

Elena G. Giannakopoulou

Professor of Canon Law and Ecumenical Councils Studies

Department of Social Theology and Religious Studies, School of Theology, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Elena G. Giannakopoulou is Professor in the Department of Social Theology and Religious Studies of the School of Theology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA), holding the academic position in Canon Law and Ecumenical Councils Studies. She has been serving at the School of Theology since 2005 as a faculty member, contributing to university teaching, research, and academic administration.

She holds three university degrees in Theology, Law, and German Language and Literature, as well as a Master's Degree and a Ph.D. in Canon Law. During her studies, she was awarded scholarships by the Greek State Scholarships Foundation (IKY) and the international Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF). This interdisciplinary academic background has shaped her scholarly profile, enabling her to combine Theology, Law, and History in a creative and productive manner.

Her research and scholarly work focuses on Canon and Ecclesiastical Law, Dogmatic Theology, the Ecumenical Councils, synodality, the history of ecclesiastical institutions, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the relationship between Theology and Law. Particular emphasis is placed on the study of primary sources, the Sacred Canons, the Acts of the Ecumenical Councils, and the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, as well as on the interaction between doctrinal teaching and canonical tradition in the formation of ecclesiastical identity. Her research interests also extend to Legal History, Family and Ecclesiastical Law, Bioethics, Pastoral Theology, and, more recently, Interreligious Comparative Law. Through recent publications, she has developed an original dialogue between the Orthodox canonical tradition, Hindu bioethical perspectives, and the contemporary Greek legal order, contributing to the development of a new field of interreligious comparative legal studies. At the same time, she highlights the pastoral dimension of the Sacred Canons and their significance as expressions of the Church's care for the human person.

She has developed a strong international academic presence through participation in international and national conferences and through publications in Greek, English, and German. She is a member of the Family Law Society, the Gesellschaft für das Recht der Ostkirchen (Society for the Law of the Eastern Churches), the Hellenic Society for Legal History, the International Association of Orthodox Dogmatic Theologians, and a founding member of the Society of Ecclesiastical and Canon Law.

In parallel, she actively participates in public theological discourse through television and radio broadcasts on public television and public radio, online media platforms, as well as the Radio Station of the Church of Greece and the Radio Station

of the Church of Crete. Through these appearances, she presents and discusses issues related to Canon and Ecclesiastical Law, the Ecumenical Councils, ecclesiastical institutions, bioethics, and contemporary theological thought, contributing to the dissemination of academic knowledge and its connection with contemporary society.

Since her appointment, she has taught nineteen undergraduate and postgraduate courses in the fields of Canon and Ecclesiastical Law, Dogmatic Theology, and the synodal tradition. During the current academic year, she teaches the compulsory undergraduate course “Introduction to the Ecumenical Councils,” which offers a comprehensive overview of the historical development, theological significance, canonical foundations, and enduring legacy of the Seven Ecumenical Councils in the life of the Orthodox Church.

She also teaches three elective courses. The first, “The First Ecumenical Council: Sources and History,” focuses on the primary sources, historical context, doctrinal decisions, and canonical heritage of the Council of Nicaea (325), with particular emphasis on the formation of the Nicene Creed and its reception in later ecclesiastical tradition. The second course, “Synodality in the 21st Century,” examines the contemporary expression of synodality through the decisions and documents of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church (Crete, 2016), exploring their theological, canonical, and ecclesiological implications for Orthodox Christianity in the modern world. The third course, “The Historical Development of the Synodal Institution,” traces the evolution of synodal governance from the early Church to the present day, highlighting the role of councils as fundamental expressions of ecclesiastical administration, unity, and canonical order.

Her teaching methodology combines traditional academic instruction with contemporary educational practices. New technologies, audiovisual resources, source-based learning, and interactive classroom discussion are systematically employed in order to strengthen students’ critical thinking and active participation. English-language lecture summaries and supporting materials are available for international and incoming Erasmus students. Educational visits to ecclesiastical institutions, libraries, archives, monasteries, and the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece complement classroom instruction and enable students to connect theoretical knowledge with contemporary ecclesiastical practice.

She has supervised and participated in the evaluation of postgraduate dissertations and doctoral theses and has served as a member of advisory committees in other university departments, including the Faculty of Law of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Department of Public Administration of Panteion University.

She has served for two consecutive terms as Director of her Academic Division and, by unanimous decision of the Department (8 June 2026), was appointed Alumni Coordinator. In addition, she offers voluntary, unpaid online teaching of Ecclesiastical and Canon Law at the Schools of Apprenticeship for Candidate Clergy (SMYK) of the Church of Greece (Vella of Ioannina) and of the Semi-Autonomous Church of Crete.

Her scholarly, teaching, and administrative work is characterized by the creative synthesis of Theology, Dogmatic Theology, Law, and History, by a strong commitment to source-based research, and by the continuous effort to connect academic knowledge with the needs of the Church and contemporary society. As a

scholar and university professor, she is dedicated to highlighting the canonical and doctrinal tradition of the Orthodox Church as a living institutional, pastoral, and spiritual reality, open to academic dialogue and responsive to the challenges of the twenty-first century.