.” In parallel, however, pressure mounted from several groups opposing the vaccination campaigns organized by numerous governments across the world. The discovery of modern vaccination in the late 18th century is regarded well beyond the medical profession as a great human achievement that was able to save millions of lives. And yet, skepticism and distrust toward vaccines and the sheer refusal of inoculation pose major questions for science and for societies as a whole. From its beginning, the practice of vaccination sparked heated debates on its safety, its efficacy, and the right of governments to coerce their citizens to undergo a medical procedure. Hesitancy against vaccination draws on medical, political, philosophical, and religious discourses and avails itself of the media technologies of its time. Using these resources, it can construct and spread false narratives while, at the same time, providing a sense of cohesion. Accordingly, to study these (re)actions and understand them against the background of global and local realities, we need to mobilize the knowledge and competences of numerous disciplines.

The lecture series and seminar, “To Vaccinate or Not? Historical, Religious, and Social Aspects of Vaccination Hesitancy” allows graduate students to benefit from the insights provided by international experts from different fields of research, and to engage in in-depth discussions of the various topics approached throughout the semester in a highly interdisciplinary setting.

## ORGANIZERS

Prof. Dr. Thomas Abel, Institute for Social and Preventive Medicine

Prof. Dr. Andrea Rota, Institute for the Science of Religion

Prof. Dr. Hubert Steinke, Institute for the History of Medicine

Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities

Bern Graduate School for Health Sciences

Swiss School of Public Health



# LECTURE SERIES PROGRAM

Tuesday, October 5, 16:15–18:00, VonRoll – Room 002

**Prof. Dr. Eberhard Wolff, University of Zurich and University of Basel**

*Zugänge zum “Sich-nicht-impfen-lassen” und anderen Impfkulturen. Eine historische Fallstudie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert mit Ausblicken auf die Gegenwart*

**Public Lecture**, Tuesday, October 19, 18:30–20:00, UniS – Room S 003

**Prof. Dr. Robert D. Johnston, University of Illinois at Chicago**

*Pox, Populism, and Politics: Three Centuries of American Vaccination Controversies*

Tuesday, November 2, 16:15–18:00, VonRoll – Room 002

**Prof. Dr. Philip Tarr, University of Basel**

*Vaccination Hesitancy and Complementary Medicine*

**Public Lecture**, Tuesday, November 16, 18:30–20:00, UniS – Room S 003

**Prof. Dr. Andrea Kitta, East Carolina University**

*God is My Vaccine: Religious Belief and COVID in the United States*

**Public Lecture**, Tuesday, November 30, 18:30–20:00, UniS – Room S 003

**Dr. Katharina Paul, University of Vienna**

*Der (Stellen-)Wert von Impfungen: Politik, Wissenschaft, und Öffentlichkeit*

Tuesday, December 14, 16:15–18:00, VonRoll – Room 002

**Dr. Mike Denl, University of Cape Town and University of Geneva**

*Social-Cultural Determinants of Vaccinations: An Assessment*

# GRADUATE SEMINAR

In addition to the Lecture Series, this course includes 8 Graduate Seminar meetings that will take place on Tuesday in Room 002, Uni Von Roll, from 16:15 to 17:45, on the following dates:

21 September; 28 September; 12 October; 27 October; 9 November;  
23 November; 7 December; 21 December

The languages of the Graduate Seminar are English and German

The participation to the Lecture Series is an integral part of the Graduate Seminar

## ECTS

For students of the MA-Program *Religion in globaler Gegenwart*: 3 ECTS

For Ph.D. students of the Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities: 3 ECTS

For Ph.D. students of the Graduate School for Health Sciences: 3 ECTS

Included in the 3 ECTS are:

- the attendance to the lecture series and the meetings of the graduate seminar
- a preparation time before each meeting
- a presentation/written assignment.

## CONTACT

You can register for the lecture series and graduate seminar by sending an email to

Prof. Dr. Andrea Rota, [andrea.rota@relwi.unibe.ch](mailto:andrea.rota@relwi.unibe.ch)

Melissa Solothurnmann, [melissa.solothurnmann@students.unibe.ch](mailto:melissa.solothurnmann@students.unibe.ch)

Please address your questions at the same addresses.