



IESR

Institut
européen
en sciences
des religions

European Institute of Religious Sciences



Training institute



Resource center



**European observatory
on religion and secularity**

The Institut européen en sciences des religions (IESR) is a center of expertise and advice on current and historical issues involving secularity and religious questions. Formed in 2002 as an institute within the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), its mission is conducted under charter oversight by the Minister for Higher Education and Research.



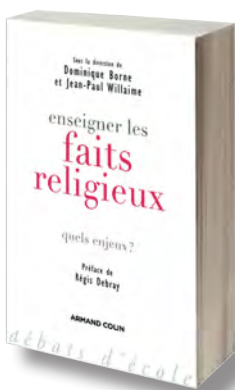
**École Pratique
des Hautes Études**

■ AN INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING ON SECULARITY AND RELIGION

Teaching about religion in school subjects

IESR was created in response to Régis Debray's report in 2002 titled *L'enseignement du fait religieux dans l'école laïque* (Teaching about religion in secular schools), which advocated bringing together the necessary resources to “**match educational methods with scientific research**”.

For this purpose, IESR provides **key support in the provision of teaching about religions in primary and secondary schools**. In collaboration with the French Ministry of National Education, universities and *IUFMs* (teacher training schools), the *Rectorats d'académie*, as well as education inspectorates, IESR organizes **initial and ongoing training programs for National education personnel**. The training programs, which are conducted in a secular framework, assist in adapting teaching methods to varying subjects where religions are discussed (History, Geography, French, Foreign Languages, Philosophy, Social and Economic Sciences, Art class, History of the Arts).



Dealing with issues involving religion in public service and professional life

IESR collaborates with a number of public bodies to carry out its mission. These include government ministries such as Foreign Affairs, Culture, Interior, Justice, and Labor-Employment-Health, as well as State cultural organizations such as the Louvre Museum, *Institut du monde arabe* (IMA), *Musée d'art et d'histoire du judaïsme* (MAHJ), *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, *Musée Guimet*, and *Musée du Quai Branly*.

IESR assists all professionals who work with issues involving religion and secularity, and offers adapted training in this regard. Examples include:

- Medicine and Religion: The Cure Factor (*Hôpital Maison Blanche*),
- The Role of Chaplains at Hospital (*Assistance Publique – Hôpitaux de Paris*),
- Foundations and Practices of Secularity (*École nationale de protection judiciaire de la jeunesse*),
- Analyzing the Religious Behavior of Youth (*École nationale de protection judiciaire de la jeunesse*),
- Stories and Images of Creation (IESR/Louvre Museum/IMA/MAHJ/*Musée du Quai Branly*).

IESR also directs a post-graduate course of studies at the EPHE titled “**Religions and secularity in professional and community life**”, which examines the topic from the socio-educational, political, legal, medico-social and cultural perspectives. This vocational course is offered under the EPHE’s Master degree program in the subject of Religious Sciences and Society, and is open to all professionals requiring initial or ongoing training in dealing with religious issues.



Evening courses and training days

In the framework of the EPHE's continuing education program, IESR organizes **evening courses and day seminars open to the public**. The different approaches offered include:

- Introduction to the great religions – e.g., *Islam: founding texts, law, diversity and practices; Gods and goddesses in Mesopotamia; Holy days of the Talmud and Jewish mysticism; Buddhism, etc.*
- Fundamental texts – e.g., *The Koran; Qumran: The mystery of a site and the Dead Sea Scrolls; Introduction to the Bible; Jeremiah, prophet of doom, etc.*
- Secularity and contemporary issues – e.g., *French "laïcité", European secularity; Case law of the European Court of Human Rights regarding religious freedom, etc.*
- Anthropological approaches – e.g., *Introduction to religious anthropology; Popular rituals and religiousness in the Americas; Deities, rituals and religious spaces in Black Africa, etc.*
- Historical and sociological approaches – e.g., *Religions and citizenship in Antiquity; Jerusalem; Constantinople; Europe and Christianity, etc.*
- Cultural approaches – e.g., *Music and religions; The St John Passion by Johann Sebastian Bach, etc.*
- Philosophy and religions – e.g., *Hannah Arendt and Christianity; Religions and violence; Nietzsche and religion, etc.*

■ **A CENTER OF EXPERTISE AND RESOURCES**

Targeted research

IESR analyzes **how teaching about religions is being implemented in France and Europe** by examining case situations, practices, issues and debates. Studies have covered:

- How educators are trained: Investigations into initial and ongoing training,
- Study of teaching practices in French, History, Philosophy, History of the Arts: Analyzing school curricula and methods,
- Teaching about religions in Europe: Comparative study of situations and developments by country,
- Teaching materials and textbooks.



Research promotion and dissemination

■ IESR draws on ongoing scientific research activity at the EPHE to publicize current projects and disseminate knowledge. It co-organized several conferences, including: *Religion and Politics in Asia* (Paris, 2005); *Enlightenment, Religions and Secularity* (Nancy, 2005); *What Future for Christians in the Orient?* (Paris, 2007); *Religions and Colonization* (Paris, 2007); *Theory of the Evolution and Religions since 1859* (Paris, 2009); *Religions and Sacredness in Revolution since 1789* (Paris, 2011).

■ IESR's website www.iesr.fr provides a digital library to educators: fact sheets on textbooks prepared for school curricula; analyses of curricula; textbook reviews; teaching dossiers.

■ In partnership with various publishers, IESR offers several publications for the teaching profession, including: *History of Islam* (La Documentation française, 2007); *History of Judaism* (La Documentation française, 2008); *History of Christianity* (La Documentation française, 2009); *Teaching about Religions* (Armand Collin, 2007); the collection *Récits primordiaux* (Founding Religious Stories, La Documentation française).

■ IESR also partners with organizations such as IISMM-EHESS (Institute for the study of Islam and Muslim societies), CERI-Sciences Po (Center for international studies and research), and IRIS (Institute of strategic and international relations) to provide jointly organized seminars and training.

■ IESR hosts monthly panel discussions called *Les mercredis de l'IESR*, where latest publications are debated in the presence of authors, with participation by the audience.



■ A EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY ON SECULARITY AND RELIGION

■ IESR has put in place a European network to study and compare **developments in legislation and public practices involving religion within Europe**, with an emphasis on teaching and education. Through this network (coordinated by Jean-Paul Willaime), IESR **participated in the three-year multilateral research program on Religion and Education in Europe, known as the REDCo project**, which associated universities in eight countries (Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Russia, Spain and the UK) over 2006-2009. Research findings for France were published in *L'école, les jeunes et la religion*, eds. J.-P. Willaime and C. Béraud (Bayard, Paris, 2009). These findings were also detailed by country in the many volumes of the collection, *Religious Diversity and Education in Europe* (Waxmann, Münster).

■ IESR's European network convenes every two years by organizing study days to compare various systems and models represented in Europe, as well as in Quebec.



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