

**CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION  
FALL 2020 WEBINAR SERIES**

# **WEBINAR #2: UNDERSTANDING AND COMBATING HATRED AND VIOLENCE THROUGH RELIGIOUS LITERACY AND THE LAW**

**ALLEVIATING THE CLASH OF  
IGNORANCE: COMBATING  
ISLAMOPHOBIA THROUGH  
RELIGIOUS LITERACY**

Presentation by Alyshea Cummins,  
University of Ottawa



**ONTOLOGIES OF VIOLENCE:  
DECONSTRUCTION, PACIFISM,  
AND DISPLACEMENT**

Presentation by Maxwell Kennel,  
McMaster University



**ISSUES OF INTERPRETATION: A  
CASE STUDY OF COMBATING  
ANTISEMITISM IN A LEGAL  
CONTEXT**

Presentation by Megan Hollinger,  
University of Ottawa

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Webinar open and  
free to attend for all  
2020 and 2021 CSSR  
members

**OCT • 29 • 2020**  
3pm EDT

Webinar chaired by  
Catherine Holtmann,  
University of New  
Brunswick

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## **ALLEVIATING THE CLASH OF IGNORANCE: COMBATING ISLAMOPHOBIA THROUGH RELIGIOUS LITERACY**

Presentation by Alyshea Cummins, University of Ottawa

*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 presentation 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.*

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## **ISSUES OF INTERPRETATION: A CASE STUDY OF COMBATING ANTISEMITISM IN A LEGAL CONTEXT**

Presentation by Megan Hollinger, University of Ottawa

*This presentation is a discourse analysis of the Ontario Court of Justice case R. v. Mahr (2010). Max Mahr was an 83-year-old man living in Guelph, Ontario. Mahr was raised in prewar Germany under Nazi influence and fought for Germany in World War II. He moved to Canada in 1958, but it was not until 2009 that he decided to go to different public properties around the city of Guelph and graffiti them with slanderous statements about Jews and Israel, including statements to kill Jews. Mahr was subsequently charged with a Section 319(2) violation of the Criminal Code of Canada for willfully promoting hatred towards an identifiable group. Through the analysis of this case, this I explore some of the limitations and complexities that arise from using law as a response to anti-Jewish hate. Contextualized with work from legal scholars and sociologists of law, I argue that the law could potentially be normalizing certain concepts, such as Jewish identity and antisemitism, and that these conceptual constructions limit the law's ability to be an effective combatant to anti-Jewish hate in Canada.*

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## **ONTOLOGIES OF VIOLENCE: DECONSTRUCTION, PACIFISM, AND DISPLACEMENT**

Presentation by Maxwell Kennel, McMaster University

*This presentation critically examines the ontological and epistemological significance of the concept of violence in the early work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida, in the works of Mennonite philosophical theologians Peter C. Blum and Chris K. Huebner, and in the *Death and the Displacement of Beauty* trilogy by feminist philosopher of religion Grace M. Jantzen. Although Derrida, the Mennonites, and Jantzen use the term 'violence' within different disciplines and with different priorities, each understands the term to refer to something that has a distinctly ontological and epistemological character. In their work, violence not only names physical violations of the body but also describes ontological terms like 'Being' and the use of rhetorical force or coercion within the domains of thinking, knowing, and speaking. This presentation summarizes this twofold association and provides new avenues for thinking about hatred, racism, and police violence by attending to how violence is conceptualized in Derrida's early commentary on Levinas, the twenty first century philosophical turn in Mennonite pacifism, and Jantzen's critical genealogy of violence in the cultural habitus of the west.*