

# CULTURAL THEORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY, AND THE STUDY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY

Methodological Intensive Seminar Given by

**Prof. Benjamin H. Dunning** (Fordham University)

**May 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2014, 9:00 – 12:00, Nobelparken, Building 1451/3  
Aarhus University, Denmark**



This seminar will explore the potential payoffs and perils of engaging contemporary critical theory for the historical study of pre-modernity—with a focus especially on early Christian texts. As the study of early Christianity has increasingly turned to insights drawn from literary theory, new historicism, gender studies, cultural studies, and postcolonial studies (to name only a few), scholars are faced with a bewildering array of theoretical options. How is one to adjudicate critically between them? What does it look like to appropriate various theoretical positions for one's scholarly work in ways that are effective, intellectually credible, historically and ethically responsible, and, at the same time, actually illuminating with respect to the materials being studied? The seminar will proceed by way of particular case studies; topics to be covered may include language and the linguistic turn, practice theory, gender and embodiment, and engagements between ancient texts and contemporary philosophy. Case studies will be grounded in a range of early Christian texts (New Testament, Nag Hammadi, patristic) and may include engagement with theorists/philosophers such as Pierre Bourdieu, Judith Butler, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault, among others. Seminar participants will also be given the opportunity to present their own research and work-in-progress.

The number of participants in the seminar is limited. Participants from outside Aarhus will have their travel and accommodation expenses covered. Applicants should send CV and 150-words description of their engagement with the theme, including a title for their presentation in the seminar, to Jonathan Cahana at [joca@teo.au.dk](mailto:joca@teo.au.dk). Deadline for Application is MARCH 15<sup>th</sup>. Applicants will be notified of their application status by March 31<sup>st</sup>.

The seminar is funded by The Danish Council for Independent Research as a part of the project *Wrestling with Archons: Gnosticism as a Critical Theory of Culture*. The project is affiliated to the research program Classical Antiquity: Traditions and Transformations (Centre for the Study of Antiquity and Christianity) at the Department of Culture and Society. For further details see <http://projects.au.dk/wrestlingarchons/>