

**CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION /
SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE POUR L'ÉTUDE DE LA RELIGION**

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING / RÉUNION DU CONSEIL
VIRTUAL MEETING AGENDA
MAY 7TH, 2024, 12 TO 2PM ET**

Present: Diana Dimitrova, Chris Miller, Kalpesh Bhatt, Jacqueline Giesbrecht, Rachel Brown, Christopher Austin, Michael Gillingham, and Alison Marshall

Regrets: Paul Gareau, Michelle Folk, Zabeen Khamisa, and Rubina Ramji

1. Welcome/Bienvenue

Start time: 12:02 Eastern

2. Accept Agenda/ Accepter l'ordre du jour

MOTION : *Accept the agenda*

Moved: Rachel Brown

Seconded: Chris Miller

Motion carried unanimously

Discussion:

- C. Austin asks if this is where we set the agenda for the AGM [Diana confirms yes]. Chris asks if that means we need to determine whether we will pursue Charity status. Diana suggests that we will announce it at the AGM, but there is nothing to vote on as of yet
- Alison asks about adding an agenda item reflecting a collective interest among the Executive in decolonizing the CSSR. Alison suggests that this was something which came up at the previous executive meeting
 - Rachel clarifies exactly what this means. Are there precise goals/targets in mind?
 - Alison notes that this point was raised by Zabeen and Ruby. Will check to clarify what they meant, articulate what they wanted, and ask if they want us to share this at the AGM
- Rachel suggests we should also add an item on the AGM agenda updating member on what we plan to work on over the next year
 - Clearly define Executive roles
 - Systematize databases/online storage of passwords, files, on
 - Research and pursue charity status

3. Accept the minutes of the executive meeting of April 8th, 2024/Accepter le Procès verbal de la réunion du conseil du 8 avril 2024

MOTION: *Accept the minutes*

Moved: Chris Austin

Seconded: Kalpesh

Motion carried unanimously

4. Accept the minutes of the executive meeting of April 11th, 2024/Accepter le Procès verbal de la réunion du conseil du 11 avril 2024

MOTION: *Accept the minutes*

Moved: Rachel

Seconded: Jacqueline

Motion carried unanimously

5. Reports/ Rappports

Programme Chair/ Présidence pour le programme (Alison Marshall/Michelle Folk)

Alison Marshall is this year's program chair at the McGill University Congress 2024 meetings from June 15-17 with Diana Dimitrova as LAC. Congress continues to have monthly one hour Countdown to Congress meetings which I attend to hear about deadline updates, room allocation, av, furnishings requests, catering and other information to help us with program planning and pass along to our members. We submit forms to Congress for rooms, and other requests. Additionally we attend other clinics Congress schedules to provide additional information about specific programming issues and the website. We have had some issues with the new CSSR website which has complicated program planning, though the addition of the program chairs email address has streamlined work and communication with members wishing for clarification of scheduling and other issues. People who submitted individual, panel, roundtable and workshop presentations received an acceptance letter via this email address. Submissions for individual, panel, roundtable and workshop presentations are now saved in a dual format which we greatly appreciate. We receive a copy of the submission via the program chairs email address, as well as a copy that is entered into fields on a template and downloadable from the new CSSR website. Going forward and in relation to the new website, we would like to tweak the CSSR conference submission template and formatting of select fields, as the fields in exported files have hidden formatting that makes the extraction of information from select fields challenging and sometimes impossible. We are grateful to have a backup system for the submission process. In cases where field information is missing on the website exported file, we can search the individual emails and locate the information. We wish to thank Rachel Brown for her tremendous work on the newsletter and circulating the program broadly to members, as well as facilitating extensive changes to and the implementation of a new CSSR website.

CSSR meets in person (not online) at Congress between Saturday June 15 and Monday June 17 at McGill University this year, one day less than in previous years given rising travel and conference costs. Roughly twenty-two Sessions with nearly 80 presentations run from 8:30 am-5:00 pm EDT in keeping with the Federation's schedule for Congress and there are scheduled breaks in nearby rooms for rest and socializing as in previous years. Participation in this year's meetings remains fairly healthy with nearly 80 presentations, though we would have expected numbers to be much higher as this year's venue is McGill University. Thus far, we have received a few cancellations that have been balanced by a few late submissions which we have accepted. The majority of sessions have volunteers for chairs/moderators but we still require volunteers for 4 panels. Please let me know if you are interested in chairing a session.

As of May 7, 66 people have registered on the Congress website to present and/or attend the CSSR meetings in person at Congress. New this year, we have also added a link on the Congress registration site to our own CSSR membership renewal page, making it easier for people to navigate to our membership page and pay this year's membership fees after registering for Congress. We note that Congress has asked registrants for information about accessibility needs, though Congress has been clear that it is the responsibility of the associations to follow up with members and determine their accessibility needs beyond wheelchair assistance which Congress provides. Thus far two people have indicated accessibility needs in their registration. One has asked for unspecified scheduling accessibility and the other has requested food accommodations. Given the high cost of catering at Congress and our limited funds, we have tried to accommodate member needs while keeping within our limited budget. This year the reception offers a mix of gluten free crackers and tortilla chips in addition to regular crackers and a variety of other foods at the reception to meet the needs of people with various diets. We host the graduate

lunch which is normally pizza and this year we have ordered gluten free options as well. We have also arranged for 50 drink tickets to be available for 50 members to use at the reception. Congress is finalizing the details about happy hour receptions, events, and drink tickets, a limited number of which will be distributed to associations.

Congress has been working on an accessibility guide (with details of childcare at Congress and other issues) which is now on their website. In the next month Congress will provide emergency plan for us to follow with contact information. PC/LAC kit will have this information. For accessible equipment rentals, transportation, accessible maps, quiet spaces on campus, priority seating and other things see:
<https://www.federationhss.ca/fr/congres/centre-de-soutien>

When choosing rooms on campus, we have tried to ensure proximity to a variety of food venues on the host campus with these diets in mind. AV and Catering orders are complete. The process for submitting forms has been somewhat difficult with parts of the organizer's portal not working the way they should (links don't work, form submission templates not working). Additionally, Congress has been having difficulty with Excel spreadsheet glitches. Congress organizers have been very flexible given the difficulty most associations have had submitting forms and in most cases we have emailed our orders and requests, and also followed up by phone. I am hoping the process is smoother next year.

We had the option of making attendance of our sessions available to anyone who registers as a community member for 30 dollars. The executive remains divided on the subject with some suggesting that entering the program into the open events calendar (deadline passed March 29) would help boost attendance, and raise the profile of our group, and others expressing privacy and room capacity concerns.
<https://www.federationhss.ca/en/congress/programming-events/events-calendar>. This might be something we wish to discuss further.

In terms of the Childcare Subsidy (200 dollars) and Graduate Merit Awards (500 dollars), we have been allotted two of each by Congress, with the possibility of bonus candidates in each category. Thus far, we have one confirmed recipient of the Childcare Subsidy at Congress in the amount of 200 dollars. This person was the only one to apply. Blind review to determine the recipients and ranking for the Graduate Merit Awards has been done and award recipients will be notified in the coming days. We have nominated two additional candidates (ranked first and second choice) if there are bonus awards given to our associations. These additional candidate nominations are not guaranteed an award. Two students applied for and were given complimentary BIPOC registration links in keeping with Congress policy.

This year most of the meetings take place in the Birks Building (205 and 111), with Monday meetings happening in the Trottier Building. As is past practice, presenters may use the laptop, screen and other equipment provided in rooms for which Congress support will be provided. Mac Users should bring their presentations on a USB stick and/or provide their own dongle (adaptors) and laptops. Congress does not provide support for equipment brought by presenters.

Some of the new initiatives and events at Congress this year include Indigenous protocols (eg smudging and land acknowledgments), SSHRC mentoring and networking sessions and a new lounge this year. Accordingly, I have taken the liberty of adding the Congress land acknowledgement to our program. The placement and other related details might be something we wish to talk about further and decide as a group given our discussions to decolonize the CSSR:

McGill University is on land which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst Indigenous peoples, including the Haudenosaunee and Anishinabeg nations. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples whose presence marks this territory on which peoples of the world now gather.

Congress has also added theme trivia nights this year and these and other Big thinking events are listed in the open events calendar (see above).

Congress is to provide a statement on the McGill protests and encampments in the coming days.

Discussion:

- Alison confirms that Congress prep is going smoothly
 - Catering, accommodations all sorted; Chairs for sessions mostly sorted
- Most recent Congress meetings have been concerned with encampments on McGill campus
 - Located on the main campus lawn; should not affect the 2 buildings CSSR is in
- Chris will re-send reminder for people to sign up for sessions to be around the building
- Jacqueline asks whether we are able to add on to the suggested Land Acknowledgement? Offering something specific about the way in which the study of religion informs understanding of these relationships? Alison confirms that we can. Jacqueline suggests looking into and developing this further

Membership Secretary and Communication Officer / Secrétaire des membres et agente des communication (Rachel Brown)

Website

- This was one of the biggest tasks of my last year
- Had to switch hosts recently, but all should be in working order now
- Will continue to work with the developer, Kyle (who has been incredibly helpful and supportive), on streamlining the website. Please send me suggestions of additions or edits that you think would help to make the website more user friendly, clean, etc.

Membership Secretary Updates

- Our tracking of memberships will change a bit with the new website and payment process. We are now shifting to a year membership based on the date that someone signs up/pays rather than an annual membership for the calendar year no matter when you sign up.
- 63 paid members since October 2023; 6 unpaid members (who have submitted membership forms but haven't paid yet); For a total of 69 members
 - I anticipate we will get a lot more memberships in the next couple of months leading up to Congress.
 - I will send out an email to all unpaid members who are set to speak at the conference with a reminder to sign up for their membership later this month
- Membership categories: Regular (\$100); Associate with SR (\$60); Associate without SR (\$55); Student with SR (\$50); Student without SR (\$30)
 - Decided to keep these categories for the new website for now. Can discuss if they still serve us well since most folks have access to SR through their institutions. I would propose changing to three categories – Regular (\$100), Associate (\$60) and Student (\$40)
- Payment through e-transfer is still a bit clunky and would love to provide a more streamlined option for folks that would be worked into the website, so it all happens in one step. For tracking, the manual labour is a bit frustrating and requires way more time for the membership secretary than it should. I have to go into the website and manually look up the member, make sure they have an account and verify their payment date/profile details.

Communications Updates

- Newsletter went out weekly over the Fall and into the new year.
- I switched to a bi-weekly (unless there was deadline specific news) in mid-January. It was requiring a ton of time and most things were not new in a given newsletter, so made the choice to go to twice a month rather than every week.
- 45-50% readership with between 5-8% engagement with links

Discussion:

- Rachel propose a shift towards fewer membership categories. Simplify to Regular, Associate, and Student, rather than each tier also having an option for with our without access to *Studies in Religion*. Fewer categories would be easier for handling membership, and also easier for our membership to understand.
 - Ruby raises that proposing this will require 2 consecutive AGM votes

- Christopher Austin also supports this shift to fewer categories. But each category should include access to *SR*, clearly indicating that this is our society's journal
- Alison commends Rachel for her many hours of work. Her and Ruby suggest that the workload needs to be reduced. Christopher also seconds this thanks and recognition.
 - Christopher suggests that he can help with membership confirmation. Also asks whether some of the work to create online profiles for our members may be redundant (are people using these?). Since he already tracks membership through his work as Treasurer, he agrees to take on this work of confirming membership starting now
- Christopher wants all references to the old Treasurer Gmail account removed from the website (specifically highlights information about Conference Travel funding)
- Christopher and Alison will coordinate to confirm whether all Congress presenters are paid CSSR members
- Diana asks if we should move the newsletter to being monthly (it is currently bi-weekly, and down from weekly the year prior)
 - Rachel says that we can think about this, but the bi-weekly format is not overly burdensome
- Ruby suggests that we need to talk about membership categories at the Exec meeting right before AGM. Then talk about a proposed change at the AGM. Then vote on it again at the AGM in 2025.
 - We need to clearly communicate to our membership why we want to move to fewer categories
- Ruby suggests that we should re-visit the jobs that got shifted to Rachel as Membership Secretary when Samiksa stepped down as Communications Liaison

Discussion:

- Rachel thanks C. Austin for taking over tracking of membership
- Rachel and Kyle updating information on the Student Essay contest (thank you to Jacqueline and Kalpesh for providing this info)
- C. Miller asks about uploading Exec and AGM minutes to the website. Will reach out to Rachel by email to coordinate this

Treasurer/ Trésorier (Christopher Austin)

In advance of our pre-AGM executive meeting, please find attached a DRAFT budget for 2024-25. Please have a look, keeping in mind your own particular role and interests for the society, and think about whether:

- I am missing something altogether here
- I have short-changed or badly anticipated a particular budget expense line
- the projected amounts, both revenues and expenses, are reasonable

Expense amounts around Congress are especially soft -- Alison or others with experience here, by all means propose adjustments to these.

I think the easiest thing to do is reflect on these issues and bring them to the exec meeting. I know from experience that the most efficient way to iron out a budget for adoption is a live screen-share modification of the excel file during a Zoom meeting with all concerned, not individual emails to me with suggestions – so please keep your thoughts in reserve for the meeting and we can make the adjustments on screen then.

A few other general points:

- Note this budget anticipates no change at all around the matter of charity status, adopting business paypal, etc. -- it assumes all our current practices will remain unchanged, or at least any future developments on that front will have no financial consequences.
- I have a BMO meeting tomorrow and will get the ball rolling on investments access. We will certainly have to withdraw from them; the question is how much.
- Remember we will polish and agree a budget draft at the pre-AGM executive meeting, and then once/if it is adopted at AGM, we will adhere to it -- i.e. we will not introduce new unbudgeted expenses over the course of the year.

CSSR Draft Budget 2024-25

1			
2			
3			
4	Revenues		18,575.00
	Total		
	memberships	7,000.00	
5			
	BMO Community Account	5,000.00	
6			
7	Investment withdrawal	6,575.00	
8			
9	Expenses		
10	Total	18,575.00	
11	Zoom Account	900.00	
12	IAHR Membership	475.00	
13	CCSR - SR Subscription	1,500.00	
14	CCSR Executive Honoraria	7,200.00	
15	Prizes	-	
16	Book Prize	500.00	unchanged from last year
17	Undergraduate Student Prize	350.00	unchanged from last year
18	MA Student Prize	300.00	unchanged from last year
19	PhD Student Prize	650.00	unchanged from last year
20	Website	1,000.00	There will be no major upgrades or website work in 2024-25, only \$80 /mo to Parsons Design for maintenance. Note that this effectively assumes all our current practices with membership renewals, Interac Payments, etc., will remain unchanged, with no modifications to the website, no adoption of any new transaction accounts such as Paypal etc.
21	Congress	-	
22	FHSS Society Registration Fee	1,100.00	
23	Rooms / other meeting fees	800.00	a ballpark figure, difficult to anticipate on the basis of current quotes for Montreal meeting
24	Student Travel Subsidies	2,000.00	The 2023-24 Budget adopted at the 2023 AGM reserved \$6,500 for student travel subsidies. I am uncertain what a reasonable amount is to set in reserve here, but \$6,500 seems unwarranted.
25	CCSR Executive Travel	500.00	a ballpark figure, difficult to anticipate on the basis of current quotes for Montreal meeting
26	AGM Reception	500.00	a ballpark figure, difficult to anticipate on the basis of current quotes for Montreal meeting
27	CCSR Grad Lunch	800.00	a ballpark figure, difficult to anticipate on the basis of current quotes for Montreal meeting
28	Banking Fees	50.00	
29			
30	Total Surp / Dfct	0.00	
31			

This is an optimistic figure based on the current year, including projections of upcoming memberships for the April-June 2024 period, and assumes there will be no decline in memberships for the 2024-25 year. But we are meeting in Montreal this year, where is next year's meeting? Memberships tend to be higher in years where Congress is in a major central city.

A working surplus must be maintained at all times in the Community Account. It should never dip below \$5,000 or so. We have nearly \$10,000 in it at the moment, so it would be safe to mark out \$5,000 or so as useable cash for the 2024-25 year.

This is the discretionary amount for debate: how much should we draw out from investments to balance the budget?

We have apparently decided to keep the Zoom account.

This amount leaves unchanged the 2023-24 Budget's allotted funds. Note that if left unchanged, the entire amount of the proposed investments withdrawal will go directly into the pockets of society executive members. I strongly urge the abolition of this practice at least for tenured or tenure-stream society executives.

unchanged from last year

unchanged from last year

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Discussion:

- Chris shared a draft budget in April with the Executive. This is the budget that will be presented at the AGM (without the notes in the margins). Shares his screen and we collectively modify the document.
- The following shares things which were updated/discussed. The full/final budget will be shared at the 2024 AGM
 - C. Austin notes that \$7000 in projected revenue may be overly optimistic
 - Jacqueline notes that \$300 for Publicly Engaged Research in Religion prize was missing
 - SR subscription adjusted to \$1200
 - C. Austin wants the record to reflect that he proposes the honorarium for executive be abolished. At the very least, this be eliminated for tenured/tenure-track exec
 - C. Miller suggests making the honoraria contingent on travel to Congress. Exec can request the \$600 honorarium if they travel to Congress to fulfill their duties. Otherwise, they cannot
 - Jacqueline requests clarity on what the honorarium is for. Are there stipulations? Diana confirms that it is just money exec members get in thanks for their service
 - Diana raises that we have voted on this number in the past, at exec meetings and AGMs. It should stay in place
 - Michael notes that he did not expect the honorarium, but was grateful to receive it. Thanks C. Austin for his work in getting us back on track financially
 - Since we will need to draw from our investments in order to pay out this money, Rachel asks if we have ever drawn from our investments before. Also asks if we should raise membership. Additionally, how much could we withdraw from our investment accounts without reducing the principal (i.e., only withdrawing interest accrued)?
 - Diana asks how our investments are doing? C. Austin notes that we have roughly \$73,000, but he is concerned about the long-term consequences of eating into the principle, and making a habit of withdrawing 6-7000 each year from our investment
 - Diana asks about raising Congress fees. Alison and C. Austin discuss proposed Congress costs, and agree that everything is in line
 - Jacqueline proposes that honorarium could be tiered (\$600 for those who attend Congress; \$300 for those who do not)
 - Jacqueline asks if our registration fees will be variable if/when we reduce to 3 tiers of membership. C. Austin doesn't think this will have a major impact. Rachel confirms
 - Rachel asks about raising membership fees, considering that it is currently not covering our operating costs. Suggests that if we are changing membership categories over the next 2 AGMs, then now is a good time to make this change as well (this would need to go through 2 AGM votes)
 - Diana suggests that we make a second membership push later in the year (after January when people are less busy)
 - Rachel notes that with our new website in place, people will get a membership renewal reminder 365 days after they registered last, regardless of date
 - Diana supports idea of raising membership fees. Raising the top tier up to \$120
 - Kalpesh asks if we should get rid of the institutional Zoom account. C. Miller reiterates the explanations from Zabeen and Ruby for why this account might be needed (not all exec have access to a Zoom account that can host large meetings). Chris adds that we should get rid of it, on the stipulation that we have a firm commitment from exec members who *do* have Faculty accounts that they will host the webinars if our Digital Coordinator should not have access in a given year

Past President/ Anciens président (Paul Gareau)

Current Executive:

- President and Representative to the Corporation: Diana Dimitrova [2022–2024]
- Past-President: Paul Gareau [2022–2024]
- Appointed Executive Member: Rubina Ramji [2020–indefinite]
- Recording Secretary: Chris Miller [2022–2025]
- Treasurer: Christopher Austin [2023–2026]

- Membership Secretary: Rachel Brown [2022–2025]
- Communications Liaison & Website Administrator: Rachel Brown [intrim]
- Digital Coordinator Position: Zabeen Khamisa [2023–2026]
- Members-At-Large: Kalpesh Bhatt, University of Toronto [2022–2025] & Jacqueline Giesbrecht, Queen's University [2022–2025]
- Programme Co-Chair: Michelle Folk, PhD [2018–2024] & Alison R Marshall, PhD [2023–2024]
- Graduate Student Member-at-Large: Michael Gillingham [2022–2024]
- SQÉR Representative: Stéphanie Tremblay
- Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (CFHSS) Representatives: Paul L. Gareau [2022–2024]

Nominations for 2024

This year the following positions are reaching the end of their term:

1. President: Alison Marshall
2. Programme Co-Chair I: 2024–2027: Michael Gillingham
3. Programme Co-Chair II: 2024–2027: Paige Thombs
4. Graduate Student Member-at-Large: Catherine van Reenen

As always, we will also accept nominations from the floor at the AGM.

President/ Présidente (Diana Dimitrova)

Congress 2023

I am happy to say that we had our last conference with Congress (at York University, Toronto) and in person from May 27th to May 29th. It was a great success! We had a very well attended and interesting conference, a wonderful reception and a very dynamic Plenary roundtable session on the Public Role of Scholars of Religion, if any. We are in the process of publishing the papers of the roundtable in the journal *Studies in Religion*.

Congress 2024

Our next conference will take place at McGill University in Montreal from June 15th to June 17th. We shared our call for papers with the SQÉR, as many colleagues, who are based in Québec may be interested in attending our conference this year, given its location in Montreal. Our Programme Chairs Michelle Folk and Alison Marshall have been working very hard on this. Our final program has just been released – it looks amazing!

Michelle Folk had to step down for health reasons with an immediate effect, so Alison Marshall took over her tasks. Our thoughts and good wishes go out to Michelle. We would like to thank her very warmly for her amazing contribution to the CSSR over the past six years!! Thank you very much, Michelle!

I would like to take this opportunity and extend our gratitude to Alison Marshall, who took over Michelle's tasks as Program Co-Chair, in addition to her responsibilities as Program Co-Chair, and completed the catering order for our reception and the finalizing of the conference program. Alison has announced that she will be stepping down in June 2024. We would like to thank her for her service to the CSSR this past year. Thank you so much for your excellent work, Alison!

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our Graduate Student Representative Michael Gillingham for his work with our graduate students and for organizing the graduate student luncheon and other activities, which benefit our graduate students. Thank you very much, Michael!

New website and newsletter

We launched a new and modern website last October, which looks very nice. Our newsletter is coming out bi-weekly in order to keep our members informed. I would like to thank Rachel Brown for mastering the new website so quickly and for taking care of the newsletter!

Membership

Our membership numbers are steady and as we know, most members pay their dues before the conference, so I expect the numbers to go up in the coming few weeks. I would like to thank Rachel Brown, who continues serving as Membership Secretary, in addition to her work as Communications Liaison. Thank you so much for your amazing work, Rachel!

New CSSR Books Series “Critical Perspectives on Religion”, published by DeGruyter-Brill

I am very happy to report that our new books Series “Critical Perspectives on Religion” will be launched soon. There will be a roundtable on how to publish your book in the Series at our conference (on Monday June 17th from 1.30 to 3 pm), where representatives of DeGruyter-Brill Press and of the Editorial Board will answer questions. We invite you to attend the round-table and to submit your manuscript to the Series! As soon as we have the book cover design, we’ll advertise the Series in the newsletter. I would like to thank Mr. Aaron Sanborn-Overby from deGruyter-Brill Press, and Ruby Ramji, Paul Gareau and Christopher Austin for their help with creating the Series!

CSSR webinars 2023-2024

Zabeen Khamisa has been preparing our new CSSR webinar series – this was another amazing and exciting year. Marc Dumas and I co-chaired a CSSR webinar on Mireille Estivalezes book “La fin de la culture religieuse”, published in the collection “Matière à pensée”, PUM, which I am co-editing with Marc Dumas. I also co-chaired a webinar on Hindu nationalism with Christopher Austin. The webinar was organized by Zabeen. The other 3 webinars were moderated by our digital coordinator Zabeen Khamisa and other executive members. Thank you so much for your great work, Zabeen!

Student Essay Winners : 2023

I would like to thank Jacqueline Giesbrecht and Kalpesh Bhatt for their work on the selection process of our student essay winners. The winners are listed below. Thank you very much for your excellent work, Jacqueline and Kalpesh!

Undergraduate Essays

1st Place (\$250) – Audrey Miatello, University of Toronto

Title: “Reconnecting to Nature in the 21st Century: Considering *Laudato Si’* as a Guide”

2nd Place (\$100) – Claire Hamilton, Queen’s University

Title: “Gnostic Conceptions of Genesis”

Graduate Essays

M.A. Prize (\$300) – Marie-Ève Ouimette, Université du Québec à Montréal, UQAM

Title : “La Culture Religieuse à L'école: Un Sacrifice sur L'Autel de la Laïcité?”

PhD Prize (\$650) – Catherine van Reenen, University of Manitoba

Title: “Delicate Instruments and the Challenges of Empirical Observation in Psychical Research: The Technical Apparatus of T.G. Hamilton’s Teleplasm Experiments”

Treasurer and CSSR Status

We have been very fortunate to welcome Christopher Austin as Treasurer, and I believe that with his help, we will manage to decide on whether a change of status to registered charity would be a viable option for the CSSR. Thank you very much for all the wonderful work you have been doing, Chris!

CSSR Book Prize 2024 and President’s Reception

The committee is currently evaluating all book submissions. We will honour the winner of the CSSR book prize at the CSSR President reception at Congress 2024. The name of the winner will be revealed at the CSSR President reception. I would like to thank Ruby Ramji and all committee members for all their hard work.

CSSR executive meetings

Our first in-person AGM since the pandemic will take place at Congress, on June 15th at 5pm. It takes a lot of effort to organize meetings, take notes and keep us organized. I would like to express my gratitude to our Recording Secretary Christopher Miller for his excellent work and for his help with organizing our 4 annual meetings and for taking the notes. Thank you very much for your amazing work, Chris!

Please join me in thanking our Past President Paul Gareau for his dedicated service and enormous contribution to the CSSR over the past 10 (or more?) years as Recording Secretary, President, Interim Treasurer and Past President. There are no words to express our recognition and gratitude. Thank you so much, Paul, we'll miss you!

As my term as President will end this June, I would like to say that it has been a great honor and privilege serving the CSSR in this capacity. I would like to thank you all for your trust and confidence in me. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Past Presidents Paul Gareau and Ruby Ramji for their support, help and advice throughout the past 2 years! I would also like to express my gratitude to all CSSR executive members and all CSSR members for their amazing work!

I am looking forward to continuing serving the CSSR as Past President and to welcoming our new President, new Program Co-Chairs and new Graduate Student Representative this June. I know that they will be joining an amazing team of executive members! Thank you!

Recording Secretary/ Secrétaire archiviste (Chris Miller)

Meeting Poll

Thank you to everyone for submitting your responses to of our meeting poll and for helping us to find times that work for this meeting.

Mailing List

I am using the following mailing list for any communications with the CSSR Executive. Please take a look, and if you would prefer that CSSR messages go to a different account, please let me know!

CSSR Executive - 2023/24		
Position	Name	Email
President	Diana Dimitrova	diana.dimitrova@umontreal.ca
Past President	Paul Gareau	pgareau@ualberta.ca
Appointed Executive Member	Rubina Ramji	ruby_ramji@cbu.ca
Recording Secretary	Chris Miller	chris.miller@uwaterloo.ca
Treasurer	Christopher Austin	christopher.austin@dal.ca
Membership Secretary	Rachel Brown	racheldianeb@gmail.com
Member-at-Large	Kalpesh Bhatt	kbhatt@umw.edu
Member-at-Large	Jacqueline Giesbrecht	19jdg@queensu.ca
Graduate Student Member-at-Large	Michael Gillingham	mgilling@ualberta.ca
Programme Co-Chair	Alison Marshall	marshalla@brandonu.ca

Programme Co-Chair	Michelle Folk	michelle.folk@uregina.ca
Digital Coordinator	Zabeen Khamisa	zabeen.khamisa@uwaterloo.ca

Graduate Students/ Étudiants de cycle supérieurs (Michael Gillingham)

Update on Activities

Student Ambassador Program

Now in its seventh year, the Student Ambassador program is continuing to run. We have added three Student Ambassadors to the list since my last report for a total of 12 Student Ambassadors for this year. Our three new ambassadors are Samar Mashadi from McMaster University, Lyn Wattam from Queen's University (Religious Studies) and Morad Algrari from Wilfred Laurier University. We have continued to advertise for new Student Ambassadors on our website and through the newsletter. I sent out an update to the Student Ambassadors in November 2023 asking them to publicize a Non-Academic Job Searching Workshop. In January 2024, I sent out an update regarding the new CSSR website, CSSR membership options and benefits, and the 2024 CSSR conference call for papers. In February, I sent out a reminder about the CSSR conference, a request for input on graduate student programming at the conference, and an advertisement for an online presentation featuring two graduate student CSSR essay prize winners. I also informed the Student Ambassadors that I will be finishing my term this year and I encouraged them to consider applying for the position.

Graduate Student Programming at the Annual Meeting

I checked with the current Student Ambassadors for suggestions for the Graduate Student programming at the 2024 Conference in Montreal. There was a strong interest in having someone present on early career publishing opportunities and strategies for graduate students and early career scholars. Another interesting topic that was suggested was the topic of academic associations for Religious Studies and the value of participating in one or some. Michelle has been in touch and we have booked the Graduate Student luncheon for Sunday of the conference and menu items have been selected. I must say that the options are much better this year...prices are comparable to last year. Here's hoping our food will actually arrive this year (and thanks again to Chris for rescuing us last year when the food did not show).

Thank You

I am very thankful to Diana, Paul, Michelle, Chris, Samiksa, and Rachel for the help they've provided me at various points this winter and spring. I am looking forward to our time at McGill University as we gather to meet and share our work with each other. It has been an honour and a privilege to serve on the Executive Committee for CSSR in this way. I would be happy to continue to serve in a different role if the opportunity arises in the future. I look forward to offering any help and support that I can for the new Graduate Student Member-at-Large for CSSR.

Discussion:

- Michael notes that this year's Graduate Student Luncheon will be on the topic of academic organizations. Asks that any executives who are willing to come and talk about this topic reach out to him

Student Essays/ Essai étudiant (Jacqueline Giesbrecht/Kalpesh Bhatt [MAL])

1. Webinar: Graduate Student Essay Prize Winners

Zabeen Khamisa organized the CSSR Webinar featuring presentations by our Graduate Student Essay Contest Prize winners from 2022-2023 on Zoom on Thursday, February 29, 2024, at 3pm EST. The presentations were:

- PhD Prize: Catherine Van Reenen, University Of Manitoba
Topic: “Delicate Instruments And The Challenges Of Empirical Observation In Psychological Research: The Technical Apparatus Of T.G. Hamilton’s Teleplasm Experiments”
- MA Prize: Marie-Ève Ouimette, Université Du Québec À Montréal
Topic: La Culture Religieuse À L’école: Un Sacrifice Sur L’autel De La Laïcité?

The webinar was chaired by Jacqueline Giesbrecht, and the recording can be found on the CSSR YouTube channel.

2. Changes to Student Prize

Based on the discussions and decisions taken during the Fall 2023 meeting, the student essay contest (attached) has been revised. The main changes are:

1. Eligibility:

- Students cannot win 2 years in a row in the same category.
- The graduate category no longer includes Canadian students studying internationally. This is due to tax and communication complications with past winners studying internationally.
- Ask grad students to send us proof of CSSR membership as part of submission to streamline the adjudication process.
- More description of registration requirements (academic year details) since this caused confusion in the past.
- **Proposed change:** The earlier requirement of “letter of confirmation/certification” be changed to “letter of support,” which can be provided by any member of the department rather than just the chair or grad coordinator. Our sense is that it is for proof of academic integrity rather than a simple confirmation of enrollment (which can be auto-generated), with the former being increasingly important with the use of AI. The change to “support” would indicate this to departments and allow students to get such a letter from the most relevant faculty member (i.e., instructor, supervisor, committee member)

2. Essay contest

- Webinar presentation of essays only for grad students.
- The maximum word count for grad student essays increased to 7000.

3. Addition of the third category: **Publicly Engaged Research in Religion**

- **TBD:**
 - Should we allow group project submissions?
 - Inclusion in webinar series or other possibilities of sharing submissions in this category?
 - Length requirements

Once all changes are reviewed, revised, and approved by the board, the contest description will be revised on the website, the poster will be updated, and the 2023-24 contest will be launched by the end of April. Jacqueline will be the contact person for the new category, and Kalpesh for the essay contests.

Update May 7, 2024

The changes approved at the April meeting have been made to the contest materials. A new application form has been made for the Publicly Engaged Religion category, and the essay application form has been updated to match (the only changes are in formatting and asking for the details of the referee since those are now being sent in separately). A new poster has been made for the contest and has already been posted on the CSSR website. Rachel has been working on updating the website with the descriptions and adding a new page for the Publicly Engaged Religion category (thanks, Rachel!!). We’ve decided to wait to officially launch the contest in the next newsletter (end of May). This is later than we’ve launched the essay contest in the past (end of March, I gather). However, with already having a delay due to finalizing details for the new category, this way it’ll be fresh in people’s minds for Congress.

Digital Coordinator (Coordinatrice numérique) Zabeen Khamisa

2023-2024: CSSR Webinar Schedule

Webinar 1: September

Organized by Zabeen – cancelled due to COVID.

Webinar 2: October

Organized by Zabeen – cancelled due to COVID.

Webinar 2: November 2, 2023 @3pm EDT

Guest: Aaron Ross

Book: *The Holy Spirit and the Eagle Feather: The Struggle for Indigenous Pentecostalism in Canada*

Host: Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, *Advancing Studies in Religion*

Webinar 3: End of November/start of December 2023

Organized by Diana – cancelled.

Webinar 4: January 25, 2024 @3pm EDT

Guest: Matthew R. Anderson

Book: "Prophets of Love: The Unlikely Kinship of Leonard Cohen and the Apostle Paul"

Host: Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, *Advancing Studies in Religion*

Webinar 5: February 29, 2024 @3pm EDT

Guest: CSSR MA Essay Winner - Marie-Ève Ouimette & Catherine van Reenen

Topic: "La culture religieuse à l'école: un sacrifice sur l'autel de la laïcité?"

Host: Jaqueline or Kalpesh

Webinar 6: March 28, 2024 at 2pm EST

Guest: Mireille Estivalezes

Topic: La fin de la culture religieuse

Host: Marc Dumas and Diana Dimitrova

Webinar 7: April 25, 2024 at @2pm EST

Guest: Amarnath Amarasingam

Talk: On Hindu Nationalism

Host: Zabeen Khamisa (or anyone else who is interested!)

CSSR/CONGRESS July

- ❖ The webinars will start again in September. I have already started planning and am waiting for confirmations. If there are any suggestions, please share!
- ❖ Starting in August, I'd like to have a set and integrated schedule for posting on CSSR Twitter – working with the details from the newsletter, but mostly for CSSR membership and conference promotion.
- ❖ Essay Competition Webinar
 - I wasn't made aware of any previous process to organize this. We opted to focus on putting together a graduate student panel of winners. I will be working with the Essay Competition team to create a webinar timeline the next set of recipients, so it's organized in advanced and a part of the regular schedule.
- ❖ I would like to give some attention to the webinar website page so it's more user-friendly and aesthetically engaging.
- ❖ Several conversations were had about cancelling the zoom, and Paul is completing this process.
- ❖ I was able to identify that Ruby's phone number is attached to the Gmail account, so we will be able to access to that again.
- ❖ We need a central place to keep our passcodes and backup account holders. Does CSSR have a secure digital drive? Perhaps the google drive can be used once the password is reset.

6. Proposed Modification to Membership Categories

MOTION: *Shift to three categories of CSSR membership, with a slight increase in fees (Regular - \$120; Associate - \$60; Student - \$50)*

Moved: Rachel

Seconded: Kalpesh

Motion carried unanimously

This will now be voted on at the AGM in 2024, followed by another vote at the AGM in 2025

7. Additional Items

- Alison shares that Congress has scheduled a meeting on Thursday (May 9) to discuss the encampments. In a recent email, indicated that there would be no refunds for cancellation, and their existent policy stands

8. Next meeting/ Prochaine séance

Our next meeting will be the CSSR Annual General Meeting, happening Saturday June 15, 5-6 PM in Birks 111

9. Adjournment/ Adjournement

The meeting adjourned at 14:02 Eastern