



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

Dipartimento di Filosofia
e Beni Culturali



CREMT

Center for Renaissance and Early Modern Thought



Decentering the Long
Renaissance. Knowledge and
Cross-Cultural Transfers in the
Early Modern Mediterranean

May 24, 2023
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4.00-5.15 pm CET
Zoom

Organizer: **Maria Vittoria Comacchi**
Università Ca' Foscari Venezia –
Indiana University Bloomington

Link Zoom
<https://unive.zoom.us/j/85434577032>
ID meeting: 854 3457 7032

Attendance is free.
All welcome.

For further info:
comacchivittoria@gmail.com
vittoria.comacchi@unive.it



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Duygu Yıldırım

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Comparing Faiths: The Making of Religious Dialogue between the Ottoman Empire and Early Modern Europe

As an imperial city at the crossroads, Istanbul functioned as a window onto debates about the complex relation between faith and knowledge during an era of inter-religious conflict and changing political allegiances. Taking seventeenth-century Istanbul as a case study, this paper examines how and why religious conflict unintentionally led to a new form of religious dialogue that stimulated knowledge exchange between Muslims and Christians. The changing nature of inter-religious dialogue between Ottomans and Europeans occurred in the context of ongoing religious crisis on both sides: within Muslim communities and between Western and Eastern Christianities. It argues that confessional conflict ironically helped to develop grounds for a rapprochement between Ottoman and European

intellectual worlds to redefine faith beyond the textual domains of theology. Through scholarly engagements, learned Europeans began to appreciate commonality with respect to matters of faith, while also becoming gradually aware that distinct individuals of the same religion vary on the nature of true faith. Faith eventually began to be understood in its own pluralities and irreconcilable conflicts through everyday encounters in Istanbul. By comparing faiths in Islam, early modern scholars faced the paradox of their own time: the irreducibility of religious difference within any one religion. Recapturing the genealogy of the comparative approach to faith in the form of dialogue, this study sheds light on the origins of religious relativism, which is conventionally associated with the European Enlightenment.