

Annual Meeting

Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (CSSR) / Société canadienne pour l'étude de la religion (SCER)

Saturday, May 30-Tuesday, June 2, 2020 / samedi 30 mai au mardi 2 juin 2020

Western University / l'Université Western

London, Ontario

MEETING PROGRAM

Saturday, May 30, 2020	
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Meeting Social Space Location: TC 310
10:00 am-12:00 pm	Executive Meeting Location: TC 203
12:00-2:00 pm	Lunch Break
2:00-4:00 pm	Annual General Meeting Location: TC 203
5:00-7:00 pm	President's Reception (including announcement of book prizes and essay winners) Location: International and Graduate Affairs Building Atrium - IGAB oA01

Program notes:

1. We are using the following buildings: Delaware Hall Residence (DHR), International and Graduate Affairs (IGAB), Music Building (MB), and Talbot College (TC). Locations are listed in the program by building acronym and room number. Western University's interactive map tool is available at <https://www.uwo.ca/about/visit/maps.html> while its barrier free campus map is available at http://fde.uwo.ca/accessibility/accessibility_floor_plans/.
2. A room has been set aside each day as a social space. Please feel free to use it at your leisure.
3. A projector for laptops is default throughout; other special requirements are indicated as required.
4. Alphabetized lists of individual presenters, panels, roundtables, and workshops and their abstracts are included at the end of the schedule.

Sunday, May 31, 2020

9:00 am-5:00 pm	Meeting Social Space Location: TC 310		
9:00-10:30 am	Location: TC 203	Location: TC 204	Location: TC 205
	<p>Panel: Religion and State: Colonialism, Religious Idealism, and the Political</p> <p>Chair: Megan Hollinger, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Participants: <i>The Wall War: The Women of the Wall and the State of Israel</i> John Cappucci, Assumption University</p> <p><i>Confronting the Complexity of Colonialism and Apartheid</i> Irving Hexham, University of Calgary</p> <p><i>Religion and the South African Institute of Race Relations Struggle for Racial Justice</i> Jeremy Hexham, Corpus Christi College</p>	<p>Special Paper: Loss of Indigenous Eden</p> <p>Chair: Paul Gareau, University of Alberta</p> <p>Presenter: <i>Loss of Indigenous Eden</i> Blair Stonechild, First Nations University of Canada</p>	<p>Panel: Being Religious and Canadian: Christian and Muslim Experiences of Negotiating Identities in Canada</p> <p>Chair: Alyshea Cummins, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Participants: <i>What is a Canadian Muslim: A Prairie Perspective</i> Qamer Hameed, University of Ottawa</p> <p><i>"14 & Muslim:" Muslims in Canadian Factual Television</i> Doaa Shalabi, University of Waterloo, and Lisa Duggan, University of Waterloo</p> <p><i>Don't Hate Me Because I'm Christian: One Christian Girl and Her Public School</i> Rebecca Starkman, OISE - University of Toronto</p> <p><i>Digital Religion and Nonreligion among Canadian and U.S. Millennial Adults</i> Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, University of Waterloo</p> <p>Please note that this panel will run from 9:00-11:00 am</p>
10:30-10:45 am	Break		
10:45 am-12:15 pm	Location: TC 203	Location: TC 204	
	<p>Roundtable: Putting Religion in its Place: Religion and Bioregionalism in Canada</p> <p>Presider: Paul Bramadat, University of Victoria</p> <p>Participants: Paul Bramadat, University of Victoria Rachel Brown, University of Victoria Rubina Ramji, Cape Breton University Pamela Klassen, University of Toronto Solange LeFebvre, University of Montreal Alison Marshall, Brandon University</p>	<p>Panel: Religion and Science: Muslim Scientific Methods, Psychiatry and Religious Experience, and Memory Studies</p> <p>Chair: Labeeb Bsoul, Khalifa University</p> <p>Participants: <i>Muslim Scholars' Development of the Experimental Scientific Method</i> Labeeb Bsoul, Khalifa University</p> <p><i>Spiritual Machines: Scientific Knowledge and Religious Experience in Nineteenth-century Ontario</i> Kyle Derkson, University of Toronto</p> <p><i>Building Bridges Between Jesus and Muhammad: Using Historical Jesus Methodology on Muhammad's Life</i> Rahim Samnani, McMaster University</p>	
12:15-2:00 pm	<p>Graduate Student Luncheon Location: DHR Formal Lounge 2C5</p> <p>All student members of the CSSR/SCER are invited to attend the Graduate Student Luncheon. More information to follow.</p>		
12:15-1:45 pm	Lunch Break		

1:45 pm-3:15 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 203</p> <p>Panel: Faith Groups and the Role of Advocacy and Agency</p> <p>Chair: Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, University of Waterloo</p> <p>Participants: <i>By and For Survivors of Abuse in Catholic Institutions: Perspectives on Recent Developments</i> Gemma Hickey, Memorial University, and Patricia Dold, Memorial University</p> <p><i>Bridging Divides between Muslims and Public Service Providers in Cases of Family Violence</i> Catherine Holtmann, University of New Brunswick</p> <p><i>The Indulgence of Professionalization: Adoption and Catholic Identity Negotiations 1945-1990</i> Elizabeth Rigotti, Manhattan College</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 204</p> <p>Panel: Sufism on the Margins</p> <p>Chair: Merin Shobhana Xavier, Queen's University</p> <p>Participants: <i>Sufism for Women and the Men who Support Them: Shaykha Fawzia al-Rawi's Sufi Subversion of Male Normativity and Mind-Centred Spiritual Teachings</i> Rose Deighton, Emory University</p> <p><i>Wandering the Desert (of the Soul): Solitary Isolation versus Collective Seclusion in the Development of Institutionalized Sufism</i> Sara Abdel-Latif, University of Toronto</p> <p><i>Sufism Without Borders: The Ecstatic Teaching and Poetry of Asad Ali</i> William Rory Dickson, Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Winnipeg</p>
3:15-3:30 pm	Break	
3:30-5:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 203</p> <p>Panel: Combating Hatred Through Religious Literacy, the Law, and Necropolitics: Case Studies of Combating Islamophobia, the Repercussions of the Law, and Anti-Black Racism</p> <p>Chair: Catherine Holtmann, University of New Brunswick</p> <p>Participants: <i>Alleviating the Clash of Ignorance: Combating Islamophobia through Religious Literacy</i> Alyshea Cummins, University of Ottawa</p> <p><i>Issues of Interpretation: A Case Study of Combating Hate in a Legal Context</i> Megan Hollinger, University of Ottawa</p> <p><i>Neoliberalism, Violence, and Time: Political Theology in Achille Mbembe's Necropolitics</i> Maxwell Kennel, McMaster University</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 204</p> <p>Panel: Religious Trends in South Korea: Confucianism, Megachurches and Religious "Nones" □</p> <p>Chair: Glen Choi, Seneca College</p> <p>Participants: <i>Rediscovering Confucianism in Korea and China</i> Kwangsuk Yoo, University of Costa Rica and Aju University</p> <p><i>A Study on Religious "Nones" in South Korea and Japan</i> Andrew Kim, Korea University</p> <p><i>Megachurch Trends in South Korea: A Comparison with the United States</i> Sung Gun Kim, Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary</p>
7:00-10:00 pm	<p>2020 International Joint Speaker</p> <p>Title: Bridging Divides: Muslims Challenging and Changing Images of Muslims on Film and Television</p> <p>Dr. Amir Hussain, Loyola Marymount University</p> <p>Lecture: 7:00-8:30 pm Location: MB 111 Von Kuster Hall</p> <p>Reception: 8:30-10:00 pm Location: MB 111 Von Kuster Hall</p> <p>Hosted by the CSSR/SCER in cooperation with the CSBS, CSPS, and CTS.</p>	

Monday, June 1, 2020			
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Meeting Social Space Location: TC 310		
9:00-10:30 am	Location: TC 203	Location: TC 204	Location: TC 205
	<p>Roundtable: Bridging Divides beyond Borders and Personal Anecdotes: Teaching in Religious Studies</p> <p>Presider: Florence Pasche Guignard, Universite Laval</p> <p>Participants: <i>Not a Sikh, Not a Punjabi...Et même pas (encore) une Canadienne! Reflections on Pedagogic Positionality</i> Florence Pasche Guignard, Universite Laval</p> <p><i>The Personal is Political - and Pedagogical</i> Ken Derry, University of Toronto Mississauga</p> <p><i>Perilous Positions: Religious Studies (and its Representatives) in the World</i> Jessica Radin, Ryerson University</p> <p><i>I Wouldn't Mind Being Honest, If Only I Knew the Answer</i> Sarah Richardson, University of Toronto Mississauga</p>	<p>Panel: From Chapel to Dress to Temple: An Exploration of Canada's Material Religious Diversity</p> <p>Chair: Rachel Brown, University of Victoria</p> <p>Participants: <i>Halls, Streets, Homes, and Chapels: Changing Spaces Signify LDS Integration into Canadian Society</i> Brooke Kathleen Brassard, University of Waterloo</p> <p><i>Who, What, Where?: The Naming, Locating, and Building of Chinese Buddhist Temples in Ontario</i> Elizabeth Guthrie, University of Waterloo</p> <p><i>Sacred and Political: Religious Fashion and Québec's Secularism Bill</i> Laura Morlock, Ryerson University</p>	<p>Panel: Invisibilities, Modernities, and Illusions in Religion</p> <p>Chair: Ted Malcolmson, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Participants: <i>Invisible Presence and Inferred Absence: Negative Theologies in Hasidic Judaism and Geluk Buddhism</i> Christopher Emory-Moore, North Island College</p> <p><i>Theory of Multiple Modernities: In the Framework of Sociology of Religion</i> Faezeh Izadi, Queen's University</p> <p><i>On Impossibility and Illusions: Desiring Faith in Julia Kristeva</i> Lucie Robathan, McGill University</p>
10:30-10:45 am	Break		
10:45 am-12:15 pm	Location: TC 203		Location: TC 204
	<p>Panel: Striking, Gaming, and Tagging: Japanese Buddhism for African American Audiences, Liberation Theology and Video Games, and Religiously Motivated Vandalism</p> <p>Chair: Ted Malcolmson, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Participants: <i>"On December 7th, 1941, One Billion Black People Struck for Freedom:" African Americans and Buddhism</i> Ryan Anningson, Wilfrid Laurier University</p> <p><i>Appropriations of Exodus Narratives: A Case Study of the Video Game Bioshock: Infinite</i> Colin Friesen, Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo</p> <p><i>What Would Jesus Tag: Religious Vandalism</i> Ted Malcolmson, University of Ottawa</p>		<p>Panel: Mapping the Spiritual Turn: Consolidating the Study of Spirituality</p> <p>Chair: Galen Watts, Queen's University</p> <p>Participants: <i>The Religion of the Heart, Or, "Spirituality" in Late Modernity</i> Galen Watts, Queen's University</p> <p><i>Locating NRM Studies Within an Emerging Framework of the Spiritual Turn</i> Sharday Mosurinjohn Washburn, Queen's University</p> <p><i>Spirituality, Consumer Culture, and the Canadian Prairies</i> Connor Thompson, University of Regina</p>
12:15-1:45 pm	Lunch Break		
12:15-1:15 pm	Head Shots for Graduate Student Members Location: TC 203		

12:15-1:45 pm	<p>Centre for Studies in Religion and Society Information Lunch Location: TC 205</p> <p>Come, join us for an informal lunch, and learn a bit about the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society. Paul Bramadat (Director) and Rachel Brown (Program Coordinator) will describe the CSRS and the fellowship opportunities that are available for scholars and students of religion at all stages of their careers. Once we have filled you with information, and pizza, we will have an open discussion time about the work of the Centre, and how you might join this extraordinary community.</p>		
1:45-3:15 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 203</p> <p>Roundtable: Authors Meet Critics: <i>None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the U.S. and Canada</i>, New York University Press, 2020</p> <p>Chair: Lori Beaman, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Authors: Joel Thiessen, Ambrose University, and Sarah Wilkins-LaFlamme, University of Waterloo</p> <p>Critics: Lori Beaman, University of Ottawa Stuart Macdonald, Knox College David Seljak, St. Jerome's University Peter Beyer, University of Ottawa</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 204</p> <p>Panel: Religion and Environmentalism: Spirituality and Ecology, Environmental Sustainability, and Resource Management</p> <p>Chair:</p> <p>Participants: <i>Bridging Divides in "Our Common Home:" Caritas, Inclusion, Ecological Action and the Amazon Synod</i> Xochiquetzal Luna Morales, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Ben Szoller, University of Waterloo</p> <p><i>Canadian Faith Communities Engaging Environmental Sustainability: A Profile</i> Joanne Moyer, The King's University</p> <p><i>The Church: Called to Prophetic-Public Witness</i> Bertha Yetman, University of Toronto</p>	
3:15-3:30 pm	Break		
3:30-5:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 203</p> <p>Roundtable: Going Further Afield: Reflections on Fieldwork</p> <p>Presider: Zabeen Khamisa, University of Waterloo</p> <p>Participants: <i>This is the Field, Right Here: Reflections on Academic Discourses as the Site of Research</i> Chris Miller, University of Waterloo</p> <p><i>"I Only Wish I Understood What They Were Saying!" Fieldwork in Another Language in a Canada</i> Elizabeth Guthrie, University of Waterloo</p> <p><i>Decolonized Approaches to Fieldwork: The Humble Researcher</i> Sahver Kuzucuoglu, Wilfrid Laurier University</p> <p><i>Formal and Informal Fieldwork</i> Jason Sparkes, Wilfrid Laurier University</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 204</p> <p>Panel: The One Has Many: Examining Hindu Deities' Many Forms and Functions</p> <p>Chair: Diana Dimitrova, University of Montreal</p> <p>Participants: <i>Three of Kind: On Gods with Multiple Bodies in the Rg-Veda</i> Adela Sandness, St. Francis Xavier University</p> <p><i>The Many Yet Singular: Merging Deities' Puranic and Local Mythologies in Tamil Devotional Poetry</i> Michelle L. Folk, Campion and Luther Colleges at the University of Regina</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 205</p> <p>Panel: Religion and Law: Case Studies of Worlding the Body and Secularism, Quebec's Bill 21, and Religious Freedom Discourses</p> <p>Chair: Ted Malcolmson, University of Ottawa</p> <p>Participants: <i>Bodies of Becoming: The Regulation of Spiritual Ambition and the Subjectivation of the Secular Body</i> Zaheeda P. Alibhai, University of Ottawa</p> <p><i>Defining the (Non)Religious in Quebec's Bill-21</i> Philip Oddi, York University</p> <p><i>Constructing a Framework for Religious Freedom: Eight Challenges Raised in Ktunaxa Nation v. B.C.</i> Nicholas Shrubsole, University of Central Florida</p>

Tuesday, June 2, 2020

9:00 am-12:15 pm	Meeting Social Space Location: TC 310		
9:00-10:30 am	Location: TC 203	Location: TC 204	Location: TC 205
	<p>Roundtable: Connecting the Dots: The Islamophobia Industry in Canada</p> <p>Presider: Sahver Kuzucuoglu, Wilfrid Laurier University</p> <p>Participants: <i>The Islamophobia Industry in Canada: Resistance Begins at Home</i> Sahver Kuzucuoglu, Wilfrid Laurier University</p> <p><i>Dissidents and Ex-Muslims: Who Speaks for Whom?</i> Doaa Shalabi, University of Waterloo</p> <p><i>Foot Soldiers of Islamophobia: Trampled Under Foot by the Rise of the Right</i> Ryan Hopkins, Carleton University</p> <p><i>Securitizing Muslims Through Islamophobia in Canada</i> Philip Oddi, York University</p>	<p>Panel: Religion and Ritual: Possession in South India, Free Improvisation and Transcendence, and Representations of Stigmata as a Mode of Seeing</p> <p>Chair:</p> <p>Participants: <i>Ritual Changes, Possession and Authority in Kerala, South India</i> Vincent Brillant-Giroux, University of Toronto</p> <p><i>Talking About the Ineffable in Writing on Free Improvisation</i> Michael Kaler, University of Toronto Mississauga</p> <p><i>Photographing Stigmata: Between Retrospective Medicine and Personal Devotion</i> Samuel MacLennan, Queen's University</p>	<p>Panel: Religion and Otherness: The Concept of the Other, Fighting Colonialism, and Modes of Scholarship That Work Towards Decolonization</p> <p>Chair: Michelle L. Folk, Campion and Luther Colleges at the University of Regina</p> <p>Participants: <i>"Otherness," Difference and Marginality in Western and South Asian Thought</i> Diana Dimitrova, University of Montreal</p> <p><i>How the Decrees of a 16th Century Synod Triggered India's Freedom Struggle</i> Clara A.B. Joseph, University of Calgary</p> <p><i>Dark Mirrors, Live Potions: Communication with the Dead in Contemporary North American Witchcraft</i> Sandra Huber, Concordia University</p>
10:30-10:45 pm	Break		
10:45 am-12:15 pm	Location: TC 203	Location: TC 204	
	<p>Roundtable: Capitalizing Identities: At the Crossroads of Religion, Economics, and Social Movements</p> <p>Presiders: Jason W.M. Ellsworth, Dalhousie University, and Zabeen Khamisa, University of Waterloo</p> <p>Participants: <i>Commodified Identifications: Buddhist, Canadian, & Organic Branding in a Global Political Economy</i> Jason W.M. Ellsworth, Dalhousie University</p> <p><i>The Red-Pill of Truth: Religion, Anti-Neoliberalism and Conspiracy within the QAnon Movement</i> Amarnath Amarasingam, Queen's University, and Marc-Andre Argentino</p> <p><i>Selling Rumi: The Commodification of Sufism in Canada</i> Merin Shobhana Xavier, Queen's University</p> <p><i>Producing Authentic Sikhi: The Politics of Representation and the Commodification of the Khalsa Aesthetic in North America</i> Zabeen Khamisa, University of Waterloo</p>	<p>Panel: Survivors' Dialogue Session</p> <p>Chair: Lily Kim, McMaster University</p> <p>Participants: Lily Kim, McMaster University D.M. Marchand-Lafortune Catherine ("Kitty") Salsberg, Azrieli Foundation</p>	

1:30 pm-3:00 pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Location: TC 205</p> <p>Co-Sponsored Session: Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (CSSR) & Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) Present</p> <p>Author Meets Critics: Unveiling the Nation: The Politics of Secularism in France and Québec (McGill-Queen's University Press 2019)</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <p>Emily Laxer, Glendon College, York University Efe Peker, University of Ottawa Amélie Barras, York University Rachel Brown, Program Coordinator, Centre for Studies in Religion & Society, University of Victoria</p> <p>Location: TC 205</p>
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2020 International Joint Speaker

Hosted by the CSSR/SCER in cooperation with the CSBS, CSPA, and CTS.

Bridging Divides: Muslims Challenging and Changing Images of Muslims on Film and Television

Dr. Amir Hussain: Biography

Amir Hussain is Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University, the Jesuit university in Los Angeles. He teaches courses on Islam and comparative religion. From 2011 to 2015, Amir was the editor of the Journal of the American Academy of Religion, and he is currently on the board of directors of the American Academy of Religion. He was an advisor for the National Geographic television series The Story of God with Morgan Freeman, and currently serves as an advisor for The UnXplained and Ancient Aliens on the History Channel. His most recent book is A Concise Introduction to World Religions, fourth edition, published in 2019 by Oxford University Press. In 2016, he published Muslims and the Making of America with Baylor University Press. He is the editor or author of seven other books, and over 60 articles and book chapters about religion. Amir grew up in Toronto, and earned his PhD at the University of Toronto with a dissertation on Muslim communities in Toronto.



Lecture: 7:00-8:30 pm

Location: MB 111 Von Kuster Hall

Reception: 8:30-10:00 pm

Location: MB 111 Von Kuster Hall

INDIVIDUAL PAPERS (alphabetical by last name)

Zaheeda P. Alibhai, University of Ottawa

Bodies of Becoming: The Regulation of Spiritual Ambition and the Subjectivation of the Secular Body

In the French legal case *S.A.S. v. France*, S.A.S. described her practice of veiling as an ambition of the cultivation of belief in progress—where the body of becoming is co-created, influenced, navigated, and engaged with the secular terrain of “everyday” life. Through the lens of “lived religion” and engaging with Connolly’s (2011) “world of becoming,” I explore “the body” as relational and a continuous process of ambitions and possibilities of becoming that are never separated from relations with the world. Against the backdrop of several international legal cases, I argue that the secular refashioning of the body (Asad 2011; Hirschkind 2011; Mahmood 2013) is less about upholding the ideals of secularism and more about new forms of worlding the body (Spivak; 1985) and invisible religiosity that are more conducive to the secular complexion of the State.

Ryan Anningson, Wilfrid Laurier University

“On December 7th, 1941, One Billion Black People Struck for Freedom:” African Americans and Buddhism

In 1919, Buddhists promoted a view of Buddhism tied to race sciences and Aryan superiority (Anningson 2016); simultaneously, *The Crisis* used swastikas as the header for each page, while Sufi Abdul Hamid (b. Eugène Brown) referred to himself as the “Buddhist Hitler” (McNichol 2019). The common thread amongst these groups was the view of an oncoming race war, which would be championed by Japan and result in victory for the “Darker Races” (Allen, Jr. 1994). In *Race War!* Gerald Horne argues that African American religions were influenced by Japanese interlocutors sent by the Japanese government, but that we cannot know what doctrines were promoted (2003). I will detail evidence gleaned from newspapers, journals, and academic work to argue that Japanese Buddhists were actively promoting a form of racially superior Buddhism to African American audiences in order to convince them to support the Japanese later in World War II.

Vincent Brilliant-Giroux, University of Toronto

Ritual Changes, Possession and Authority in Kerala, South India

Changes that are introduced in possession rituals during performance will have to be accepted or challenged on the spot as they have the potential to be repeated in the future. However, what happens when those who have the authority to judge and interpret such situations are the ancestors themselves by whom the performers are possessed? We addressed this issue following ethnographic research in Kerala, South India, where we studied the revival of ancestor worship in the Mavilan and Malavettuvan tribal communities. We also studied the case of a woman who was able to experience possession in a type of role that is usually reserved solely for men and the challenges she faced. What is the role played by the possibility of hearing an ancestor’s words during possession in the adaptation of rituals to new social contexts?

Labeeb Bsoul, Khalifa University

Muslim Scholars’ Development of the Experimental Scientific Method

Scientific research is one of the complex aspects of scientific activity by scientists in order to increase the total of scientific knowledge and techniques. The science concerned with the methods and methods of research in cosmic sciences is referred to as the scientific truth or to prove it by the name of methodology of research in cosmic sciences, which examines the partial phenomena of the universe and life, the name (empirical experimental method), which means the method of extracting the general rule (scientific theory) or scientific law from the vocabulary of facts based on observation and experiment. The attempt of this article is to shed light on the Muslim polymath scholars’ contribution to human civilization in their scientific methodology/inductive *al-istiqra’* prior to the Europeans renaissance. It is an ordinary view of Islam, the other side of Islam as penetrated by the western media; Islam is a religion of knowledge too.

John Cappucci, Assumption University

The Wall War: The Women of the Wall and the State of Israel

The State of Israel was formed as a secular nation-state not governed by any religious movement within Judaism. However, seventy years after its formation, the Orthodox branch seems to be exerting considerable influence over religious affairs, particularly with regard to gender segregation at Judaism’s holiest site. For thirty years, the Women of the Wall have campaigned for equal access and rights at the Western Wall. They seek to openly pray and read the Torah, wear kippah, tefillin and tallitot, and perform *bnot mitzvah* and other ceremonies without restriction or reprimand. This paper contends that these restrictions imposed on the Women of the Wall have less to do with strictly observing religious law and tradition and more to do with garnering political currency with members of the growing Orthodox branch in Israel.

Alyshea Cummins, University of Ottawa

Alleviating the Clash of Ignorance: Combating Islamophobia through Religious Literacy

Islamophobia has real consequences for Muslims across the globe. While Canadians often pride themselves on being a tolerant people whose identity is largely derived from a deep respect for diversity, multiculturalism, and inclusion, Canada is no exception to the global proliferation of anti-Muslim sentiment. From individual encounters of prejudice to state legislated discrimination, Islamophobia takes many forms which significantly impact the lives of Muslims in many Western countries, including our own. This lecture addresses Islamophobia by first providing context into its contemporary spread and global manifestations, arguing how it has recently contributed to a ban for practitioners in public service who wear Islamic dress in one of Canada's largest provinces. It presents how one Canadian Muslim community, the Shi'a Imami Nizari Ismaili Muslims, has been engaged in combating negative perceptions of Muslims and Islam through an innovative literacy effort.

Kyle Derkson, University of Toronto

Spiritual Machines: Scientific Knowledge and Religious Experience in Nineteenth-century Ontario

Walt Whitman visited psychiatrist Richard Bucke in Sarnia, Ontario in 1880. During this trip, Whitman visited a nearby reserve. Regarding this visit, he said there was "not much to see of novelty, nothing at all of aboriginal life or personality." My paper will explore the relationship between psychiatry and new approaches to religious experience by focusing on the Canadian psychiatrist Dr. Bucke and his friendship with Whitman. Nineteenth-century discourse on the body turned to science in order to make the body a knowable, curable contraption. By extension, the mind too became knowable along with one's religious experiences. What does this shift to scientific knowledge mean in a time marked by racial and gender differences? My argument is that the categories of religion, secular/scientific, and spiritualism were not used to contain conceptually similar items but rather to group and validate people based on the gender and race of their bodies.

Diana Dimitrova, University of Montreal

"Otherness," Difference and Marginality in Western and South Asian Thought

The concepts of the "other" and "otherness" have not been central to Western metaphysical thought until the nineteenth-century. In the age of modernity, these concepts have been studied by several influential thinkers, such as phenomenologist Edmund Husserl, phenomenologist and existentialist Martin Heidegger, phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty and existentialist Emanuel Lévinas. The notion of the "other" has also been the subject of study by many poststructuralist, postmodernist and feminist thinkers, such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva. In the following, I will focus on two major interpretations of the concept of the "other," namely the phenomenological and postphenomenological positions, as represented in the works of Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, and of Lévinas respectively. I shall then examine the positions of two important postmodernist thinkers, Derrida and Foucault, and will conclude by suggesting possible phenomenological and post-phenomenological interpretations of the concept of the "other" in Hindu and Buddhist thought.

Gemma Hickey, Memorial University, and Patricia Dold, Memorial University

By and For Survivors of Abuse in Catholic Institutions: Perspectives on Recent Developments

Throughout 2019, the work of Canadian survivors of clergy abuse in Catholic institutions has attracted extensive media attention and their work is producing or at least shaping results within the Church. However, neither the media nor the religious institution give full voice to survivor perspectives. Indeed, while the media frequently present survivor voices, the church just as frequently ignores, minimizes, or filters survivors' voices. Following up on our participation at survivor events at the Annual Plenary Assembly of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops held in Cornwall, ON, in October 2019 and at the Vatican's February 2019 Summit on Sexual Abuse, as well as our work with the Pathways Foundation of NL, Gemma Hickey reflects as a survivor-advocate and founding member of ACTS Can (Advocates for Clergy Trauma Survivors of Canada), and Patricia Dold as an academic advocate for survivors.

Christopher Emory-Moore, North Island College

Invisible Presence and Inferred Absence: Negative Theologies in Hasidic Judaism and Geluk Buddhism

Toward an improved understanding of Jewish-Buddhist theological relations, this paper compares the apophatic grounds of ultimate reality in Hasidic Judaism and Geluk Buddhism: nothingness (ayin) and emptiness (śūnyatā). Analysis of the teachings of Dov Ber ben Avraham of Mezeritch (Polish successor to Hasidism's eighteenth-century founder Ba'al Shem Tov) and Tsongkhapa (fourteenth-century Tibetan scholar-monk and founder of the Geluk school) suggests that the most striking parallel between Hasidic and Geluk theologies of nothingness and emptiness is their similar two-fold models of ontology and perception. While Hasidic and Geluk doctrines of immanence and correct view entail similar conceptions of the enlightened experience of the world as cognitive union of the two "dimensions" or "truths" of all phenomena - somethingness/nothingness (yesh/ayin) and conventional/ultimate (saṃvṛti/paramārtha) - their ontologies of ayin as an invisible essence and śūnyatā as an inferred absence appear to be philosophically irreconcilable.

Colin Friesen, Conrad Grebel University College, University of Waterloo

Appropriations of Exodus Narratives: A Case Study of the Video Game Bioshock: Infinite

The liberation of Israel from the bondage of Pharaoh in the Book of Exodus has been used in Black and Liberation Theology as a primary text to describe God's relation to the oppressed and the oppressor. Bioshock: Infinite is a video game set in the fictional dystopian city Columbia, where pseudo-Christian white supremacists enforce institutional racism and Jim Crow-esque societal structures. This project will use reception theory to examine the interpretations of Exodus narratives by Black and Liberation Theologians and compare them to white American interpretations from critical historical contexts.

Using Bioshock: Infinite as a case-study, this survey will explore the various ways that Exodus liberation narratives are used, and the implications of their use by historically dominant people groups versus their use by historically oppressed people groups.

Qamer Hameed, University of Ottawa

What is a Canadian Muslim: A Prairie Perspective

The negotiations of being Canadian and Muslim differ from Muslims in Europe and the United States in a sense that the label of Canadian is a highly ambiguous, varied, and un-defined concept that leaves room for hybrid and collaborative sense of identity. Canadian does not have to mean pick one and leave the other. It is flexible, ambiguous, and often it is receptive to growth. The concept of being Canadian Muslim can encompass many things. Identity in Canada can mean many things. Identity is dynamic with internal and external components in flux with a degree of static perceptions. It is passive and active, individual and social, with self-reflexive and performative facets. The social aspect of identity is complex and considers belonging and boundaries from within and from outside. Canadian Muslims often maintain religion as the structuring agent of identity and the engagement of this source can differ between generations, cultures, and regional experiences. This presentation will explore a case study of Canadians in Manitoba and look at some of the influences on negotiating space for uniquely Canadian Muslim identities.

Irving Hexham, University of Calgary

Confronting the Complexity of Colonialism and Apartheid

The issue this paper addresses is the complexity of religion and colonialism in South Africa. During the apartheid era many White Afrikaners hated colonialism and identified it as the source of racism in Africa. At the same time many prominent Afrikaner Nationalist leaders, like General Hertzog, and Dr. Hendrick Verwoerd, appear to have been convinced agnostics who had little time for Christianity. On the other-hand Africans like Londa Shembe, the leader of one of the largest African indigenous churches in South Africa, and Mrs. Winnie Mandela saw some good in the colonial enterprise and were convinced Christians who regarded Christianity as the source of their hope and ultimate liberation. This paper discusses the unexpected reactions of Black and White South Africans to both colonialism and Christianity. It is based on archival research, participant observation, and oral interviews with Black and White South Africans.

Jeremy Hexham, Corpus Christi College

Religion and the South African Institute of Race Relations struggle for Racial Justice

Founded in 1929 by a group of young academics in Johannesburg the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) was created to investigate and improve cooperation between South Africa's many racial and religious groups. It aimed at overcoming the impact of British colonialism and improving the lot of Black Africans. Influenced by the Fabian Society they built an argument against racism based on careful research that presented their findings as "the facts" about race in South Africa and moral criticisms of government politics based on the Judeo-Christian tradition. This paper examines the religious roots of the SAIRR and its careful blending of secular and religious ideas to oppose racism and apartheid. The paper examines the complex relationship between religious idealism, secular morality, and the struggle for justice. It is based on archival documents and life-history interviews.

Megan Hollinger, University of Ottawa

Issues of Interpretation: A Case Study of Combating Hate in a Legal Context

There are many issues that divide Canadians. There are also many ways in which social divisions are reinforced. My paper is a discourse analysis on a Supreme Court of British Columbia case, entitled R. v. Noble (2008). Keith Noble was charged with a violation of Section 319(2) of the Criminal Code for willfully promoting hatred towards identifiable groups, namely Jewish people, Black people, other non-white peoples, and gay persons. Noble was found guilty. Although this seems to be an appropriate outcome, the language of the case could have negative repercussions for legal responses to hate. Through this discourse analysis, I examine the issues of using law as a means of combating hate towards minorities. I examine how law could potentially be normalizing ideas that enable social divisions in Canada, therefore impeding positive social change for minority groups.

Catherine Holtmann, University of New Brunswick

Bridging Divides between Muslims and Public Service Providers in Cases of Family Violence

Providers of public services for victims and perpetrators of family violence may be uncertain how to work with members of minority faith groups. Uncertainty can turn into inaction and/or discrimination when faced with cultural barriers. This presentation begins with the analysis of social scientific data collected from Muslim women and men in New Brunswick based on their experiences of gender roles and attitudes towards family violence. It then provides information about a project of building bridges between Muslim and Arabic families in Fredericton, New Brunswick and those who provide public services including domestic violence outreach workers, child protection workers and police. The plan is modeled on the Muslim Family Safety Project which has been successful in bridging divides between London, Ontario's Muslim communities and public service providers using a culturally integrative framework. The project is designed to build capacity to ensure the safety of Muslim women and children.

Sandra Huber, Concordia University

Dark Mirrors, Live Potions: Communication with the Dead in Contemporary North American Witchcraft

Witchcraft constitutes one of the “newest” religions and one of the oldest magical practices. The proposed presentation involves taking a look at communication with the dead as it manifests in contemporary North American witchcraft with influences from ceremonial magic. Through categories of glass, fluid, and inscription, I examine how mediumship destabilizes biases around who and what can (and cannot) communicate and in what ways this communication materializes. I will argue that mediumship subverts models of subject and object while igniting modes of scholarship that are geared towards decolonization and away from systems of proof, evidence, or classical empiricism. To do this, I will discuss experiences from my work with contemporary witches as well as my own autoethnographic practices, particularly involving dark mirrors, potions, and automatic writing. How do the methods of the witch both construct and divert contemporary systems of knowledge-making within academia and within the study of religion? What do the dead have to say and how do we listen?

Faezeh Izadi, Queen's University

Theory of Multiple Modernities: In the Framework of Sociology of Religion

In the last two decades, the Theory of Multiple Modernities has emerged as a new alternative for the former paradigms of sociology of religion: ‘Secularization’ and ‘Rational Choice Theory.’ This theory has led to a rethinking about the future of religion in modern societies and has raised new attempts to various paths of socio-political development. ‘Multiple Modernities’ explains it cannot be clearly determined what will happen to religion in the process of modernization. The issue should be assessed separately, according to the modernizing culture. This paper tries to clarify the concept of the theory, process of formation, and historical backgrounds as well as one of its significant applications in the contemporary time: democracy. I posit the theory of multiple modernities has a strong correlation on revising the concept of modernity and understanding its various dimensions. Therefore, it is better to call each of these three paradigms as a “Quasi-Paradigm.”

Clara A.B. Joseph, University of Calgary

How the Decrees of a 16th Century Synod Triggered India's Freedom Struggle

In scholarship on India, Studies in Christianity and Postcolonial Studies privilege British colonization over other European colonization and focus on regions once important to the Raj. India in World Christianity, thus, has become the study of British missions in chiefly North or South East India. Similarly, Postcolonial Studies interprets Christianity in India as authored by the British and, more recently, American Empire. To prompt a rethinking of the field, this paper focuses on the Decrees of the Synod of Diamper (1599) to consider when, how, and why the Thomas Christians fought against Portuguese colonization in India. I will trace the freedom struggle of the Thomas Christians mainly within three political contexts i) resistance to attempts by the Portuguese to monopolize the lucrative trade in pepper and other spices ii) objections to attempts to assimilate the Thomas Christians to the Portuguese way of life and worship iii) desire for self-rule.

Michael Kaler, University of Toronto Mississauga

Talking About the Ineffable in Writing on Free Improvisation

When asked about his beliefs, saxophonist Eric Dolphy once responded, “I am a practicing musician.” Being a serious musician, like being a serious adherent of a religious faith, involves extended periods spent in ritualized activities, with the goal of honouring a transcendence that can never be fully attained; at higher levels of engagement both practices may great sacrifices in the hope of experiences beyond what is normally accessible. Few forms of music demand a higher level of engagement than free improvisation, a radical and utterly open approach to spontaneous music-making that was pioneered in the 1960s. In this presentation, I will examine discussions of free improvisation by David Toop, Edwin Prevost, Jack Wright, and Ben Watson, to discuss how narratives about this music often mirror religious themes and tropes, pointing the reader or listener towards an ineffable transcendence that runs parallel to more traditionally religious forms of expression.

Maxwell Kennel, McMaster University

Neoliberalism, Violence, and Time: Political Theology in Achille Mbembe's Necropolitics

In my paper I address the critique of anti-Black racism in Achille Mbembe’s Necropolitics and Critique of Black Reason. From the broad standpoint of Religious Studies, my specific methodology is rooted in the sub-field of ‘political theology’ – a diverse area of study that spans confessional and nonconfessional orientations and includes both social scientific paradigms and those of the humanities. Here I use political theology as an analytical tool to understand the complex entanglements of religious and political concepts in the production of anti-Black racism. Mbembe critiques the economization of all things under the regime of neoliberalism, while pointing out the temporal nature of this power in the conversion of time into money. I argue that the paradigm of political theology allows us to see latent religious themes in Mbembe’s work and identify how sovereignty over time is a key but underemphasized part of his antiracist critique.

Samuel Maclennan, Queen's University

Photographing Stigmata: Between Retrospective Medicine and Personal Devotion

This project explores how religious and medical ways of seeing converge in photographic representations of Saint Padre Pio, the Italian stigmatic. Prayer cards clearly exist outside the medical tradition of photography forged in Jean-Martin Charcot's late 19th-century practice at the Parisian hospital of Salpêtrière. Yet discourses of hysteria, crystallized at Salpêtrière, form the backdrop for challenges to Pio's stigmata from both medical doctors and Catholic critics. While the representational practices at Salpêtrière differ from those produced by Pio's cult, I notice three parallels between them. First, both use photography as an archival practice, whether in memorializing Pio's wounds or as a database at Salpêtrière. Second, body-truths are represented (ostensibly) more faithfully through photographs than other media, which can be used for either clinical insights or mediating intercession. Third, in both cases, photography represents a tactile mode of seeing.

Ted Malcolmson, University of Ottawa

What Would Jesus Tag: Religious Vandalism

The highway outside the Christian Fundamentalist Creation Science Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky was adopted by the tri-state freethinkers. In response to this, the adopt-a-highway markers were defaced with black paint. This paper will focus on the question of how to interpret religious vandalism - not responses to vandalism of religious spaces, but vandalism of secular spaces where there is a religious motivation.

Xochiquetzal Luna Morales, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Ben Szoller, University of Waterloo

Bridging Divides in "Our Common Home:" Caritas, Inclusion, Ecological Action and the Amazon Synod

This paper aims to examine how Caritas, the Roman Catholic organization on relief, development and social services, has incorporated this year's Amazon Synod to establish new bridges with indigenous communities in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Building on Jose Casanova's concept of deprivatization of religion, we are presenting a comparative critical discourse analysis in order to understand how Caritas confronts tensions between spirituality and ecology, indigeneity and Christianity. Although the idea to bridge these divides is not new for the Roman Catholic Church, the Synod has done so explicitly. As a result, it is useful to examine how Faith-Based organizations, such as Caritas, incorporate Synod discussions to navigate political and cultural boundaries. Further, examining how colonialism and indigeneity are addressed (or not) by Caritas provides an important insight into the Catholic principle of subsidiarity, particularly at a time of heightened pressure for inclusion and ecological action.

Joanne Moyer, The King's University

Canadian Faith Communities Engaging Environmental Sustainability: A Profile

The current state of the Earth's social-ecological systems presents multiple challenges and momentum to engage sustainability concerns within faith communities appears to be growing. This research builds a baseline understanding of faith-based engagement on environmental sustainability in Canada, focusing on activities within diverse faith communities at the institutional and congregational levels. Data were collected from websites of faith communities' leadership and umbrella organizations and through interviews with representatives from active faith communities. Faith communities in Canada began engaging environmental issues in the 1960s and 1970s. Key areas of engagement include: planning and priority setting; formation through theological development, education, and worship; political advocacy; and practical actions within congregations. Partnerships with denominational agencies and other organizations and congregational level initiatives play an important role in implementing these activities. Some faith communities have been societal leaders in this work, while others are just beginning to develop an approach to environmental sustainability.

Philip Oddi, York University

Defining the (Non)Religious in Quebec's Bill-21

Attempts to call Quebec's legislative intentions into question during the recent federal election resulted in an embarrassing scenario for the federal candidates, all the while religious minorities continue to suffer under the once-unthinkable Bill-21. I will be exploring how the Provincial Government of Quebec defines "religion" and "the religious," while also analyzing how Bill-21 tries to limit the practice of religion in the province under the guise of a "secular state." Furthermore, by using an adapted version of Jolyon Baraka Thomas' notion of the colonial construction of secularism as a methodological approach, I will argue that Bill-21 constructs both secularism and religion to subjugate minority religions under the supposed separation between religion and state. Additionally, I will briefly explore such issues surrounding Bill-21 being constructed as secular and its effect on religious minorities, particularly Muslims within Quebec.

Lucie Robathan, McGill University

On Impossibility and Illusions: Desiring Faith in Julia Kristeva

In her psychoanalytic treatment of religion, Kristeva considers the need to believe as constitutive of our subjectivity. Via her negotiations of the imaginary and the impossible, she presents us with an account of religious belief that seems, itself, haunted by desire. This paper endeavors to reveal the lingering desire for love - and perhaps for faith - within Kristeva's own writing, through an analysis of her dialogue with Christian mysticism. It draws together threads from the semiotic, psychoanalytic and ethical streams of her work, in order to suggest that we can read Kristeva's own meditations on (impossible) love, faith and desire as a working-through of just that sort of love-sickness for which she seeks a cure.

Elizabeth Rigotti, Manhattan College

The Indulgence of Professionalization: Adoption and Catholic Identity Negotiations 1945-1990

Using the case study of single mothers in the United States between 1945 and 1990, I examine the power wielded by a network of authoritative religious and non-religious charity and social service institutions and how they denied agency to the single mothers in order to establish their own influence in American society. Catholic hierarchy encouraged laity to lead charity work, creating institutions that supported their population between 1820 and 1920. The American government responded to Catholics' charity-building by allowing them a voice in the New Deal. With the influence of secular social work, Catholics changed their policy of encouraging single mothers to keep their infants into one of coercing mothers to surrender their infants for adoption against their will. Social workers collected information about the single mothers in the care of Catholic charities, and used this information to develop their own authority in the realms of "illegitimacy" and single motherhood.

Rahim Samnani, McMaster University

Building Bridges Between Jesus and Muhammad: Using Historical Jesus Methodology on Muhammad's Life

For over one hundred years, scholars of early Christianity have used historical Jesus scholarship to reconstruct Muhammad's life. For the most part, historical Jesus scholars have presented an overwhelming amount of scholarship motivated to portray Muhammad in an antagonistic and inferior manner. In the twenty-first century, however, historical Jesus scholarship began to solve its own methodological flaws, including theological and anti-semitic agendas. Over the last decade, scholarship on memory has brought forth interesting conclusions on how communities remembered Jesus after his crucifixion. My dissertation uses memory studies to bridge scholarship between the historical Jesus and the historical Muhammad. More particularly, I use Dale Allison's method on memory, imagination, and history, which I contextualized for seventh-century Arabia. Allison's method offers us an approach to better understand Muhammad's life through larger generalizations, as well as certain themes and motifs that recur consistently throughout primary sources.

Doaa Shalabi, University of Waterloo, and Lisa Duggan, University of Waterloo

"14 & Muslim:" Muslims in Canadian Factual Television

This paper is an in-depth analysis of the Canadian documentary "14 & Muslim" which aired on CBC on September 21, 2018. The documentary followed 3 teenaged Muslims as they transition from a private Islamic elementary school to Catholic and public high school. The documentary was part of the CBC Point of View series which "takes on unique and often intimate look at issues that matter to Canadians." The documentary's director Wendy Rowland stated that her film aims to make people "see Muslims are just normal people." If the goal was to make people see Muslims at normal people, what are the techniques used in the storytelling and what parts of the story have been left out? These are two of our research questions as we seek to analyze and review this documentary.

Nicholas Shrubsole, University of Central Florida

Constructing a Framework for Religious Freedom: Eight Challenges Raised in *Ktunaxa Nation v. B.C.*

This paper constructs a framework consisting of eight interrelated theoretical considerations to help understand challenges in advance of, and denials of, freedom of religion claims here in Canada. These considerations include law's cultural form, the incommensurability of values and choices, cultural incommensurability, the exclusivity of religious freedom, the challenge brought by diversity, the impact of religious heritage, the homogenizing discourse of equality, and, for Indigenous peoples, assertions of Crown sovereignty. Drawing on religious freedom discourse and the recent decision in *Ktunaxa Nation v. British Columbia*—the first ruling on Indigenous religious freedom under the modern constitutional order—I look at how equality, exclusivity, diversity, and Crown sovereignty, as examples, function together to create a barrier for the realization of religious freedom, particularly for Indigenous peoples. I will consider the unique nuances of the Canadian context, particularly against that of the U.S., where much religious freedom discourse is situated.

Rebecca Starkman, OISE - University of Toronto

Don't Hate Me Because I'm Christian: One Christian Girl and Her Public School

This paper joins scholarly conversations examining how faith-identifying students are bridging the divides historically erected between individual faith and spaces of public schooling (Hassan, 2010; Moulin, 2012; 2016; Zine, 2001). This paper presents data from the doctoral project exploring how religious girls (of any faith) experience their public school lives in Toronto, Canada. This research took the form of a basic qualitative study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015), guided by feminist poststructural (Lather, 1992; Pillow & St. Pierre, 2000), and lived/everyday religion (Ammerman, 2007; McGuire, 2008) theoretical frameworks. This paper interrogates the position of one Christian student, Leera, who sits at the intersections of faithfulness, invisibility, vulnerability, and privilege. As a Presbyterian Christian Leera identifies with Canada's majority faith group, while simultaneously experiencing silencing around her religious identity by the discourses defining Christianity in her particular school space.

Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, University of Waterloo

Digital Religion and Nonreligion among Canadian and U.S. Millennial Adults

With the arrival of communication technologies such as radio, television, and more recently the internet and social media, scholars of (non)religion have debated their place in lived religiosity and nonbelief. To what extent do these technologies play a complementary role to in-person activities, those more involved with organized religion or nonbelief also using these technologies more for (non)religious purposes? Or do these technologies also play an alternative role in terms of religion, spirituality and nonbelief for a substantial portion of individuals who are not involved in person? With new 2019 survey data, this paper explores this debate among Millennial adults in the USA and Canada and their use of digital media. This generation has one of the lowest rates of participation in organized religious activities within North America, but are many of them engaged with religious, spiritual and nonbelief themes online in a meaningful and regular way?

Bertha Yetman, University of Toronto

The Church: Called to Prophetic-Public Witness

Catholic social teachings obligate the Church, "the people of God" to active prophetic-public witness to the pressing economic-social-ecological and spiritual needs of the day. The Church's social tradition constrains it to be ever-present to bridging the gap between God's will for humanity and the problems besetting humanity. The Church is compelled to commit to raising public consciousness, and live the reality of the Christian experience of the common good. In the past, such as when the Newfoundland cod fishery collapsed, the Church-local, conditioned by the legacy of colonialism, defaulted in acting on the wisdom of its own social teachings and failed to rise to active agency for distressed maritime communities. Learning from past mistakes, the Church of today can no longer be silent on interconnected issues of environment, sustainability and resource management.

SPECIAL PAPER (alphabetical by title)

Stonechild, First Nations University of Canada

Loss of Indigenous Eden

Indigenous Eden is the state that existed prior to the rise of civilization. Civilization is predicated upon the rejection of Indigenous spirituality and values. The world as it is currently evolving is the consequence of being expelled from the “Garden of Eden.” The research topic is based upon over 40 years of work with Indigenous Elders and is a summary of my forthcoming book *Loss of Indigenous Eden and the Fall of Spirituality* (University of Regina Press 2020).

Blair Stonechild is a member of the Muscowpetung First Nation and is a survivor of the Qu’Appelle Indian Residential School. He obtained his Bachelor’s degree from McGill, and Master’s and Doctorate degrees from University of Regina. In 1976 Blair joined the First Nations University of Canada as its first faculty member and has been Dean of Academics and Executive Director of Development. Major publications include *Loyal Till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion* (1997); *The New Buffalo: Aboriginal Post-secondary Policy in Canada* (2006); *Buffy Sainte-Marie: It’s My Way* (2012), *The Knowledge Seeker: Embracing Indigenous Spirituality* (2016) and *Loss of Indigenous Eden and the Fall of Spirituality* (2020).

PANELS (alphabetical by title)

From Chapel to Dress to Temple: An Exploration of Canada's Material Religious Diversity

This panel will discuss material and visual cultural elements of three distinct Canadian situations: early Later-Day Saint missionaries in Manitoba and Ontario and their integration into Canadian mainstream society through the purchasing and construction of their own sacred spaces; the strategies and practices utilized by Chinese Buddhist in Ontario to name, locate, and build their own religious sites; and the use of fashion, as an embodied religious practice, by Muslim women in Quebec to claim Quebecois and Muslim identities and challenge what Quebec's Bill 21 represents. In their own way, each situation demonstrates the diversity of Canada's religious material culture even as they speak to the experiences of immigrant and non-dominant groups of Canadians.

Chair: Rachel Brown, University of Victoria

Presenters:

Brooke Kathleen Brassard, University of Waterloo

Halls, Streets, Homes, and Chapels: Changing Spaces Signify LDS Integration into Canadian Society □

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ Canadian Mission began as settlements in southern Alberta attempting to create a place of refuge for polygamists escaping prosecution in the United States. Eventually, the Mission’s goals evolved, and the Church looked outward to expand across Canada. Relying on data collected during archival fieldwork at the Church History Library and the L. Tom Perry Special Collections, this paper considers the missionary work performed in Manitoba and Ontario, and the signs demonstrating Mormonism’s progression toward integration into Canadian society, working towards becoming another established Christian denomination searching for potential new members. This paper highlights one sign of progress: the transition from rental spaces to ownership and construction of sacred spaces. This category of integration allows an analysis of the successes and failures, difficulties and advantages faced by LDS missionaries in Canadian populations with very few members and little exposure to Mormonism.

Elizabeth Guthrie, University of Waterloo

Who, What, Where?: The Naming, Locating, and Building of Chinese Buddhist Temples in Ontario

Temple building has a long, rich heritage in Chinese Buddhist communities. This heritage has continued within diasporic Chinese Buddhist communities across the globe and is being actively drawn on by the Cham Shan community of Southern Ontario. In this paper, I apply three of the ten factors for the interpretation of a religious site, as developed by Thomas Tweed in his book *America’s Church: The National Shrine and Catholic Presence in the Nation’s Capital* (2011) to the Cham Shan community’s three main sites: the Cham Shan Temple, the Ten Thousand Buddhas Sarira Stupa, and the Four Great Sacred Buddhist Mountains in Canada. I focus on the buildings’ names, locations, and appearances to suggest that each decision made in relation to naming strategies, chosen locations, and physical appearances deliberately draw on established temple building strategies and practices while helping to establish the community as a distinct feature of Ontario.

Laura Morlock, Ryerson University

Sacred and Political: Religious Fashion and Québec's Secularism Bill

Colonial legacies create a false sense of what constitutes “religious” dress, identifying it with minoritized and racialized communities and practices, claiming dominant “Western” dress is not itself embodied religious practice. Québec’s Bill 21 is a highly visible example of this belief in action. Its preamble states that the province is a place that prioritizes gender equality, a pointed reference setting the hijab and niqab in opposition to these values, and which Québec’s minister for the status of women has twice stated are symbols of “oppression.” In the midst of this context, this paper explores the ways some Muslim women are using fashion to simultaneously claim Québecois and Muslim identities, challenging the idea that they are not themselves proud francophone Canadians, while highlighting how embedded in belief supposedly secular dress is itself.

Mapping the Spiritual Turn: Consolidating the Study of Spirituality

Since the 1960s sociologists of religion have witnessed a number of dramatic shifts in the religious landscapes of Western democracies. One of the most significant has been the increasing popularity of "spirituality." Yet issues of academic siloing and over-specialization have plagued the sociology of spirituality; there has been little concerted attempt to consolidate disparate studies in order to shape a larger research agenda. The study of spirituality now takes place across a plethora of subfields, each of which has contributed much to our understanding of the spiritual turn, but whose theoretical and methodological insights have yet to be comprehensively compared or synthesized. As a result, the study of spirituality remains deeply fragmented. It is high time that the field was properly consolidated. Our panel will bring into conversation recent work on the spiritual turn - both empirical and theoretical in nature - in order to help shape a forward-looking research agenda.

Chair: Galen Watts, Queen's University

Presenters:

Galen Watts, Queen's University

The Religion of the Heart, Or, "Spirituality" in Late Modernity

Drawing from a range of recent scholarship on spirituality in modern societies, as well as qualitative research with "spiritual but not religious" and neo-pentecostal millennials in Canada, I delineate and historicize the cultural structure which informs much of the discourse that is used to describe, or narrate, "spirituality" today - what I call the religion of the heart. I begin by outlining the methodology to which my analysis is indebted: the strong program in cultural sociology. Second, I outline my research methods, which consist of semi-structured interviews, ethnographic fieldwork, and discursive analysis of popular contemporary spiritual and self-help books. Third, I describe its character, and trace its historical roots, demonstrating that most of today's spiritual discourses - contra the self-understanding of their proponents - belong to a tradition, if peripatetic in nature. I conclude with a reflection on how the "spiritual turn" may challenge foundational assumptions in much religious studies scholarship.

Sharday Mosurinjohn Washburn, Queen's University

Locating NRM Studies Within an Emerging Framework of the Spiritual Turn

This project aims to map the constitution of NRM studies onto the emerging framework of the spiritual turn. The aspiration to synthesize these fields is not to necessarily dissolve the them, but to use both to move each other forward theoretically. Firstly, this synthesis is of value to NRM Studies insofar as recent scholarship calls for scholars to move past the "social problems paradigm" that assumes NRMs to be comparable on the basis of their "deviance" from "normal" society rather than similarities in worldview, practice, or underlying cultural structure. Secondly, this synthetic project is of value to spirituality studies by bringing cognate sociocultural forms into the same discursive frame, and more particularly, it shows that the account of the holistic milieu in spirituality studies is not sociologically separate from the ever growing - and somewhat haphazard - list of what counts for study as NRMs.

Connor Thompson, University of Regina

Spirituality, Consumer Culture, and the Canadian Prairies

Undertaking a regional analysis of the Canadian Prairies, this paper will argue for the utility of understanding spirituality's growth relative to the permeation of consumer culture and secular discourse in Canada, looking at how brands like Lululemon and Fitbit, as well as international leaders such as Oprah Winfrey, influence spirituality's permeation in the region through relationships with commodities, workshops, educational institutions, and annual events such as the Prairie Love Festival. Different (though potentially overlapping) beliefs and practices within the milieu of spirituality will be charted, noting discourses that focus on ethics, such as individualism and self-improvement, and those that emphasize direct encounter with the divine, through near-death experiences, encounters with angels, and reincarnation. Based on this analysis, this paper will propose a greater focus on the beliefs and practices of SBNRs, rather than their relationship to "religion" as such.

Religious Trends in South Korea: Confucianism, Megachurches and Religious "Nones" □

According to the latest census in 2015, Protestantism is the largest religion in South Korea with nearly 10 million followers or about 20 percent of the population, followed by Buddhism and Catholicism. What is noteworthy about the country's religious landscape is that the rapid growth of religions coincided with the country's rapid modernization and industrialization, i.e., 1960s to the 1980s. Another notable fact is that, in spite of secularization, the socio-political influence of religion has not waned in the country, as religious organizations continue to not only expand their scope of influence in politics, education, and mass media. In view of these preliminary observations, this panel examines major trends of religion in contemporary South Korea in order to bring into relief some of the main characteristics of the country's changing religious culture, especially in comparison with China and Japan as well as the United States.

Chair: Glen Choi, Seneca College

Participants:

Kwangsuk Yoo, University of Costa Rica and Aju University

Rediscovering Confucianism in Korea and China

Confucians in Korea declined from 1.2 percent of the whole population in the 1985 census to 0.15 percent of the total population in 2015, while they do not belong to a category of religion in China. Since the liberation from Japanese colonialism in 1945, most Korean scholars have frequently claimed that Confucianism is one of the "enemies" of modernizing and democratizing Korean society. In China, Confucianism had been stigmatized as an empty and anachronistic cultural tradition to be annihilated at the national level. In both countries, the rapid reduction in Confucian membership seemingly reflects a cultural annihilation of Confucianism. This paper, however, tries to show that Confucianism as a religion still remains strong and pervasive in contemporary Korea and China.

Andrew Kim, Korea University

A Study on Religious "Nones" in South Korea and Japan

According to the latest census taken in South Korea in 2015, the proportion of Koreans who are religiously unaffiliated was over 56 percent, which is much higher than the world average of 16 percent. This study aims to examine the factors which account for such high ratio of Koreans who choose not to identify with a religion. Many reasons account for such a high percentage of Koreans being religious "nones" but the most important reason is historical. That is, Korea has a unique religious history in that during the last dynasty (1392-1910), all religions were banned, except Confucianism, which is marked by having ancestor worship as perhaps its sole religious aspect. Also discussed is whether religious "nones" in Korea are qualitatively different from their counterparts in other countries where data are available, particularly Japan.

Sung Gun Kim, Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary

Megachurch Trends in South Korea: A Comparison with the United States

This paper compares and contrasts the characteristics of Korean megachurches and their American counterpart. For example, megachurches in both countries usually hide their traditional denominations and instead display their religious products and services under their branded name as a "community church." The two countries' megachurches also differed in one important way, among others: expository preaching based on Biblical literalism or a fundamentalist theology rather than topical preaching, which is popular in American megachurches, was observed to be one of the most remarkable and innovative traits of successful Korean megachurches.

Sufism on the Margins

The various spiritual practices, orders, and cultural expressions collectively known as Sufism have functioned within the centre and on the periphery of Muslim institutions of religious and political authority. In different times and places, Sufis have been stalwart representatives of normative Islam, as well as visible challengers of conventional religious paradigms. Historically, Sufism has offered Muslims and others liminal spaces where conventions of scriptural interpretation, gender, and class can be suspended, and in some cases overturned. In each period, practitioners of Sufism also exhibit their own internal normative standards and marginalize figures, groups, and practices. This panel explores some of Sufism's rich variety, with particular focus on the ways in which Sufis have developed 'counter-cultural' or alternative expressions of Islamic religiosity that challenge normative frameworks of authority, authenticity, and identity.

Chair: Merin Shobhana Xavier, Queen's University

Presenters:

Rose Deighton, Emory University

Sufism for Women and the Men who Support Them: Shaykha Fawzia al-Rawi's Sufi Subversion of Male Normativity and Mind-Centred Spiritual Teachings

Many Sufi traditions are designed by men and produce knowledge, practices, and communal structures that are male-oriented. The teachings of the contemporary Shaykha Fawzia al-Rawi represent a unique inversion of marginalized aspects of Sufism, especially women and the body. Shaykha Fawzia believes that due to patriarchal precedents and our contemporary fixation on mental work, people have become disconnected from their bodies. Through embodied dhikr and physical exercises, she guides students to integrate aspects of themselves that have been excised by their conditioning and inadequately addressed by other Sufi teachings. Whereas most Muslim and Sufi spaces centre men in their rituals or are exclusively for women, Shaykha Fawzia centers women while creating space for "the men who support them." Based on textual and ethnographic research, this paper examines how Shaykha Fawzia sees centering the body and women in her teachings as a fulfillment of the Sufi commitment to integration and unity.

Sara Abdel-Latif, University of Toronto

Wandering the Desert (of the Soul): Solitary Isolation versus Collective Seclusion in the Development of Institutionalized Sufism

Early Muslim ascetics undertook practices of wandering the desert (siyaha) to train personal will through voluntary self-isolation (khalwa). After the 11th century, Persian Sufis began to deride solitary isolation through travel, preferring collective seclusion within the confines of the khanaqa (Sufi lodge). By prioritizing urban collective isolation over exurban self-seclusion, Sufis promoted homosocial networks that eroded the participation of female and non-elite male ascetics. Consequently, marginalized mystics were relegated to domestic spaces and isolated from evolving Sufi practices. This paper employs theories of psychosocial formation and historical urbanization to critically analyze how diverse Sufi practices of seclusion were eradicated and transformed through changing sociopolitical landscapes. I conclude the evolution of medieval Sufi lodges helped shape orthodox Sufi identities while forcing a variety of ascetic practitioners to the margins of Islamic societies.

William Rory Dickson, Wilfrid Laurier University and University of Winnipeg

Sufism Without Borders: The Ecstatic Teaching and Poetry of Asad Ali

Asad Ali is well-known in Syria as a Sufi poet, orator, television personality, and (retired) professor of Arabic literature at Damascus University. Although considered by some to be a 'modern day Rumi,' few volumes of his poetry have been translated into English (Helminski 1991, 2014), and much of his substantial body of work remains unknown in the West. Ali trained within several lineages of Sufi teaching, and yet he functions outside of the traditional system of Sufi orders. His spiritual poetics challenge conventional notions of scripture, transcend Sunni-Shi'a binaries, while embodying the epistemological pluralism of classical Sufism, invoking visions and dreams as genuine sources of knowledge.

Survivors' Dialogue Session

The need to capture and hear what aging survivors have to say is becoming increasingly urgent. Survivors of atrocity have encountered not only cultural or ethnic violence, but also, the trans-border migratory issues that led to their sense of barriers to belonging. In the current age of digital and postmodern fragmentation, interpersonal dialogue is needed to promote intercultural understanding. Delivering the concerns of the academy back to grassroots activism and community work may foster empowerment, liberation or hope. In this session, Lily Kim will facilitate a conversation between two survivors of genocide: Kitty Salsberg, Holocaust survivor, who will be in dialogue with D.M. Marchand-Lafortune.

D.M. Marchand-Lafortune is an educator/film-maker who is trained in law (inclusion policy) and facilitates dispute resolution. Born to but immediately taken from a Cree-Metis mother, she was later adopted by Mi'kmaq-Scottish parents. D.M. relates her experience of the "Sixties Scoop" in Canada to the work of Truth and Reconciliation. She teaches about the meaning of reconciliation to postcolonial people like D.M., embodying multiple social identity. "Decolonizing the Heart" is a message that D.M. shares on repairing relationships and individual hearts, as a step in working toward social transformation.

Chair: Lily Kim, McMaster University

Participants:

Lily Kim, McMaster University

D.M. Marchand-Lafortune

Catherine ("Kitty") Salsberg, Azrieli Foundation

The One Has Many: Examining Hindu Deities' Many Forms and Functions

The following panel explores how Hindu deities become manifest in a multiplicity of forms in literature. Adela Sandness will examine how deities have multiple shapes and forms in the Rg Veda depending upon the realm in which they function. Michelle L. Folk will use the example of Shiva in Tamil devotional poetry to examine how Puranic mythology is merged with the local to create a uniquely Tamil understanding of the sacred.

Chair: Diana Dimitrova, University of Montreal

Presenters:

Adela Sandness, St. Francis Xavier University

Three of Kind: On Gods with Multiple Bodies in the Rg-Veda

Space is understood in Rgvedic cosmology as being tripartite: heaven, earth and the space in-between. Several Vedic deities have three forms and take a different shape in each of these three realms: Sarasvati the goddess in the realm of the gods is also a physical river on earth and has a third form of a cow, source of ritual offerings substances. Agni is fire in the heavens as the sun, physical hearth and cremation fire on the earth, and lightning in the space in-between. There are many other examples. Such deities have forms also in the internal world: Agni is also digestive fire, for example; Sarasvati's lute illustrates her connection with vocal cords. These three realms, and their corresponding expressions of being that have a fourth and are one. This paper will explore gods with multiple bodies - and many and the one - in the Rg-Veda-Samhita.

Michelle L. Folk, Campion and Luther Colleges at the University of Regina

The Many Yet Singular: Merging Deities' Puranic and Local Mythologies in Tamil Devotional Poetry

While deities' numerous Pan-Indian, Sanskritic forms are articulated in literature, material culture, and ritual activities, their local manifestations are also celebrated in these same sources. The Tamil nayanars, for example, embraced Sanskritic orthodoxy by incorporating Puranic imageries in their poetry and situating it within temple life. The bhakti poets localized the Puranic Shiva by writing in the vernacular Tamil, utilizing Tamilian sangam poetic motifs, and singing the praises of the pan-Indian Shiva in his localized form at temples, thereby Tamilizing the deity and his mythology. The brahmanical Shiva of the Puranas became the local Sundareshwarar at the Meenakshi Sundarashwarar Temple by marrying the Pandyan Meenakshi and making their home in the city of Madurai. This paper will examine how the nayanars accomplished the goal of merging the Puranic and the vernacular to create a uniquely Tamil Shiva.

ROUNDTABLES (alphabetical by title)

Authors Meet Critics: None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the U.S. and Canada

This book by Joel Thiessen and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme examines the nearly one-quarter of American and Canadian adults who say they have no religion. Who are they? Why, and where, has this population grown? How do religious nones in the United States and Canada compare? What are the dynamics of being a religious none in contemporary America and Canada, and how does this willful distance from organized religion impact other aspects of daily and social life? This study turns to survey and interview data to answer these questions against the backdrop of three theoretical frameworks in the sociology of religion and religious studies: stages of decline, individualization and spiritualization, as well as polarization. The authors meet critics session will bring together the two authors of the book along with four leading experts on religion and nonreligion in Canada for their responses and critiques.

Author: Joel Thiessen, Ambrose University, and Sarah Wilkins-LaFlamme, University of Waterloo

Critics:

Lori Beaman, University of Ottawa

Stuart Macdonald, Knox College

David Seljak, St. Jerome's University

Peter Beyer, University of Ottawa

Bridging Divides Beyond Borders and Personal Anecdotes: Teaching in Religious Studies

This roundtable features contributions drawn from personal experiences in teaching religious studies courses in various national, cultural, religious, and linguistic settings, at public and private, secular and religious academic institutions. Recurring themes emerged in what we started as conversations and informal sharing of anecdotes. Beyond the sharing of personal experiences, this roundtable will engage with a critical questioning of how scholars and teachers in religious studies position themselves towards students who sometimes wish for or demand full disclosure of the religious backgrounds of those who teach them. To which extent are we obliged to respond to questions that some may regard as personal or even intimate? Are such questions legitimate or relevant? Does answering them change the ways in which a religious studies course gets taught or how students evaluate our teaching performance? At this time when assessments by students are being challenged as criteria for promotion, does this matter?

Presider: Florence Pasche Guignard, Université Laval

Participants:

Florence Pasche Guignard, Université Laval

Not a Sikh, Not a Punjabi...Et même pas (encore) une Canadienne! Reflections on Pedagogic Positionality

Ken Derry, University of Toronto Mississauga

The Personal is Political - and Pedagogical

Jessica Radin, Ryerson University

Perilous Positions: Religious Studies (and its Representatives) in the World

Sarah Richardson, University of Toronto Mississauga

I Wouldn't Mind Being Honest, If Only I Knew the Answer

Capitalizing Identities: At the Crossroads of Religion, Economics, and Social Movements

What might scholars of religion contribute to conversations about a global society that is often structured via markets where worth is determined by economic value? And, how might we study the dynamic entanglements of human social relations in a highly monetized world where the ongoing growth of capital continues to reproduce itself, benefiting only a few? This round table sheds light on these questions by examining how religious traditions, organizations, and social movements, transform and challenge dominant economic systems. The panelists draw on four case studies to carry out this task, focusing on Buddhist agricultural businesses, anti-neoliberal conspiracy theories within the QAnon Movement, the commodification of Sufism, and the production of authentic Sikhi. We aim to provoke discussions related to identity, authority, and legitimation at the intersection of religion and economics.

Presiders: Jason W.M. Ellsworth, Dalhousie University, and Zabeen Khamisa, University of Waterloo

Participants:

Jason W.M. Ellsworth, Dalhousie University

Commodified Identifications: Buddhist, Canadian, & Organic Branding in a Global Political Economy

Amarnath Amarasingam, Queen's University, and Marc-Andre Argentino

The Red-Pill of Truth: Religion, Anti-Neoliberalism and Conspiracy within the QAnon Movement"

Merin Shobhana Xavier, Queen's University

Selling Rumi: The Commodification of Sufism in Canada

Zabeen Khamisa, University of Waterloo

Producing Authentic Sikhi: The Politics of Representation and the Commodification of the Khalsa Aesthetic in North America

Connecting the Dots: The Islamophobia Industry in Canada

The awareness and recognition of Islamophobia has been growing as hate-based violence, policies, and attacks targeting Muslims across the world moves to the forefront of our global consciousness. The construction of the Muslim "other" has a long history rooted in Orientalist discourses as fear and hatred manifest into individual, ideological and systemic practices that reach far beyond geo-political boundaries. After three years of monitoring, documenting, and researching key players, themes, agencies, organizations, influencers, donors, and governments contributing to anti-Muslim racism in Canada, strong correlations and connections have become evident. Doaa Shalabi (University of Waterloo), Philip Oddi (York University), Ryan Hopkins (Carleton University), and Sahver Kuzucuoglu (Wilfrid Laurier University) - four researchers on the Canadian Islamophobia Research Project based at Wilfrid Laurier University under the guidance of Dr Jasmin Zine - present their individual areas of research and connections between them as they uncover the larger Islamophobia Industry in Canada.

Presenter: Sahver Kuzucuoglu, Wilfrid Laurier University

Participants:

Sahver Kuzucuoglu, Wilfrid Laurier University

The Islamophobia Industry in Canada: Resistance Begins at Home

Doaa Shalabi, University of Waterloo

Dissidents and Ex-Muslims: Who Speaks for Whom?

Ryan Hopkins, Carleton University

Foot Soldiers of Islamophobia: Trampled Under Foot by the Rise of the Right

Philip Oddi, York University

Securitizing Muslims Through Islamophobia in Canada

Going Further Afield: Reflections on Fieldwork

Fieldwork is a staple of many Ph.D. programs. After our projects are approved, emerging scholars venture out into the field – wherever that may be – and collect the data which we will eventually pore over when we reach the writing stage. Despite these shared steps in the dissertation process, fieldwork entails infinite possibilities. The 'field' takes us to different places, and we engage different conversation partners depending on our working definition of what constitutes the 'data' that we seek. In this panel, four scholars share their reflections on their experiences in fieldwork thus far. Working in field sites such as temples, community centres, overseas, and academic conferences, and interacting with interlocutors including tourists, religious authorities, practitioners, and fellow scholars, this panel discusses the reasons for selecting a particular site as well as the challenges that arise from navigating these different 'fields.'

Presenter: Zabeen Khamisa, University of Waterloo

Participants:

Chris Miller, University of Waterloo

This is the Field, Right Here: Reflections on Academic Discourses as the Site of Research □

Elizabeth Guthrie, University of Waterloo

"I only wish I understood what they were saying!" Fieldwork in another language in a Canada

Sahver Kuzucuoglu, Wilfrid Laurier University
Decolonized Approaches to Fieldwork: The Humble Researcher

Jason Sparkes, Wilfrid Laurier University
Formal and Informal Fieldwork □

Putting Religion in its Place: Religion and Bioregionalism in Canada

We all live in natural and built environments, or "spaces," many of which we turn into meaningful "places" through stories and practices. These spaces arguably have an impact on who we are, with whom we interact, and the ways religious and spiritual practices and communities emerge in each region. In our field, there has been surprisingly little comparative analysis of how the geography of a region, and the cultures that become embedded there, impact the forms of religiosity and spirituality we can see in these bio-regions. In this roundtable, speakers from five regions in Canada will discuss the ways the distinctive natural and cultural features of their region influence religious phenomena. In this conversation, we ask scholars to think beyond specific religious communities with which they might be familiar, and pay attention to the impact of the natural and built environments on the current state of religion in their region.

President: Paul Bramadat, University of Victoria

Presenters:

Paul Bramadat, University of Victoria
 Rachel Brown, University of Victoria
 Rubina Ramji, Cape Breton University
 Pamela Klassen, University of Toronto
 Solange LeFebvre, University of Montreal
 Alison Marshall, Brandon University

Co-Sponsored by Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (CSSR) & Canadian Sociological Association (CSA) Present

Author Meets Critics: Unveiling the Nation: The Politics of Secularism in France and Québec (McGill-Queen's University Press 2019)

Over the last few decades, politicians in Europe and North America have fiercely debated the effects of a growing Muslim minority on their respective national identities. Some of these countries have prohibited Islamic religious coverings in public spaces and institutions, while in others, legal restriction remains subject to intense political conflict. Seeking to understand these different outcomes, social scientists have focused on the role of countries' historically rooted models of nationhood and their attendant discourses of secularism.

Emily Laxer's *Unveiling the Nation* problematizes this approach. Using France and Quebec as illustrative cases, she traces how the struggle of political parties for power and legitimacy shapes states' responses to Islamic signs. Drawing on historical evidence and behind-the-scenes interviews with politicians and activists, Laxer uncovers unseen links between structures of partisan conflict and the strategies that political actors employ when articulating the secular boundaries of the nation. In France's historically class-based political system, she demonstrates, parties on the left and the right have converged around a restrictive secular agenda in order to limit the siphoning of votes by the ultra-right. In Quebec, by contrast, the longstanding electoral salience of the "national question" has encouraged political actors to project highly conflicting images of the province's secular past, present, and future.

At a moment of heightened debate in the global politics of religious diversity, Laxer's *Unveiling the Nation* sheds critical light on the way party politics and its related instabilities shape the secular boundaries of nationhood in diverse societies.

Panelists:

Emily Laxer, Glendon College, York University
 Efe Peker, University of Ottawa
 Amélie Barras, York University
 Rachel Brown, Program Coordinator, Centre for Studies in Religion & Society, University of Victoria