

PROGRAM

**CANADIAN
SOCIETY
FOR THE
STUDY OF
RELIGION**



**SOCIÉTÉ
CANADIENNE
POUR L'ÉTUDE
DE LA
RELIGION**

May
29



June
2

**2021 ANNUAL
MEETING**

MESSAGE from the PRESIDENT

Taan'shii kiiyawow/bonzoor and welcome/bienvenue everyone,

Simply put: this has been one incredible year! Incredible in the challenges to how we understand *normativity* as well as the opportunities that have emerged. The CSSR is weathering this sea-change with passion and determination to confront what we know and embrace the soon-to-be-known.

This year has been unprecedented for the CSSR in terms of equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonisation. The Black Canadian Studies Association's (BCSA) critical response to structural racism in the academy has been a catalyst for change and reflexivity in ourselves and our learned societies. Our webinar series has been a great success this past year, which has seeded the confidence to support a fully online conference and AGM in spring 2021. We are excited in bringing together our scholarship and experiences in religious studies in an online format. And finally, the CSSR is celebrating 55 years since its founding in 1965. This gives us pause on where we have been and what we have done. But we always keep our thoughts to the future hopeful in continuing to do creative and critical work in support of religious studies in Canada and beyond.

I wish you a wonderful and engaging CSSR conference this year. Know that, on behalf of our amazing executive, we are grateful for your participation and continued support of the CSSR. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you and we look forward to seeing you soon.

Maarsii,

Paul L. Gareau, PhD
President | Président
Canadian Society for the Study of Religion | Société Canadienne pour l'Étude de la Religion

ABOUT the ANNUAL MEETING

This Year's Theme

This year's theme is "Why We Shouldn't Return to "Normal." Working Towards Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization." The pandemic upended academia overnight. The abrupt transition to remote learning changed the ways we teach, do research, and learn. These changes have impacted students' and faculty's wellness. COVID 19 has exposed existing societal inequalities and created new ones - lack of access to technology, stable and safe housing, and income and food security - not only in the post-secondary community. The pandemic has further highlighted neo-liberalism's impact and exacerbated existing injustices in Canada and globally.

Many of us have heard the statement "when we return to normal" during the pandemic. "Normal," as it was constituted pre-pandemic, was exclusivist, marginalizing, and othering. Rather than returning to normal, we should combat it. Those of us trained in the humanities and social sciences, whether we are working in a traditional academic setting or non-academic field, are uniquely positioned to examine these issues and work towards equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization in our institutions and society more broadly.

Working on religion and culture more specifically allows us to examine these epistemic injustices through religious literacy - decolonizing the history of religions and the study of religion, deconstructing the other, challenging prejudices, and countering polarization. We seek at this year's meeting to provide a platform for dialogue about these important issues with the goal of working towards equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization.

Registration

All presenters - moderators, panellists, and roundtable participants - are already registered for the annual meeting. Members who are not presenting this year but would like to attending one or more sessions can register at <https://forms.gle/Y2T7ZqJRKeau3Zho9>. The registration deadline is May 21, 2021. Once registered for the conference, you will be contacted by email.

Annual Meeting Fees

We have eliminated the CSSR annual meeting fee for 2021. All current CSSR members are invited to attend. Visit the [membership page](#) on our website to join or renew your membership for this year.

Programming

Our annual meeting is Saturday, May 29-Wednesday, June 2, 2021. While Saturday is typically dedicated to our annual general meeting, president's reception, and announcement of the book prize winner, we have moved these events to later in the spring and fall.

Meeting days will run 11 am-4 pm EDT. Breaks for networking, lunch, and so forth have been factored into the program to accommodate multiple time zones, dialogue, networking opportunities, Zoom fatigue, and members' work-life balance.

We have also added new programming to this year's annual meeting. Rather than hosting our yearly luncheon for our student members, we have planned three shorter sessions on managing graduate school during COVID 19, networking, and employment opportunities after graduate school. In keeping with the theme, "Why We Shouldn't Return to "Normal"," we are hosting our first ever plenary titled *Decolonising Urgency*. Join us for a series of talks on the state of religious studies in Canada where speakers will reflect on the history of the discipline, teaching religious literacy in an ever-changing classroom, and the challenges that we face today and moving forward.

Attending on the Day

The annual meeting will take place through Zoom. If you are using Zoom for the first time, check out this [YouTube tutorial](#).

The annual meeting will be synchronous in format. All programming and presentations will take place in real time and not be pre-taped.

We will have a Zoom room set up each day where the sessions will be run (programmed as a recurring meeting by the host). To join the Zoom room, enter the provided meeting ID/web link and the password into your Zoom app/web browser for the desired session. These meeting IDs, web links, and passwords will be emailed to you if you are a presenter or registered attendee for the conference. These meeting IDs, web links, and passwords are not provided in the public version of the conference program. We respectfully ask that members not share these links or post them to social media to protect against Zoom bombing for example.

Use the same Zoom user ID to enter the conference as you registered with if you are a conference attendee. Please have your full name as your Zoom user ID if possible.

Please arrive a few minutes before the start of the session you wish to attend, especially if you are chairing or presenting. The Zoom meeting room will always be open at least 15 minutes before each session.

We ask that you remain muted during the session if you are not presenting to cut down on background noise. If there are a lot of attendees for a given session, you may also be asked to turn off your video by the room's host.

If you are using slides during your presentation, please have them ready on your computer before the session starts to screen share once you present. When screen sharing, it is good practice to "disable annotation for others" in Zoom. Visit Zoom for more information about options for [screen sharing a PowerPoint presentation](#).

Sessions will begin with presentations and close with a Q & A. To ask a question during the Q & A, please post your question (or just an indication that you would like to ask a question) in the chat at any time during the session. Once the session presentations have been given, the session chair will prompt you to ask your question during the Q & A in order of posting in the chat.

The Zoom room host will also offer technical support during each session.

Annual General Meeting and President's Reception

We traditionally hold the AGM and the president's reception on the Saturday of the annual meeting. We have scheduled the AGM and president's reception for Thursday, June 10, 2021 at 5 pm EDT.

2020 Book Prize

The CSSR had 20 books submitted for consideration for the 2020 book prize. The winner will be announced in the fall of 2021, and we invite you to "meet the author(s)" of the book prize during our upcoming webinar series. Find out more about the CSSR book prize - past winners, the nomination process, and selection criteria - on our [website](#).

Webinar Series

Thank you to everyone who participated in making this year's inaugural webinar series a success. Subscribe to our [newsletter](#) if you have not already for announcements about the 2021-22 series and go to our [YouTube](#) channel to view the 2020-21 webinars.

Questions or Comments About the Program?

Please email the program co-chairs, Michelle L. Folk and Qamer Hameed, with any questions at michelle.folk@uregina.ca or gamerhameed1@gmail.com.

Connect With Us



PROGRAM at a GLANCE



SAT May 29	8-9 am PDT 9-10 am CST MDT 11 am-12 pm EDT 12 pm-1 pm ADT	Past, Present, and Future: Religious Studies in Canada - CSSR 50 Years Later
	9-10 am PDT 10-11 am CST MDT 12-1 pm EDT 1-2 pm ADT	Morning/Lunch Break
	9:15-9:45 am PDT 10:15-10:45 am CST MDT 12:15-12:45 pm EDT 1:15-1:45 pm ADT	Navigating the Job Market After Graduate School
	10-11 am PDT 11-12 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Decolonising Urgency
	11-11:30 am PDT 12-12:30 CST MDT 2-2:30 pm EDT 3-3:30 pm ADT	Afternoon Break
	11:30 am-12:30 pm PDT 12:30-1:30 CST MDT 2:30-3:30 pm EDT 3:30-4:30 pm ADT	Examining Why and How We Teach Religious Competency: Real-World Applications
SUN May 30	9:15-9:45 am PDT 10:15-10:45 am CST MDT 12:15-12:45 pm EDT 1:15-1:45 pm ADT	Managing Graduate School During the Pandemic
	10-11 am PDT 11 am-12 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Religion, Power, and Constructions of Truth in Public Service Programs in Canada and the United Kingdom
	11-11:30 am PDT 12-12:30 CST MDT 2-2:30 pm EDT 3-3:30 pm ADT	Afternoon Break
	11:30 am-12:30 pm PDT 12:30-1:30 pm CST MDT 2:30-3:30 pm EDT 3:30-4:30 pm ADT	Authors Meet Critics on <i>None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the US and Canada</i> (New York University Press, 2020)

MON May 31	8-9 am PDT 9-10 am CST MDT 11 am-12 pm EDT 12 pm-1 pm ADT	Bridging Divides Beyond Borders and Personal Anecdotes: Teaching in Religious Studies and Thinking About Positionality Through Sharing Experiences
	9-10 am PDT 10-11 am CST MDT 12-1 pm EDT 1-2 pm ADT	Morning/Lunch Break
	9:15-9:45 am PDT 10:15-10:45 am CST MDT 12:15-12:45 pm EDT 1:15-1:45 pm ADT	Graduate Student Networking Opportunities
	10-11 am PDT 11 am-12 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Decolonising the Study of Colonialism in the Face of Eastern Christians
	11-11:30 am PDT 12-12:30 pm CST MDT 2-2:30 pm EDT 3-3:30 pm ADT	Afternoon Break
	11:30 am-1 pm PDT 12:30-2 pm CST MDT 2:30-4 pm EDT 3:30-5 pm ADT	Emerging Scholars in Religious Studies in Canada: Social Crises and Religions' Responses to COVID 19
TUES Jun 1	8-9 am PDT 9-10 am CST MDT 11 am-12 pm EDT 12 pm-1 pm ADT	Authors Meet Critics on <i>After the Revival: Pentecostalism and the Making of a Canadian Church</i> (McGill-Queen's Press, 2020)
	9-10 am PDT 10-11 am CST MDT 12-1 pm EDT 1-2 pm ADT	Morning/Lunch Break
	10-11 am PDT 11 am-12 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Constructing Narratives: What Storytelling Through Fiction and Personal Archives Tell Us About Religion and History
	11-11:30 am PDT 12-12:30 pm CST MDT 2-2:30 pm EDT 3-3:30 pm ADT	Afternoon Break
	11:30 am-12:30 pm PDT 12:30-1:30 pm CST MDT 2:30-3:30 pm EDT 3:30-4:30 pm ADT	Religious Studies in Today's University: A Case Study of the University of Alberta

WED Jun 2	8-9 am PDT 9-10 am CST MDT 11 am-12 pm EDT 12 pm-1 pm ADT	Otherness: The Need to Deconstruct and Decolonize Research and Teaching
	9-10 am PDT 10-11 am CST MDT 12-1 pm EDT 1-2 pm ADT	Morning/Lunch Break
	10-11 am PDT 11 am-12 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Past, Present, and Future: Religious Studies in Canada - CSSR 50 Years Forward

SATURDAY

May 29

Time	Presentation	Presenters
8-9 am PDT 9-10 am CST MDT 11 am-12 pm EDT 12 pm-1 pm ADT	Speaker Series on the Past, Present, and Future: Religious Studies in Canada - CSSR 50 Years Later	Moderator: David Seljak Discussants: Ruby Ramji Bill James Pat Dold Paul Bramadat
9-10 am PDT 10-11 am CST MDT 12-1 pm EDT 1-2 pm ADT	Morning/Lunch Break	
9:15-9:45 am PDT 10:15-10:45 am CST MDT 12:15-12:45 pm EDT 1:15-1:45 pm ADT	Graduate Student Session on Navigating the Job Market After Graduate School	Moderator: Sana Patel Speaker: Alyshea Cummins
10-11 am PDT 11 am-12:00 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	CSSR 2021 Plenary Address on Decolonising Urgency	Moderator: Jean-François Roussel Discussants: Becca Whitla Denise Nadeau Michael Andraos Valerie Michaelson
11-11:30 am PDT 12-12:30 pm CST MDT 2-2:30 pm EDT 3-3:30 pm ADT	Afternoon Break	
11:30 am-12:30 pm PDT 12:30-1:30 pm CST MDT 2:30-3:30 pm EDT 3:30-4:30 pm ADT	Speaker Series on Examining Why and How We Teach Religious Competency: Real World Applications	Moderator: Michelle L. Folk Discussants: A. Brenda Anderson Qamer Hameed Rebekka King Alyshea Cummins

SUNDAY

May 30

Time	Presentation	Presenters
9:15-9:45 am PDT 10:15-10:45 am CST MDT 12:15-12:45 pm EDT 1:15-1:45 pm ADT	Graduate Student Session on Managing Graduate School During the Pandemic	Moderator: Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme Speaker: Cory Steele
10-11 am PDT 11 am-12:00 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Panel on Religion, Power, and Constructions of Truth in Public Service Programs in Canada and the United Kingdom	Moderator: Heather Shipley Presenters: Catherine Holtmann, A Culturally Integrated Approach to Muslim Family Safety Lucie Robathan, Technologies of Truthfulness: Confession and Performativity in the Asylum-Claiming Process
11-11:30 am PDT 12-12:30 pm CST MDT 2-2:30 pm EDT 3-3:30 pm ADT	Afternoon Break	
11:30 am-12:30 pm PDT 12:30-1:30 pm CST MDT 2:30-3:30 pm EDT 3:30-4:30 pm ADT	Roundtable on Authors Meet Critics on <i>None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the US and Canada</i> (New York University Press, 2020)	Authors: Joel Thiessen and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme Critics: Stuart Macdonald and David Seljak

MONDAY

May 31

Time	Presentation	Presenters
8-9 am PDT 9-10 am CST MDT 11 am-12 pm EDT 12 pm-1 pm ADT	Roundtable on Bridging Divides Beyond Borders and Personal Anecdotes: Teaching in Religious Studies and Thinking About Positionality Through Sharing Experiences	Moderator: Mathieu Boisvert Presenters: Ken Derry, The Personal is Political – and Pedagogical Jessica Radin, Perilous Positions: Religious Studies (and its Representatives) in the World Sarah Richardson, I Wouldn't Mind Being Honest, If Only I Knew the Answer Florence Pasche Guignard, Not a Sikh, Not a Punjabi...Et même pas (encore) une Canadienne! Reflections on Pedagogic Positionality
9-10 am PDT 10-11 am CST MDT 12-1 pm EDT 1-2 pm ADT	Morning/Lunch Break	
9:15-9:45 am PDT 10:15-10:45 am CST MDT 12:15-12:45 pm EDT 1:15-1:45 pm ADT	Graduate Student Session on Network Opportunities	
10-11 am PDT 11 am-12 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Special Paper on Decolonizing the Study of Colonialism in the Face of Eastern Christians	Moderator: Diana Dimitrova Presenters: Clara A.B. Joseph
11-11:30 am PDT 12-12:30 pm CST MDT 2-2:30 pm EDT 3-3:30 pm ADT	Afternoon Break	
11:30 am-1 pm PDT 12:30-2 pm CST MDT 2:30-4 pm EDT 3:30-5 pm ADT	Panel on Emerging Scholars in Religious Studies in Canada: Social Crises and Religions' Responses to COVID 19	Moderator: Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme Presenters: Megan Hollinger, COVID-19 and Antisemitism: The Resurgence of Scapegoating, Stereotyping, and Conspiracies Xochiquetzal Luna, "No News is Not Always Good News:" Exploring Discourses on Catholic Faith-Based Organizations Ben Szoller, The Amazon Synod Revisited: Canadian Catholic Responses and Rural Solidarity in Light of COVID-19

TUESDAY

June 1

Time	Presentation	Presenters
8-9 am PDT 9-10 am CST MDT 11 am-12 pm EDT 12 pm-1 pm ADT	Roundtable on Authors Meet Critics on <i>After the Revival: Pentecostalism and the Making of a Canadian Church</i> (McGill-Queen's Press, 2020)	Authors: Michael Wilkinson and Linda Ambrose Critics: Phyllis Airhart, Bruce Guenther, and Joel Thiessen
9-10 am PDT 10-11 am CST MDT 12-1 pm EDT 1-2 pm ADT	Morning/Lunch Break	
10-11 am PDT 11 am-12 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Panel on Constructing Narratives: What Storytelling Through Fiction and Personal Archives Tell Us About Religion and History	Moderator: Megan Hollinger Presenters: Michelle L. Folk, From Canada to India and Back Again: Reading a Personal Archive for Fragments of Colonialist History Michael Gillingham, The "Gay" Rabbi: Israel Lyons the Younger as Scholar, Writer, Tutor, and Rabbi in Harrington
11-11:30 am PDT 12-12:30 pm CST MDT 2-2:30 pm EDT 3-3:30 pm ADT	Afternoon Break	
11:30 am-12:30 pm PDT 12:30-1:30 pm CST MDT 2:30-3:30 pm EDT 3:30-4:30 pm ADT	Speaker Series on Religious Studies in Today's University: A Case Study of the University of Alberta	Moderator: Paul L. Gareau Discussants: Shawn Flynn Peter Sabo Sharmin Sadequee Joe Wiebe

WEDNESDAY

June 2

Time	Panel	Presenters
8-9 am PDT 9-10 am CST MDT 11 am-12 pm EDT 12 pm-1 pm ADT	Panel on Otherness: The Need to Deconstruct and Decolonize Research and Teaching	Moderator: Michelle Folk Presenters: Eric Bronson, Bracketing Belief: A Fictionalist Approach to World Religions Diana Dimitrova, "Otherness," Difference and Marginality in Western and South Asian Thought
9-10 am PDT 10-11 am CST MDT 12-1 pm EDT 1-2 pm ADT	Morning/Lunch Break	
10-11 am PDT 11 am-12 pm CST MDT 1-2 pm EDT 2-3 pm ADT	Speaker Series on the Past, Present, and Future: Religious Studies in Canada - CSSR 50 Years Forward	Moderator: Paul L. Gareau Discussants: David Feltmate Michelle L. Folk Jeanine LeBlanc Michael Wilkinson



CSSR SPEAKER SERIES

2021 Plenary Address: Decolonising Urgency

Faced with the call to “normal,” four authors reflect on how the pandemic “moment” has reinforced the need to prioritize decolonization in their interrogation of settler colonialism. These include: decolonizing worship practices as part of a liberating praxis of Christian worship; a reckoning of how Christian theologies and practices have been used to propagate violence, fuel racism and expand Eurocentrism in the formation of children; the need to integrate a decolonial theology of reconciliation into the theological curriculum; and the priority of addressing white body supremacy before there can be any serious engagement with Indigenous ethics of responsibility and reciprocity. Each speaker offers insights into how processes of decolonization problematize daily practices which contribute to inequities and climate crisis. Presenters are Becca Whitla (*Liberation, (De)Coloniality, and Liturgical Practices*), Valerie Michaelson (*Decolonizing Discipline*), Michel Andraos (*The Church and Indigenous Peoples in the Americas*) and Denise Nadeau (*Unsettling Spirit: A Journey into Decolonization*).

Becca Whitla's research stems from her lived experience with communities and churches on the ground, from multiple ethno-cultural and religious traditions. She interrogates colonizing forces in Western European and Anglo North Atlantic worship and congregational singing and illustrates how marginalized communities embrace resistance and other ways of knowing in worship, and in so doing, flip coloniality on its head. She will reflect on how the pandemic has illuminated the tension between creatively rethinking approaches to worship on one hand, and a desire to reassert “normal,” with an entrenchment of Eurocentric/White ways of worship, on the other.

Denise Nadeau, with a background in somatic psychotherapy, focuses on how white body supremacy and the institution of private property shape settler colonial attitudes and behaviour. Decolonization of the body needs to be addressed before settlers can even begin to understand what an Indigenous ethos of relationality means and the importance of learning about and engaging with Indigenous legal orders to subvert the return to normal.

Michel Andraos' main area of research and teaching is intercultural theology, with a particular emphasis on dialogue with decolonial thought. He used the lens of interculturality-decoloniality to discuss the decolonization of theology. His presentation will focus on making connections between the emerging theology of reconciliation in the Canadian context and the need to link that to decolonization in dialogue and solidarity with the Indigenous resurgence movements.

Valerie Michaelson draws attention to the ways that through the formation of children, many churches reinforce and even expand the same harmful colonial ideologies and attitudes of domination and control, even as they have issued apologies for their roles in the Residential Schools. As churches look for a “new normal” beyond the pandemic, she calls for a reckoning as to how Christian theologies and practices have been used to propagate violence, fuel racism and expand Eurocentrism in the formation of children, and for a commitment to a new way forward that leads to the flourishing of all people and the planet.

Moderator: Jean-François Roussel, Université de Montréal

Discussants: Becca Whitla, St. Andrew's College
Denise Nadeau, Concordia University
Michael Andraos, Université Saint-Paul
Valerie Michaelson, Brock University

Examining Why and How We Teach Religious Competency: Real-World Applications

Many of the students in our classrooms may take one or two religion classes during their undergraduate work and are from a range of faculties (e.g., business, engineering, MAP, science, and social work). They will not become majors or go on to graduate school in religious studies. Additionally, shrinking employment opportunities mean that many of our graduate students either cannot remain in academia or are contract faculty after they graduate without the protections of being tenured faculty. Others choose not to work in a traditional academic setting for many reasons.

The study of religion and culture more specifically allows us to examine epistemic injustices through religious literacy - decolonizing the history of religions and the study of religion, deconstructing the other, challenging prejudices, and countering polarization. Those of us trained in religious studies, whether we are working in a traditional academic setting or non-academic field, are uniquely positioned to examine these issues and work towards equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization in our institutions and society more broadly. Taking the theme from this year's annual meeting as the framework for discussion, panellists will discuss teaching religious competency in today's classroom in light of these issues.

Moderator: Michelle L. Folk, Champion and Luther Colleges at the University of Regina

Discussants: A. Brenda Anderson, Luther College at the University of Regina
 Qamer Hameed, University of Ottawa
 Rebekka King, Middle Tennessee State University
 Alyshea Cummins, University of Ottawa

Graduate Student Sessions

In this three-part series, graduate students will meet to discuss navigating graduate school during the pandemic, the job market, and networking.

Past, Present, and Future: Religious Studies in Canada

Moderated by David Seljak and Paul Gareau, this two-session panel explores the history of religious studies in Canada and its future. The Canadian Society for the Study of Religion was founded in 1965 at a time when there was great growth in the discipline with the establishment of religious studies departments and programs at the post-secondary level. In this period, emerging religious studies scholars, working to distinguish themselves from theology, also introduced new ways of approaching the study of religion. The critical, comparative, and interdisciplinary approach of these new religious studies programs produced a liberating and exciting environment for studying religion, especially when faculty and students came from a variety of Western and Eastern religious traditions. In 2021, we are facing declining enrolments, the shuttering of religious studies programs, and increasing precarity for students and faculty. Religious studies is not the only discipline facing these challenges.

On the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the founding of the CSSR, we have organized a two-session panel in which scholars will discuss the history of religious studies in Canada and its current state with the purpose of looking to the future. In the first session chaired by David Seljak entitled "CSSR 50 Years Later," speakers will talk about the history of the field and the successes and challenges that religious studies scholars faced in establishing and growing the field. In the second session chaired by Paul L. Gareau entitled "CSSR 50 Years Forward," speakers will discuss the current state of religious studies in Canada - the impact of neo-liberalism on post-secondary education, religious studies in non-academic fields, and precarity in the workplace - with the goal of moving forward.

CSSR 50 Years Later

Moderator: David Seljak, St. Jerome's University

Discussants: Ruby Ramji, Cape Breton University
 Bill James, Queen's University
 Pat Dold, Memorial University
 Paul Bramadat, University of Victoria

CSSR 50 Years Forward

Moderator: Paul L. Gareau, University of Alberta

Discussants: David Feltmate, Auburn University
 Michelle L. Folk, Champion and Luther Colleges at the University of Regina
 Jeanine LeBlanc, University of Alberta
 Michael Wilkinson, Trinity Western University

Religious Studies in Today's University: A Case Study of the University of Alberta

In a time of political change and economic austerity, religious studies is often one of the first disciplines to feel the grind of attrition with shuttered departments or program reshuffling. This is true at the University of Alberta with the recent provincial funding cuts that have instigated a massive institutional reorganization and the move of religious studies within the Department of History and Classics. But, the study of religion remains an important aspect to the university with scholars and different institutes and colleges. This roundtable highlights the study of religion at the University of Alberta within these different institutions and areas of focus that remain at the University of Alberta.

Moderator: Paul L. Gareau, University of Alberta

Discussants: Shawn Flynn, University of Alberta
Peter Sabo, University of Alberta
Sharmin Sadequee, University of Alberta
Joe Wiebe, University of Alberta

PAPERS

Eric Bronson, York University

Bracketing Belief: A Fictionalist Approach to World Religions

Teaching Introduction to World Religions courses poses unique problems for those of us trained in Western philosophy. Accustomed to analyzing truth-claims, our well-reasoned critiques of religious traditions are likely to come across as ethnocentric. Decolonizing World Religion courses means subverting such Western philosophical traditions in favor of pedagogies that better address the multi-ethnic student body in Canadian universities today. Teaching ancient religious stories in the spirit of religious fictionalism is a good way to introduce philosophy to non-majors, and an even better way to teach religion in a multi-cultural classroom setting. Religious fictionalism encourages us to bracket our own culturally-informed biases and “go with” the stories in the spirit of reading good fiction. Once we take belief out of the equation, in the spirit of religious fictionalism, we open our students to a wider horizon of religious and philosophical truths.

Diana Dimitrova, Université de Montréal

“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 post-phenomenological 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.

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

From Canada to India and Back Again: Reading a Personal Archive for Fragments of Colonialist History

The Government of India planned to close British-era military dairy farms 129 years after the first farm was established at Allahabad. While news reports credited the farms with modernizing dairy practices, India Office records provide much different insights into their operations during the colonial era. Charles A. Bradbrooke (1873-1948) served at Lucknow’s military dairy farm before settling in Saskatchewan and becoming the Indian Agent at Pelly. The Saskatchewan Archives’ Bradbrooke fonds is an assortment of things we imagine ourselves collecting - awards, newspaper clippings, notebooks, and postcards. Bradbrooke’s keepsakes offer us a unique glimpse into India’s and Canada’s colonialist histories. I will examine the Bradbrooke fonds and India Office records for what we can learn about these colonialist narratives from someone that was memorialized by a donation of family mementos to a local archives and whom, although lesser known than others (e.g., William Jones), was nonetheless part of these narratives.

Michael Gillingham, University of Alberta

The “Gay” Rabbi: Israel Lyons the Younger as Scholar, Writer, Tutor, and Rabbi in Harrington

In Harrington, Anglo-Irish author Maria Edgeworth presents a psychological portrait of a young British boy and his journey from antisemitism to philosemitism. Exposed to antisemitic myths and legends as a young boy by his nanny, his prejudices begin to be undermined when the main character in the novel begins to meet actual British Jews. One Jewish character of interest in the novel is Israel Lyons the Younger. Edgeworth presents Lyons as a rabbi, a scholar, an author, and a tutor for students studying Hebrew at Cambridge University. I am interested in how Edgeworth includes Lyons, an actual historical figure, employing him to help unsettle and challenge the early prejudices of the main character. I am also interested in Edgeworth’s choice to depict Lyons as a cosmopolitan rabbi. I will be examining historical references for Lyons, discussing and comparing these references with Edgeworth’s use of Lyons in the novel.

Megan Hollinger, University of Ottawa

COVID-19 and Antisemitism: The Resurgence of Scapegoating, Stereotyping, and Conspiracies

Antisemitism has existed in various forms over time. Stereotypes, conspiracy theories, and tropes about Jewish people that persist in today's world originated in specific socio-religious contexts. These portrayals and assumptions about Jews have, over time, helped fuel and have been fuelled by social crises and upheavals, such as pandemics and economic instability. This paper explores, through an analysis of visual culture, the origins of tropes and stereotypes of Jews in relation to various episodes of scapegoating Jews for major crises. More specifically, this paper examines, through art, the Medieval origins of these tropes, conspiracies, and stereotypes in relation to the Black Death and anti-Jewish blood libels. It then moves to the COVID-19 pandemic and examines different antisemitic memes in order to demonstrate how these same anti-Jewish portrayals have been renewed by the pandemic. This paper concludes with a discussion about the implications of social crises on antisemitism.

Catherine Holtmann, University of New Brunswick

A Culturally Integrated Approach to Muslim Family Safety

Providers of services for victims and perpetrators of family violence may be uncertain how to work with minority faith groups. Uncertainty can turn into inaction and/or discrimination when faced with linguistic and cultural barriers. This presentation begins with the analysis of social scientific data collected from Muslim women and men 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 work of the Muslim Centre for Social Support and Integration 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 building capacity to ensure the safety and inclusion of Muslim families.

Xochiquetzal Luna, Wilfrid Laurier University

"No News is Not Always Good News:" Exploring Discourses on Catholic Faith-Based Organizations

Since COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic, Catholic faith-based organizations (CFBOs) increasingly defy how religion-inspired organizations engage with non-religious sectors and businesses. They make alliances to actively support vulnerable populations and join efforts to create job networks, emotional support, or websites that promote gender equality, to name just a few. In this sense, CFBOs are a clear example that religious and non-religious actors can work together. However, does the media have perceived these efforts? This paper investigates the discourses that secular mainstream media in Mexico City and Moscow depict for CFBOs since COVID-19 by doing a content analysis of their published news. The aim is to juxtapose two countries where Roman Catholicism is a majority (Mexico) and minority (Russia) religion, to understand how the media perceive CFBOs in a time of crisis in two societies where religious charity plays a vital role in humanitarian assistance.

Lucie Robathan, McGill University

Technologies of Truthfulness: Confession and Performativity in the Asylum-Claiming Process

This paper is concerned with the function of truth in the process of claiming refugee status in the U.K. It is a characteristic tension of the asylum-claiming experience to be routinely perceived as a liar, within an institutional setting that insists on truthfulness as the marker of legitimacy and credibility as the marker of truth. Building upon Beard and Nöll's Foucauldian reading of the asylum claimant as a confessional subject, this paper will evaluate the production of truth in this system as a spiritual practice. By filtering the notion of confession through the lens of 'epistemic injustice,' it will argue that the particular epistemic harms enacted through the asylum-claiming process work to distort the quasi-confessional process. The imbalance of power in relation to credibility renders this context more akin to spiritual abuse than spiritual practice, producing a performative version of truth-telling as a test of political deservingness.

Ben Szoller, University of Waterloo

The Amazon Synod Revisited: Canadian Catholic Responses and Rural Solidarity in Light of COVID-19

After years of increased deforestation, sprawling fires, and growing concern for rural health, Pope Francis convened the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon region in October 2019. Months later, the novel coronavirus emerged. Within Catholic social teaching, COVID-19 can be seen not as a discrete singular crisis, but as a global event that amplifies injustices already compounded by ecological devastation, economic disparity, and the lasting impacts of colonization. This paper steps back to examine the central themes of the Amazon Synod in light of COVID-19 and considers its import for Canadian Catholic communities moving forward. It observes how Canadian bishops and the Catholic Organization for Development and Peace engage the public sphere, particularly around issues of globalization, indigeneity, and rural health developed within recent documents.

SPECIAL PAPER

Clara A.B. Joseph, University of Calgary

Decolonising the Study of Colonialism in the Face of Eastern Christians

In "Secularism in the Framework of Heterodoxy" (PMLA 2008), Gauri Viswanathan proposes the term "heterodoxy" to signify an anti-colonial and anti-Christian "expansive idea of secularism" (476). In *Jesus in Asia* (2018), R.S. Sugirtharajah gives us the term "minority hermeneutics" (251) to refer to anti-colonial interpretations of the Bible and mainstream Western Christianity by the colonised during British colonisation. Such scholarship purports to decolonise by aiming Christianity. However, a case study of the Thomas Christians of India responding to colonialism in the sixteenth century forces us to rethink some of the theoretical paradigms of orientalist and postcolonial scholars. This paper, therefore, does three things. Firstly, it highlights some problematic assumptions of postcolonial scholarship. Secondly, by examining two primary sources, it presents the case of the anti-colonial struggles of Indian Christians in the early phase of colonialism. Thirdly, it considers what the findings mean for anti-colonial and decolonial studies and, notably, for Religious Studies.

ROUNDTABLES

Authors Meet Critics on *After the Revival: Pentecostalism and the Making of a Canadian Church*, McGill-Queen's Press, 2020

Authors: Michael Wilkinson, Trinity Western University, and Linda Ambrose, Laurentian University

Critics: Phyllis Airhart, Emmanuel College at the University of Toronto, Bruce Guenther, Trinity Western University, and Joel Thiessen, Ambrose University

Early Pentecostal revivals swept through Canadian communities in the early 1900s. Tent meetings inspired curious onlookers to witness these phenomena for themselves. Following these revival meetings, Pentecostals organized, built churches, and expanded across the country, while many churches were beginning to decline. Since 1919, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) worked to establish order and steady growth by managing financial and material assets, offering programs designed to attract families and youth, and training leaders. While Pentecostalism sometimes reflects broader cultural trends and at other times resists them, the PAOC has grown steadily to become one of the largest evangelical denominations in Canada. Addressing broader questions about how religious movements organize, establish an identity, and develop a subculture that flourishes, *After the Revival* explores the fascinating history of Pentecostalism in Canada and the ways the church, represented by the PAOC, engages with Canadian society.

Authors Meet Critics on *None of the Above: Nonreligious Identity in the US and Canada*, New York University Press, 2020

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 two leading experts on religion and nonreligion in Canada for their responses and critiques.

Authors: Joel Thiessen, Ambrose University, and Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, University of Waterloo

Critics: Stuart Macdonald, Knox College, and David Seljak, St. Jerome's University

Bridging Divides Beyond Borders and Personal Anecdotes: Teaching in Religious Studies and Thinking About Positionality Through Sharing Experiences

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?

Moderator: Mathieu Boisvert, Université du Québec à Montréal

Participants:

Ken Derry, University of Toronto Mississauga The Personal is Political – and Pedagogical

A key element of my approach to teaching is to encourage critical self-reflection, using concepts from the study of religion to understand our own beliefs and practices. I have found it exceedingly helpful to model such self-reflection by offering up examples from my own life for consideration – from thinking about my wedding using theories of ritual to explaining how patriarchal ideologies contribute to my unconscious gender biases. Also, as a white cisgender male settler who often teaches about colonialism and Indigenous traditions, I emphatically believe in the importance of disclosing certain aspects of my identity in the classroom. It would be more than irresponsible to avoid discussing the relevance of my privilege and power when attempting to understand historical and ongoing colonial violence and Indigenous resilience.

Jessica Radin, Ryerson University

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

Over the course of several years spent teaching in Canada, the US, and the Middle East, I have become aware of how carefully the study of religion must be approached in some non-Western – and particularly theocratic – countries. In contexts where teaching about a non-State sponsored tradition can be downright dangerous, personal anecdotes are simultaneously more important as a pedagogical tool, and more fraught. While my pedagogical approach has been to refuse any discussion about my own background, students often assume that they know what tradition I come from. Additionally, the ubiquity of the internet means that it is increasingly impossible to keep one's personal affiliations private. Taking into account questions of political, sexual, and national affiliation, I investigate the ways that I have learned to negotiate questions about my own identity and consider the problematics of the 'evidence of experience' in teaching religious studies.

Sarah Richardson, University of Toronto Mississauga

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

I teach about religions and arts in Historical studies and visual studies Departments at the UofT Mississauga. My research focus is on Buddhist art. Sometimes I also teach courses about Buddhism. My students are mostly young, bright and curious, and come from all sorts of different backgrounds. I am invariably asked by students whether I am Buddhist, and I have found that my answer to this question has been changing over the past five years. While at first I resisted answering something so personal, I no longer feel it is appropriate denying their natural curiosity. Furthermore, since in my courses I am encouraging students to critically examine their own positionality, and how it contributes to their beliefs, assumptions and values, wouldn't it be hypocritical for me to obfuscate my own position? And yet, this is still complicated territory, as I am not always sure I have the answer.

Florence Pasche Guignard, Université Laval

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

My experience teaching courses in religious studies in Switzerland and in Canada has led me to question my own self-identification and perceived identity, as well as notions of privilege and discrimination. In this contribution, I share a personal reflection on positionality through my experience designing and teaching introductory level courses on Sikhism and other religions, thus involving discussions about colonialism, post-colonialism, migration, and identity, while I was requesting and receiving my Canadian citizenship. While I am careful to never out my students' religious, political, or sexual practices and identities, can I expect them not to be curious about my status as a landed immigrant with French as my first language? Deconstructing my own and my students' assumptions, I think about how teaching in the multicultural and diverse urban context of Toronto compares to that of francophone universities in Switzerland and in Québec and what this means to my pedagogy.

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