The Jewish-Christian dialogue has been thriving in the last few decades, attracting the attention of both the public and scholars. This dialogue has generally been conducted between representatives of relatively open-minded factions within the Jewish and Christian communities, where the participants’ religious attitudes could be described as “liberal” in the sense that they are united by similar political and cultural visions which transcend their differences. The dialogue appears to result from the weakening of radical elements, which tend to view those of another religion with hostility, as well as to the growth of moderate religious attitudes which are facilitative of rational and pragmatic interfaith discussion. In other words, Jewish-Christian dialogue may be viewed as a phenomenon, attributable to the secular/liberal conditions of postwar Western societies, conducted by means of a modernized and moderate universal religious language.

However, this common understanding of the nature and scope of Jewish-Christian dialogue is limited in two respects. First, it does not cover the entire range of dialogical phenomena. As certain studies (which will be discussed at the workshop) suggest, several dialogical initiatives do not adhere to liberal criteria, which assume a rational consensus regarding the function of religious commitments and their contributions towards a diverse society. In fact, one can find dialogical inclinations in surprisingly conservative settings.

Second, the liberal narrative of the Jewish-Christian dialogue focuses mainly on that arising out of North American and European geographical and political settings; it ignores other forms of dialogue that stem from other geopolitical settings and neglects to address their unique concerns. These non-western initiatives are grounded on alternative religious grammars, and are oriented towards dissimilar political agendas that often explicitly reject liberal principles.

In order to avoid taking a narrow approach to religious dialogue, our workshop will focus on two topics. First, we will undertake an empirical examination of various projects that have been performed in contexts that are not normally deemed amenable to the dialogical logic (that is, they are narrowly understood). The examination of such initiatives, often ignored within the liberal dialogical framework, itself contributes to the understanding of Jewish-Christian dialogue in its variety.

Second, we will perform a critical inquiry into the variety of dialogical initiatives, thereby enabling us to explore the logic behind the concept of dialogue itself. The workshop aims to develop a grammar suitable for the variety of dialogical phenomena, including those that have thus far only been narrowly understood, and to reexamine them, with a theoretical language suited to this variety, through the lens of liberal dialogical grammars.