

Workshop

Art as Modern Religion

Paul C. Johnson (University of Michigan)

In this workshop we will read and comment on a paper in preparation by Prof. Johnson about the triadic relationship between Rodin, Rilke, and Georg Simmel in the production of the early 20th-century idea of "art as modern religion." This idea included a form of esotericism: that true art carries within it hidden powers of transcendence that act on perceivers with or without their assent. The paper gives attention to both the growth and influence of the notion of art as modern religion, and also to its latent fractures and ultimate demise.

Schedule

10.00-12.30	Introduction and discussion
11.00-11.15	Coffee break
13.00-14.30	Lunch
14.30-16.30	Discussion
15.00-15.15	Coffee break

Paul Christopher Johnson is Professor of History, Afroamerican and African Studies, and the Doctoral Program in Anthropology and History at the University of Michigan. Working between historical and anthropological modes on issues from secrecy to diaspora to diversely mediated forms of agency, Johnson has done long-term fieldwork in Brazil and Honduras, and shorter-term fieldwork in the Bronx and Paris. He is the author of *Secrets, Gossip and Gods: The Transformation of Brazilian Candomblé* (Oxford, 2002), *Diaspora Conversions: Black Carib Religion and the Recovery of Africa* (California, 2007), *Ekklesia: Three Inquiries on Church and State* (Chicago, 2018), with Winnifred Fallers Sullivan and Pamela E. Klassen; and, most recently, *Automatic Religion: Nearhuman Agents of Brazil and France* (Chicago, 2021).

January 28, 2026

**10.00-12.30,
14.30-16.30**

**Big Seminar Room
Hartmannstr. 14,
Building D1, Erlangen**