



in cooperation with



## Call for Papers

### Workshop

### Women of Justice

## Images of Female Legal Professionals in Popular Culture: A Transnational Comparison

11–12 August 2022

Münster, Germany

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) in cooperation with the University of Münster is pleased to announce the Call for Papers for the international and interdisciplinary workshop 'Images of Female Legal Professionals in Popular Culture: A Transnational Comparison' at the Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Münster, 11–12 August 2022.

Popular culture, be it literature, cinema, or television, has a long history of imagining stories around the judicial system, legal processes, and everyday practices of law. As a result, legal professionals frequently emerge as main characters or important protagonists in different genres of cultural production. For a long time, however, these characters, whether lawyers, judges, or law enforcement officers, were overwhelmingly male. Notwithstanding a few notable exceptions, male legal professionals dominated almost all cultural productions. This changed near the end of the 20th century, when a shift became apparent in the United States, the pioneer of law-related screen productions. Scholarship has argued that increasing representation in both plot and casting have correlated with rising numbers of female legal professionals in real life. Yet, images of women in law-related popular culture have also been described as 'appalling' (Shapiro 1994), 'disappointing' (Caplow 1999), or 'cautionary tales' (Papke 2003).

Such negative appraisals criticize stereotypical depictions which frequently come in one of two guises: Either the women lawyers experience an allegedly insurmountable conflict between their professional and personal lives (Grosshans 2006, Banks 2011); or – in marked contrast to their male counterparts – they lack opportunities to emerge as heroes (Corcos 2003). These depictions, in turn, heavily influence how the public imagines, not only the female pop cultural character, but also women in the real-life legal profession.

Only recently have legal and media studies scholars identified more nuanced portrayals of female legal professionals (see e.g. Foster et. al. 2009, Banks 2012). Yet, these studies again focus almost exclusively on US-American and, to a lesser degree, British productions. What is still missing from the analysis is how female legal professionals are viewed and portrayed in popular culture outside

the dominant sites of media production. Has the cultural export of US-American legal drama or British crime fiction influenced how law and gender are imagined in other parts of the world? How do the actual participation and representation of women in the legal profession affect their depictions in different genres of popular culture? Has popular culture, both domestic and imported, altered the way society thinks about female lawyers, judges, or law enforcement officers? Our international and interdisciplinary workshop aims to address these questions and, to foster a truly transnational comparison, is particularly interested in contributions that look at popular culture in countries and regions not commonly recognized as creators of globally consumed media productions.

Topics, themes, and issues to be explored include, but are not confined to the following:

- Stereotypical versus realistic images of female legal professionals in popular culture
- Audiences/readership and their changing perceptions of women in the legal profession
- Women's access to the legal profession and their representation in real life versus popular culture
- Changing portrayals of women in the legal profession and cross-cultural influences
- Plots, characters, and sociopolitical critique through female lead characters

The workshop is organized by AGYA members Lena-Maria Möller (Max Planck Institute for Comparative and International Private Law) and Shahd Alshammari (Gulf University for Science & Technology). Travel costs and accommodation for confirmed speakers will be covered by AGYA. Funding is still subject to approval.

Those interested in presenting papers are invited to send a tentative title, an abstract of around 300–500 words, and a short biography to Lena-Maria Möller ([moeller@mpipriv.de](mailto:moeller@mpipriv.de)) by **15 February 2022**.

Notifications of acceptance will be announced by 1 April 2022 and draft papers will be due by 1 July 2022. The workshop language will be English. The organizers aim to publish the papers either as an edited volume or as a special issue of an academic journal.

While we are aiming at holding the workshop in person, we are happy to accommodate presentations by authors who will not be able to travel because of restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **About AGYA**

The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA) is based at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) and at the Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) in Egypt. It was established in 2013 as the first bilateral young academy worldwide. AGYA promotes research cooperation among outstanding early-career researchers (3–10 years after PhD) from all disciplines who are affiliated with a research institution in Germany or in any Arab country. The academy supports the innovative projects of its members in various fields of research, science policy, and education. AGYA is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and various Arab cooperation partners.

**For more information about AGYA please visit [www.agya.info](http://www.agya.info)**