



MONDAY LECTURES | SOSE 2025

IN RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

RESEARCH BUILDING "WELTBEZIEHUNGEN" | C19.00.02/03 | 16:15 - 17:45

23.06.2025 | TANYA RICHES

SCANDAL OR CRIME? MEDIA NARRATIVES AND SURVIVOR COMPLAINT TESTIMONIES IN AUSTRALIAN MEGACHURCHES

Hillsong Church, an Australian contemporary Pentecostal megachurch, is globally recognized for its worship music, large-scale gatherings, and influential charismatic leadership. As an iconic representation of the global Pentecostal movement, Hillsong initially positioned itself as a youthful, democratically structured congregation, emphasizing accessibility and broad appeal. However, over time, this focus shifted toward centralized authority, aspirational lifestyles, and the prominence of its founders and celebrity pastors – reinforced by Pentecostal theological understandings of divine authority, loyalty, and spiritual discernment.

Through ethnographic observation and theological reflection, this presentation examines the tensions between charismatic leadership, institutional narratives, and congregational voice. The scandals of 2022, which surfaced through media outlets such as Vanity Fair, Rolling Stone, The New York Times, Christianity Today, and Crikey, highlight the varied ways survivor testimonies and complaint collectives have been amplified. This presentation explores how large Pentecostal institutions navigate internal complaint-raising, where informal pastoral channels and formal legal processes intersect with journalistic narratives.

As leadership crises continue to unfold across denominations and global contexts, this presentation contributes to broader discussions on institutional accountability, resilience, and the role of survivor testimonies in shaping the future of ecclesial practice.

**ALL GUESTS WELCOME.
NO REGISTRATION NECESSARY.**