

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE HELLENIC-CANADIAN**  
**INTERNATIONAL XENOS WORKSHOP**

The Hellenic-Canadian international and interdisciplinary Workshop on the «Ξένος» (XENOS. The Stranger, the Foreigner, the Refugee) took place with great success on Sunday 28.05.2023, organized by the **Department of Social Theology and the Study of Religion** of the School of Theology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), and by the **Stavros Niarchos Foundation Centre for Hellenic Studies** of the Department of Global Humanities of **Simon Fraser University** in Vancouver, Canada.

The Workshop began with a **guided tour** of the Canadian faculty members, researchers and students to the renovated facilities of the School of Theology Building, up to its stunning Multimedia Events Venue, at which the Workshop's presentations were scheduled to be held. The working language of the event was English, and attendance was available via physical presence and on-line.

The formal commencement of the XENOS Workshop was made by Professor **Dr. Dimitrios Karadimas**, Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs and Student Welfare at the University of Athens. Professor Karadimas warmly welcomed the members of the Canadian mission on behalf of the Rector and the Administration of the institution. He also briefly showcased facets of the history and academic identity of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, emphasizing the need for furthering international cooperation, academic excellence and achievement. Professor Karadimas then congratulated all engaged in the XENOS Workshop for the outstanding result.

Subsequently, welcome messages followed from the part of the Workshop's Organising Committee by Professor **Dr. Kirki Kefalea** (NKUA) and by the Lecturer **Dr. Eirini Kotsoveli** (SFU). The XENOS Workshop, they pointed out, aspires on addressing the «Ξένος» as a notion and a thematic with multiple meanings of great importance, ancient and timeless, Christian and interreligious, Greek and global, which concern every society beyond ethnicity, race and religion. The word «Ξένος», the unknown, the refugee, should signal not a threat to the Other, not enmity or adversity but the total opposite: human fellowship in a spirit of acceptance and solidarity. To this purpose, much can be achieved thanks to academic institutions endowed with strong interdisciplinary identity and impact, such as the Simon Fraser University in Canada, and the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens in Greece, through its Department of Social Theology and the Study of Religion.

In the first session, several reflections on otherness in pre-modern material culture were presented, traced in the Homeric epics (**Miltiadis Vassilopoulos**, NKUA), Zhuangzi (**Paul Crowe**, SFU) and 1<sup>st</sup> c. Palestine (**Evelina-Stefania Denbek**, NKUA). The following session specialized in the Mediterranean region, the Gospel of Matthew in the light of the Greek tradition (**Sotirios Despotis and Argyro Marinopoulou**, NKUA), and in the non-verbal communication as a way of approaching the Stranger (**Dimitra Tounta**, NKUA). The next session brought forth issues of identity and politics in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> c. music and literature, in the work of R. Wagner (**Caedyn Lennox**, SFU), Angelos Sikelianos and Mark Twain (**Angeliki Korre**, NKUA). The fourth session investigated the theme of the «Ξένος» and of estrangement from the perspective of EU politics and legislation, evaluating the position and role of Greece

in handling the migration crisis (**James Horncastle**, SFU). A case study was also presented within the historical framework of Asia Minor Catastrophe (**Apostolos Michailidis**, NKUA). Identities as explored by modern literature, was the theme of the fifth session, with references to Albert Camus (**Alessandra Capperdoni**, SFU) and Nikos Kachtitsis (**Eleni Kyriakou**). The final session of the Xenos Workshop focused on 21<sup>st</sup> c. ideas and perspectives in relation to the Other, made manifest through the work of Kamel Daoud (**Alexandra-Katerina Bacopoulos-Viau**, Cornell Medical College), and the bioethical dimension of humans and religions in outer space (**Demetrios Alexopoulos**, NKUA).

Each session was allocated ample time for **discussion**, which was met with fervent response from all sides, further promoting the goals and thematic of this capital Hellenic-Canadian initiative. At this point, special thanks are in order to the **Student Union of Postgraduate Students and Doctoral Candidates** of the Department of Social Theology and the Study of Religion, for kindly providing a coffee break to the attendees.

The proceedings of the XENOS Workshop were concluded with some thoughts by **Dr. Eirini Kotsovili**. **Professor Dr. Kirki Kefalea** then proceeded to make the symbolic gesture of offering to all the members of the Canadian mission as well as to the keynote speakers of the Workshop, the book of Panagiotis Valavanis “**The Acropolis through its Museum**”, generously made available by **KAPON** editions.

After the Workshop’s presentations, all participants took part in a special tour themed “**In the Footsteps of St. Paul: Exploring and Experiencing Athens of Greco-Roman Antiquity and Beyond**” led by Professor **Dr. Sotirios Despotis** (NKUA). The XENOS Workshop came to an end after a visit to shelters of the “**SYNYPARXIS**” Ecumenical Refugee Programme, a Non-profit Organisation of the Church of Greece, where all interested were briefed by Archimandrite **Fr. Panteleimon Papasynefakis**, the Programme’s General Director.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to the XENOS Workshop’s overwhelming success, and we truly wish our effort became a point of departure for more initiatives promoting student-centered international engagement.

#### The Organising Committee

- Professor Dr. Sotirios Despotis (NKUA)
- Professor Dr. Kirki Kefalea (NKUA)
- Dr. James Horncastle (SFU)
- Dr. Eirini Kotsovili
- Dr. Apostolos Michailidis (NKUA)
- PhD Cand. Demetrios Alexopoulos (NKUA)