

## **“Thou Shalt Not Vaccinate?” Historical, Social, and Religious Aspects of Vaccination Hesitancy**

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### **Projektbeschreibung**

In the last week 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 are not new phenomena. 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.