**Course description**

The history of the main religious movement which constituted the overall background for medieval and early modern Europe that of Christianity is told in a very similar manner. Thus Christianity originated in the Near East, only in order that passing through the Greek-speaking world it may become the par excellence religion of Western Europe. In this drama of European history the subsequent centres are seen in a strong light, while we perceive only some dim contours of the peripheries. (As a protest against this story a certain counterpart history of this is told e.g. in Russia - the ‘Third Rome”.)

This is a story often told with strong teleological connotations. However, twentieth century scholarship gathered together a vast amount of new information about the so-called peripheries, to the effect of enabling a new view on the late antique and early medieval world. In this new perspective the oikumene, that is, a world of cultural continuity, stretches from the Atlantic coast as far as to Western India, and it can accommodate the multiplicity of successive centres in space and time in a more appreciative way. Not only will Europe become on this view two-centred around the Old and New "Rome", that is to say, Rome and Constantinople, but the great archaic cultures will also yield distinct entities within the greater unity, radiating from their own centres: the Graeco-Coptic Egypt with Alexandria and later Cairo, the Greco-Syriac Orient with Antioch, Edessa, Nisibis, and later Seleucia-Ctesiphon, and last but not least the Holy Land with Jerusalem. The peripheries like the Caucasus, south-western India etc., still play an important role in the cultural history of the oikumene. The emerging view shows ongoing and intense exchanges and interactions within the entire period, showing that spiritual and intellectual influences may not coincide with political importance.

The course certainly does not want to give a new general version of the "entire history", rivalling the old one. Our aim is, quite on the contrary, to show how many new interpretations become possible on the basis of recent progress in scholarship. Thus, a dozen of outstanding international scholars will present their own personal research on diverse topics, like the history of manuscripts, texts, dogmas, philosophical ideas, etc.

Although the period treated is late Antiquity and early Middle Ages, the course will not be deprived of contemporary interests. The traditional view suggests that intellectual life can be real only within the attraction sphere of the current focal points of civilisation and that it gradually looses its relevance as we move farther from them. The translatio imperii / studiorum view, deeply rooted in the subconscious, inspires unrest, inferiority complexes and often unnatural centripetal movements toward the "centres" of our modern world. The timely lesson of our cultural history course will hopefully be that all peoples and cultures have their irreplaceable role in human history and that one can participate in the most important processes without leaving one's original cultural environment.

**Who are we expecting to apply?**   
Those young or middle aged researchers, academics, and university lecturers (assistant professors, associate professors) of the region (or from the West) who are working within some aspects of late antiquity, medieval cultural history or philosophy and desire to get acquainted with the latest developments in the historiographical awareness, the interdisciplinary methods and perspectives, or simply with the current state of the art in the research areas outside their narrower fields. Thus, although the course will offer an in depth analysis of the topics dealt with, it will not require more than a very basic previous knowledge of them. (The bibliography serves as a point of orientation).   
Coming from various Eastern European countries the participants will meet international scholars, intimately familiar and sympathetic to their respective smaller cultures and traditions.   
The course will also provide an excellent opportunity to establish contacts with the prospective young researchers, that is, the Nachwuchs of these fields.

**Teaching methods**   
The course is planned to provide a friendly, relaxed, co-operative atmosphere. While speakers will give four to six talks, there will also be time for two or three tutorials to work together with students on papers prepared by them in advance.

**Requirements**   
Knowledge of ancient languages is not required but it is an asset. Familiarity with the bibliography is required. We encourage applicants to prepare a paper in English (French, German or Italian) in advance on any related topic, for in this way they can gain maximum benefit from the course, for these papers can be discussed with a personal referent in tutorial sessions. (Essays should be no longer than five thousand words.)

**Proposed bibliography**   
The bibliography contains some of those books which played a decisive role in shaping the philosophical and theological language of the oikumene. While this bibliography serves as the supposed prerequisite of the courses, it does not contain the specialised readings which will be provided later. These books are largely available for all prospective participants, either in the vernacular, or at least in English, let alone in the editions of the original versions.

The New Testament (any version)   
Boethius: The Consolation of Philosophy.   
Proclus: The Elements of Theology.   
Pseudo-Dionysius: The Divine Names   
Liber de Causis   
Averroes: The Incoherence of Incoherence (Tahafut al-Tahafut)   
Maimonides: The Guide of the Perplexed   
Joannes Damascenus: On the orthodox faith (De fide orthodoxa) 