

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

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING / REUNION DU CONSEIL
VIRTUAL MEETING AGENDA
OCTOBER 4, 2023 (16:00–18:0 EDT)

Minutes Submitted by Chris Miller, Recording Secretary, February 27, 2024

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

Regrets: Paul Gareau, Michelle Folk, Rubina Ramji

1. Welcome/ Bienvenue

Start time : 16.04 EDT

2. Accept Agenda/ Accepter l'ordre du jour

MOTION : *Accept the agenda*

Moved: Alison

Seconded: Rachel

Motion carried unanimously

3. Minutes/ Procès verbal – May 16, 2023

MOTION: *Accept the minutes.*

Moved: Zabeen

Seconded: Kalpesh

Motion carried unanimously

4. Reports/Rapports

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

CSSR Program Co-Chairs Report

Fall Executive Meeting

Submitted by Alison Marshall and Michelle Folk

October 3, 2023

Congress 2024 is being hosted by McGill University. Congress dates are June 12-21, 2024.

Our annual meeting is scheduled June 15-18, 2024. The theme of Congress 2024 is *Sustaining Shared Futures* and is summarized as,

While alarming images of a warming planet infuse the concept with a critical sense of urgency, ‘sustainability’ transcends even the immense challenges posed by climate change, urging recognition of the interconnectedness of human existence and global action on the

overlapping social, economic, environmental, and technological issues that threaten our future.

As members of the global community, we share the responsibility to take on this multi-faceted challenge of a lifetime by way of concerted action across disciplines, bringing into focus its unequal impact, the bounds of our planet, and in turn, our solutions.

For this 2024 edition, enmeshing the knowledges of diverse contexts, and amplifying Black and Indigenous perspectives, Congress invites scholars, students, policymakers and community members to reflect on what remains collectively attainable – and what must be done – in the face of this vast and complex imperative in order to bring forth solutions for today, and sustain systems of tomorrow (<https://www.federationhss.ca/en/congress2024>).

Diana Dimitrova has kindly agreed to be the **local area coordinator** this year. The Federation’s annual planning meeting took place on September 20 at McGill.

Historical data in the Federation’s organizers portal shows attendance was down last year but *we anticipate that it will rise this year*:

	Congress 2018 (University of Regina)	Congress 2019 (UBC)	Congress 2023 (York)
Registration	83 (74 pre-registrations, 0 regular, and 9 on-site)	112 (91 pre-registrations, 17 regular, and 6 on-site)	50 (30 pre-registrations, 16 regular, and 4 on-site).
Revenues	\$2335.00	\$3705.00	\$2060.00
Expenses	\$2114.63	\$4147.22	\$2265.30

Registration opens January 25, 2024. Registration categories: regular attendee, reduced fee for attendees who self-identify as underemployed or as post-doctoral researchers (new category that appears to now include post-docs), special reduced fee for attendees who are students, K-12 educators, retired, and unemployed, *Black or Indigenous students who self-identify to their associations, community, and Black or Indigenous attendees. Registration deadlines: early-bird (March 31), regular (April 1), on-site (June 11). ***Until the online submission system is revised, we propose that submissions include in the abstract whether the person submitting or presenting identifies as black or indigenous.**

Congress asks that associations follow its daily programming schedule to accommodate for other programming and suggests the following daily schedule:

- 8:30–10:00 Session 1
- 10:00–10:30 Break 1
- 10:30–12:00 Session 2
- 12:00–13:30 Lunch
- 13:30–15:00 Session 3
- 15:00–15:30 Break 2
- 15:30–17:00 Session 4

18:00 + Special events, AGMs, joint sessions, receptions, open events etc.

Room bookings: We were told at the planning meeting that there are overall fewer rooms at McGill than last year at York. Rooms will be available at upper and lower campuses and will accommodate Zoom. Rooms holding over 20 people will have a screen and projector. Unlike last year, there is no deluxe A/V package but only the basic package. Associations that plan on hybrid sessions need to provide their own technology (e.g., laptops). *There is an option to add additional chairs and tables to rooms. Some rooms may need panel table and chairs at the front of the room which must be ordered in advance and at an additional cost. Rates for additional furnishings will be provided later.*

Funding opportunities include the open program fund, which we used last year for the plenary session (February 2, 2024 deadline). We received \$250.00 for Congress 2023, which was used towards catering.

Congress Graduate Merit Award: The Federation is providing funding for graduate students through the Congress Graduate Merit Award (CGMA). Students must be an MA or PhD student in good standing at a Canadian university, a member of the association, and submit a 250-word (max.) abstract of their presentation to the CSSR. The CSSR executive must then nominate a set number of candidates to the Federation. The Federation decides the number of nominees based on association size. Last year we have 1 CGMA. We can submit our list of nominees until April 19, 2024. The Federation will notify the CSSR executive of accepted nominees between October 16, 2023-April 19, 2024. Payments will be sent to students' bank accounts in July, 2024. **Until the online submission system is revised, we propose that submissions include in the abstract whether the person submitting or presenting is MA or PHD student(s) (with link to their university program and information so that we may contact reference at the institution). This will enable us to expedite our determination of qualified candidates for consideration for this award.**

Childcare subsidy: We had 1 child/dependent care subsidy last year. The number is based on membership size and determined by the Federation. Eligibility: presenter, moderator, chair, or respondent at Congress, member in good standing with the association, registered for Congress, and submission of a 250-word (max.) application detailing professional status, needs, and costs to the association. We are required to endorse someone by April 19. The Federation will notify the recipient by May 3. **Until the online submission system is revised, we propose that submissions include in the abstract whether the person submitting or presenting would like to be considered for the childcare subsidy. This will enable us to expedite the process.**

Deadlines: Upcoming deadlines in the organizers portal: signing authority form (October 15), membership list (November 3), conference fees form (November 10), conference details form (November 10) and room requests (November 24).

Meetings: Program co-ordinators met October 3 to discuss programming for the 2024 McGill meetings and will be attending regular Congress operated meetings in addition to CSSR executive meetings and will follow up as required.

Discussion:

- Chris Miller suggests a Google Form for abstract submissions, as opposed to Sunflower
- Rachel confirms that Sunflower will not be part of our new website, so we need an alternative
- Christopher Austin asks whether the Revenues shared in report go to us, or to the federation
 - Diana answers that this is correct. That figure basically goes as a credit towards the invoice we receive from Congress
- Rachel also suggests advertising the new dates for Congress in our next Newsletter

Membership Secretary/ Secrétaire des membres (Rachel Brown)

Update: Diana explains that Samiksa had to step down from the position of Communication Liason for health reasons. Christopher also had to take on a share of the Membership Secretary tasks, since they relate to our finances. Rachel has therefore taken on some of the former Communications duties, in addition to her work as Membership Secretary

Membership Secretary and Communications Report
CSSR Executive Meeting October 4th 2023
Rachel Brown

Membership Secretary Updates

- Website update
 - Working with the Developer to make a new site which will stream line the membership process
 - Until website is done, won't do a membership push
 - Only paid members will have access to some aspects of the website
- 101 paid members for 2023
- 27 new
- 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
- Memberships will move to a yearly membership depending on when you sign up for membership – automatic reminders
 - All current CSSR members will roll over on a January 1st renewal basis

Communications Updates

- No Newsletters over the summer – much of this was because of transition from Samiksa to me

- First Newsletter went out September 10th
- Weekly since
- 45-50% readership with between 5-8% engagement with links
- While website is in transition this is the main format for our communications

Treasurer/ Trésorier (Christopher Austin)

Christopher Austin
 Treasurer, CSSR
 Oct. 4th 2023 Meeting

Updates and Issues

- Attached are 2022 and 2023 (to-date) expense and revenue reports. Will be asking for clarification on yellow items from exec. in meeting.
- BMO account transfer of signing authority from Paul to myself is now complete: I can access account online, make and receive E-payments. Still waiting for Paul to snail mail me the physical cheques, but we won't need these often.
- A new CSSR Treasurer email account is now up and running; this is linked to BMO account and Paypal.
- Ruby has set up the Paypal and she and I worked out the details for me to access it. I should now be able to receive new and renewed memberships, and use the Paypal to manage membership data. Thanks to everyone for setting that up!
- At its AGM this year, the CSSR adopted a roughly \$14,000 deficit budget and since Jan. 2023 is running a \$9,660.84 deficit. That amount excludes any money owed for 2023 Congress (is that usually paid out mostly in Dec. of the prior year?). To avoid any future deficit budgets, I will urge the CSSR to consider dropping the executive honoraria and Zoom account.

Questions

- Who has access to the investments portfolio? Do we have a CRA profile for the CSSR to pay taxes on investment interest? We owe 2022 taxes on the interest from these investments and almost certainly from prior years.
 - This question was not answered during the meeting
- Samiksa was paid \$2000 in June 2023 -- was this for website work over July 2022 - June 2023 or an advance on the upcoming July 2023 - June 2024 year?
 - Diana answered that this was for last year's work
- We have many \$400 item expenses -- are these student awards? Again, any tips people can give me on the yellow items in the attached files will be most welcome.
 - Brief discussion of the likely source of these item expenses. Most of them are likely student awards as well as honouraria

Discussion:

- Christopher offers a strong warning about the dangers of adopting a deficit budget. We will very soon run the risk of going into the red if we continually overspend our revenues

- Recommends dropping the Executive Honouraria, which would remove over \$5000 of expenses
- Diana notes that there will be a savings in the projected budget, since the web developer that Rachel has been working with will cost less than was estimated for Samiksa
- Zabeen asks whether Christopher has been creating better records, especially considering the confusing situation that he (and Paul before him) had to take over
 - Christopher has been creating better records, with the idea of making future transition easier
- Diana notes that she is not in favour of scrapping the Honouraria for Executive members
 - Suggests that we may think about scrapping our reception at the conference

Digital Coordinator/Coordinateur numérique (Zabeen Khamisa)

CSSR Digital Coordinator

Zabeen Khamisa

October 4, 2023

1. CSSR Webinars

- Planning for the webinar series is underway.

November 2, 2023 @3pm EDT - Aaron Ross (Hosted by Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme)

January 25, 2023 @3pm EDT - Matthew R. Anderson (Hosted by Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme)

- We have a few more penciled in, just awaiting confirmation.
- Always looking for suggestions

2. CSSR digital content

- It has been hard to post without a schedule of some kind to rely on.
- I would like to create a more integrated posting schedule that includes membership outreach, reminders about the newsletter, etc.
- I will need support in generating this content, which could include drafted tweets I can pull from.

Discussion:

- General conversation about ideas for upcoming webinars
- Diana suggests that webinars do not always need to be based on books. Instead they can be on recent events, articles, or work in development
- Zabeen asks about making a call for webinar topics in our newsletter
 - Rachel suggests that when we announce the upcoming webinars, we can let it be known that we are open to suggestions from members
- Alison suggests organizing webinars around favourite books (which may be several years old). Create roundtables that offer reactions from diverse perspectives
- Alison also suggests a topic around outreach to/within communities

- Kalpesh suggests highlighting contemporary issues, and scholarly perspectives on these topics
- Diana suggests promoting the work of recent or current PhDs
- In terms of social media activity, Chris recommends re-posting from a defined number of accounts that we know our members are involved with (CSRS at UVic, Nonreligion a Complex Future, so on)
- As another webinar topic, Kalpesh asks to talk offline with Zabeen about a Hindu-Christian Studies group that he is involved with

Past President/ Anciennes présidente (Paul Gareau)

Current Executive:

- President and Representative to the Corporation: Diana Dimitrova [2022–2024]
- Past-President and Academic Freedom & Tenure Committee: Paul Gareau [2022–2024]
- Appointed Executive Member: Rubina Ramji [2020–indefinite]
- Recording Secretary: Chris Miller [2022–2025]
- Treasurer: Paul Gareau [interim 2023]
- Membership Secretary: Rachel Brown, University of Victoria [2022–2025]
- Communications Liaison & Website Administrator: Samiksa Love [2010–indefinite]
- Members-At-Large: Kalpesh Bhatt, University of Toronto [2022–2025] & Jacqueline Giesbrecht, Queen's University [2022–2025]
- Programme Co-Chair: Qamer Hameed [2020–2023] & Michelle Folk, PhD [2018–2024]
- 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 2023

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

- Programme Co-Chair: 2023–2026 — Alison Marshall
- Treasurer: 2023–2026 — Christopher Austin
- Digital Coordinator Position: 2023–2026 — Zabeen Khamisa

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

Nominations for 2024

Keep in mind that there are three positions up for renewal or nomination in 2024:

1. President
2. Programme Co-Chair
3. Graduate Student Member-at-Large

President/ Président (Diana Dimitrova)

Congress 2023

I am happy to say that our conference at Congress 2023 (York University, Toronto), May 27th to May 30th, was a tremendous success! Our program was amazing – we had many interesting and engaging panels and papers, and a very important and well-attended plenary round-table on the public role, if any, of scholars of religion! Our reception was, as usual, a lot of fun. Thank you all for coming!

I would like to thank very warmly our Programme Chairs Michelle Folk and Qamer Hameed, our LAC Chris Miller and our Past President and Federation Representative Paul Gareau for organizing the conference. Thank you!

I would also like to thank Michael Gillingham and Rachel Brown for hosting the graduate student luncheon, and Chris Miller and Michelle Folk for taking care of the catering!

It was wonderful to reconnect with you at Congress last May and I am looking forward to seeing you at Congress 2024, which will take place at McGill University in Montreal from June 15th to June 18th, 2024.

Our Program Co-Chairs Michelle Folk and Alison Marshall have already begun preparing our conference. Thank you!

CSSR round-table on the public role of scholars of religion

We are now in the process of editing the CSSR plenary round-table. We hope that it will appear in the journal SR this fall/winter.

Website and newsletter

I would like to thank Samiksa Love for her many years of dedicated service to the CSSR. Thank you Samiksa!!! Unfortunately, Samiksa Love had to step down for health reasons, and we are very grateful to Rachel Brown, who took over our newsletter! Thank you, Rachel!

I would like to take this opportunity to tell you that we are currently working on a new website. This has been a tremendous effort, which requires a lot of coordination, time, and hard work. I would like to thank Rachel and Zabeen for their exploration of different venues regarding our new website.

Rachel Brown has been working on the new website with a web developer and she has devoted an enormous amount of time, effort and energy to it. I would like to express our gratitude to Rachel for her service and dedication. Thank you so much, Rachel!!

We are also moving the Membership Secretary's responsibilities toward communications, as the Treasurer's responsibilities will now include some aspects of the former Membership Secretary's functions.

New PayPal account

We are delighted to have Christopher Austin as our new Treasurer. He has been working with Ruby on setting up the PayPal account and linking it to our bank account. We believe that this will enhance security and will make payments more user-friendly. I would also like to thank Paul Gareau, who served as our Interim Treasurer last year for his guidance and his advice to Christopher Austin. Thank you Ruby, Paul and Chris!

CSSR webinars 2023-2024

Our digital coordinator Zabeen Khamisa has been preparing our new CSSR webinar series. Marc Dumas and I plan to co-chair a CSSR webinar on a book published in the collection "Matière à pensée", PUM, which I am co-editing with Marc Dumas, the other 5 webinars will be chaired and moderated by Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme and Zabeen Khamisa. Thank you, Zabeen!

Student essays

The winners of the student essays will be known shortly. I would like to thank Jacqueline Giesbrecht and Kalpesh Bhatt for their excellent work.

We created a third student prize on Publicly Engaged Project on the Study of Religion, monetary value 300 \$, open to graduate and undergraduate students, and this will be the first year, in which it will be awarded

CSSR book prize 2022 and President's Reception

The winner of the CSSR 2023 book prize was announced at the CSSR President reception at Congress 2023. Last year's winner was

Nadeau, Denise Marie. *Unsettling Spirit: A Journey into Decolonization*. McGill Queen's University Press, 2020.

Thank you, Ruby and all committee members for your hard work on selecting the winner! The new competition will be announced shortly.

CCSR Meeting

I attended the CCSR AGM on May 24th. Lori Beaman is now the Past President of the Corporation, and David Keussens of the Université de Sherbrooke will serve as President from 2023 to 2026. Jennifer Selby was elected a Vice-president of the CCSR. Congratulations to all.

We had asked the CSSR to contribute \$ 1000 toward the construction of our new website, in exchange for having their logo on the CSSR website. Unfortunately, the answer was negative. The CSSR will not be contributing \$ 1000 to our website at this time.

New CSSR DeGruyter Series “Religion”

We are in the process of creating a new CSSR Series “Religion”, which will be published by DeGruyter. I believe that this new Series would be very attractive and important to our members and all scholars of religion. Special benefits will be available to all CSSR members. We hope to have more details in the spring, as the next meeting with DeGruyter will take place this winter.

It is wonderful to be part of such a dynamic and enthusiastic CSSR executive team! I would like to thank all CSSR executive members and all CSSR members for their amazing work!! THANK YOU!!!!!!

Discussion:

- Diana discusses the CSSR book series, in association with DeGruyter, currently in development. Biggest difference of this series is that they will cover the cost of publication for authors, unlike most other Canadian presses
- Diana and DeGruyter are working to develop an editorial board, hopefully with several CSSR executive members, giving the society further control over the series
- Fine details of negotiations with press are still ongoing. Degruyter is offering 6% royalty for known authors and 1-2% for first-time authors. Will have further updates once negotiations close
- Alison expresses support for the series, and also asks about any costs that CSSR would have to take on. Diana confirms that there would be no cost to the CSSR for production, and DeGruyter will also take care of copy-editing. Authors would still need to take care of indexing costs on their own

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

Thank You!

Chris Miller

Graduate Student Member-at-Large/ Étudiants des études supérieures (Michael Gillingham)

Update on Activities

Graduate Student Ambassadors 2023 - 2024

I have been in contact with the Graduate Student Ambassadors from last year and there are several who have agreed to serve for another term. I have heard from one who is not able to continue because they are finishing their program. I have also heard from two new students who are willing to serve. I hope to send an email to those departments on my list without a current ambassador soon. Here are the names and the academic affiliations of our CSSR Graduate Student Ambassadors for the 2023 - 2024 year so far.

Morad Bkhait, Université du Québec à Montréal
 Jacqueline Giesbrecht, Queen's University (Cultural Studies)
 Paige Thombs, University of Victoria
 Catherine van Reenen, University of Manitoba

Tulika Singh, University of Alberta
Pascale Frémond, University of Montreal
Ankita Choudhary, University of Toronto
Faezeh Izadi, University of Calgary
Cassidy Ascione, University of Lethbridge

A Personal Note

After a very busy summer and early fall, I tested positive for COVID yesterday on a home test. I will do my best to make it to the meeting on Wednesday and I'm glad that the online option provides one layer of protection in terms of exposing others to these nasty germs. I'm thankful for the students who serve as student ambassadors and I'm hoping to see our number grow over the next little while.

Sincerely,

Michael

Michael Gillingham
CSSR Graduate Student Member-at-Large

Discussion:

- Michael and Rachel confirm that current wording for an announcement about seeking Student Ambassadors is suitable
- Chris recommends Tweeting out an announcement as well, and tagging relevant RS departments that are active online

Members-at-Large (Jacqueline Giesbrecht and Kalpesh Bhatt)

2023 Essay Contest

The Call for Student Essay Submissions commenced in April 2023, with August 1st as the deadline. This year we received a total of 11 student essay submissions, 5 of which were undergraduate submissions and 6 of which were graduate submissions (2 Master's and 4 PhD). While we only received 1 French essay submission in 2022, this year we received 4.

Kalpesh and I adjudicated the essays in September 2023 and are in the process of finalizing the winners. The PhD category is quite close between a French and an English essay, so we have decided to ask for a third opinion.

Undergraduate Prize

We had increased the upper word limit to 5,000 words to match the graduate competition's. This change was beneficial, as most undergraduate submissions were within 10% of this new limit.

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

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

This paper presents a commendable effort to explore the role of religion in the conservation of nature and ecology. The author argues that the contemporary disregard for nature and the pressing issue of climate change can be traced back to our increasing detachment from the natural world. We, as humans, have undervalued the importance of nature and do not appreciate its significance in our lives. Considering this is an undergraduate paper, it is impressively well-written and thoroughly researched. The author proposes that embracing the concept of interconnectedness as a religious ethic could offer a significant solution to this pressing issue. While there is room for a more in-depth and sustained exploration of this topic, the paper stands as an excellent endeavor to leverage religious ethics and values to address a contemporary global concern.

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

“Gnostic Conceptions of Genesis”

This paper provides a well-articulated exploration of the Gnostic interpretations of the Genesis accounts found in the Hebrew Bible. It effectively elucidates how Gnosticism portrays the Hebrew God as a Demiurge, an intermediate deity with inherent imperfections. The Gnostics achieve this by reinterpreting passages within the Bible to assert that the true transcendent God exists beyond this Demiurge. Throughout the paper, the author adeptly alters the characters of the Hebrew God/Yaldabaoth, the serpent, Eve, and Seth to construct an alternative Genesis narrative that sharply contrasts with orthodox Christian accounts of Biblical Genesis. While this paper primarily serves as a comprehensive summary of Gnostic arguments and doesn't introduce a new or entirely original perspective, it is nonetheless a well-articulated and thoroughly supported piece of work.

Graduate Prize

Master’s Prize (\$300) – Marie-Ève Ouimette, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQUAM)

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

This essay description will be included in the next meeting report.

PhD Prize (\$650) – TBA

We had some questions about essay length, since some graduate students hoped to submit an essay they had written for a journal (~7,000 words).

Question: Would we be interested in increasing this word limit?

Observations and Suggestions

We received emails with various repeated questions before the competition deadline. Some of these can be easily clarified, while some may take further discussion among exec.

The deadline (midnight August 1st) – There was some confusion due to the ambiguity of how midnight works on a calendar. Changing it to 11 p.m. instead (and specifying a timezone) would help clarify this for the future.

Eligibility

We received a lot of questions about eligibility. The most frequently asked questions were about current registration status, the letter of confirmation/certification, CSSR membership, and the differences between undergraduate and graduate eligibility.

Reflecting on and clarifying the requirements may help increase future submissions. Comparing the undergraduate and graduate eligibility will be useful for creating the new prize category, as this prize will be a single combined competition.

Current Registration

	Undergraduate	Graduate
Registration	“Any undergraduate currently registered in a Canadian university or college”	“Master’s or PhD student status in a religious studies programme in a Canadian university or Canadian graduate students registered in programs outside of Canada (include proof of Canadian citizenship)”

Questions about registration mostly came from undergrads not studying during the summer term and those between their undergrad and Master’s. We decided to go with “current” meaning those registered for the 2022/2023 school year (Sept 2022 - August 2023, even if not during the summer term) or those already accepted into a graduate program (as of August 1st).

Suggestion: “was registered in the preceding academic year (September - August) or is currently registered in a ____ for the upcoming academic year”?

Canadian University vs. Canadian Citizen

We received no questions about this, but this would be important to clarify for the new competition.

Question: Do we want to allow Canadian undergrads studying abroad to submit essays, like in the graduate competition?

Degree Program

	Undergraduate	Graduate
RELS Program?	Not necessary to be in a RELS program	RELS program specifically

Question: For interdisciplinarity, would we be open to receiving papers from other departments? E.g., Cultural Studies students or papers written for RELS electives?

Letter of Certification

Some students had trouble getting a letter of certification. The student from Athabasca wasn't sure who to email, as the course was online and no religious studies department existed. Another student emailed their department chair and was told to use the auto-generated confirmation of enrollment.

	Undergraduate	Graduate
Letter of certification	<p>“Essays must be accompanied by a letter of confirmation</p> <p>from a member of the sponsoring religious studies department or programme,</p> <p>certifying the degree and programme status of the student,</p> <p>and indicating that the student is in good standing in that university or college.”</p>	<p>“Essays must be accompanied by a letter of certification</p> <p>from the chairperson or graduate coordinator of the religious studies department</p> <p>certifying the degree and programme status of the candidate,</p> <p>and indicating that the student is in good standing in that university or college.”</p>

Question: What is the purpose of the certification letter? Do these descriptions continue to meet our needs and current university bureaucracy?

- **Current enrollment? Academic Integrity?**
 - Does it need to come from the RELS department/chairperson?
 - Could they get it from someone else (undergrad → home department?)
 - Is an auto-generated confirmation of enrollment fine?
- **Status**
 - Do we care about full-time vs. part-time status?
 - E.g., can a student taking one course at Athabasca submit an essay they wrote for that course?

CSSR membership

A CSSR membership is required for the graduate competition but not for the undergraduate competition. Would we like to continue with this? If so, adding a clarifying sentence in the undergrad description would be helpful, as I (Jacqueline) misread this myself and misinformed a student.

Publicly Engaged Research in Religion

The discussion about essay prize eligibility will also help to move the new student prize along. The changes made today will be added to the [Google doc](#) with the new prize description. This draft will be presented at the Spring meeting for further discussion and final approval. Until then, please feel free to provide your feedback about the new prize in the Google doc or over email.

Discussion:

- Based on the questions for eligibility above, brief discussion over how to fine-tune these details
- In terms of registration requirements, we agree that registration status from the previous year (September to August) should be what counts. In other words, an undergraduate student who plans to enter a MA program would still submit to the 2024 undergraduate essay contest
- Concerning question of location and citizenship, Christopher says that our bank account only allows students registered at a Canadian university to submit, since they are the only ones we can award the prize to. This means that undergraduates studying abroad can submit, so long as they have a Canadian bank account
- Concerning the question of degree program, we agree to open it up to disciplines outside of Religious Studies. While the topic of the essay still needs to be in the study of religion, students can be enrolled in other programs (e.g., Cultural Studies, History). Brief debate over whether this expands it too far, as Christopher and Kalpesh express concerns about people submitting essays from other fields. Zabeen and Chris suggest that the eligibility requirements should be broad, and essays that are deemed to be too far outside the study of religion just won't be selected as winners
- Due to time constraints, we could not discuss all of the questions raised in MAL report. Issue of whether the certification letter should still be a requirement still needs to be addressed/resolved

5. Additional items/ Des articles supplémentaires

i. Website

Rachel reports that we have hired a developer to build our website. We hired the same developer who built the site for CSBS. Things are moving smoothly with the new developer. Working on cleaning out unnecessary elements from our old website and creating a new, clean look. New site will hopefully be ready by middle of October. If there is anything that we would like to add, let Rachel know. The developer is also offering to maintain the website, for a fee, so any updates can be made once the new site is launched

ii. Paypal

Rubina undertook the task of setting up a Paypal account for the CSSR. Christopher thanks her for this work, and gives the update that members can now pay their membership through Paypal. This account is linked to our BMO account, and should hopefully make for a smoother operation

iii. Plenary Roundtable

Diana shares that the Plenary Roundtable from our conference on the topic of the public role of scholars of religion will soon be published in *Studies of Religion*. Also requests that anyone pass on ideas for plenaries or roundtable topics for our upcoming conference

iv. DeGruyter Book Series

This news item was discussed in Diana's President's Report earlier. Diana has a meeting coming up soon, and will be able to announce the series shortly

6. Next Meeting/ Prochaine reunion

Will take place in Spring, around March or April. Watch for a meeting poll sometime in March.

7. Adjournment/ Adjournement

MOTION: *Adjourn the meeting.*

Moved: Alison

Seconded: Christopher

The meeting adjourned at 18:11 EDT.