



2025 ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, May 31, 2025 - Monday, June 2, 2025
George Brown College
Toronto, Ontario

CSSR Annual Meeting 2025 – Essential Information

The **CSSR Annual Meeting** will be held **in person** at **George Brown College** from **Saturday, May 31, to Monday, June 2, 2025**. This year's **Congress 2025** theme, *Reframing Togetherness*, invites us to foster collaboration that bridges diverse ways of learning and producing knowledge.

Attending the Annual Meeting

All presentations will take place at **George Brown College's Waterfront Campus**, with most meetings occurring on the **fourth floor** (see the Program Schedule for specific room numbers).

 **Location:** 51 Dockside Drive, Toronto, ON M5A 1B6

 **Campus Map:** [Click here](#)

Getting to the Venue – Public Transit

The main TTC subway stations for the Waterfront Campus are:

- **Union Station** (Line 1 – Yonge-University)
- **Castle Frank Station** and **Pape Station** (Line 2 – Bloor-Danforth)

From Union Station: Take the 19 Bay or 72B Pape bus to Dockside Drive.



From Castle Frank Station: Take the 65 Parliament bus to Dockside Drive.

From Pape Station: Take the 72B Pape bus to Queens Quay East & Lower Sherbourne.

 More transit info: www.ttc.ca

Congress Registration

Attendees can pick up their registration materials at the following locations:

-  **Main Registration:** Waterfront Campus (51 Dockside)
-  **Secondary Registration:** St. James Campus

Badges and conference packages will be available at both locations.

Presentation Schedule

Time: 8:30 AM – 5:00 PM EDT (see Program for more details)

Breaks: Scheduled throughout the day for networking, lunch, and wellness.

Internet Access

Wi-Fi is available via **Eduroam** or through nearby coffee shops around George Brown College.

AV Options and Your Presentation

Meeting rooms are accessible and equipped with:

- ✓ **Computer (with Windows operating system) with internet access**
- ✓ **Screen & projector**
- ✓ **HDMI cable**

 **Important Notes:**

- **No virtual sessions** will be available.
- Bring a **printed copy** of your presentation and/or outline.
- Have your **presentation saved on a USB stick** as a backup.
- **Mac users:** Ensure slides are on a **compatible USB** and bring any necessary dongles.

Please **arrive early** to set up your presentation before your session begins.

CSSR Annual General Meeting (AGM) & President's Reception

Date: Saturday, May 31, 2025

CSSR AGM: 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM

 **Location:** Room WFL-438

- ◆ **Open to all CSSR members** – Your participation is encouraged!
- ◆ **Elections** will be held for open positions on the CSSR Executive Board.
- ◆ **Discussion topics include:**
 - New initiatives and future directions for CSSR
 - Updates on annual functions and society activities
- ◆ **Why attend?**
 - Have your voice heard and cast your vote
 - Meet the current Executive team
 - Learn how CSSR is working for you

CSSR President's Reception: 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

 **Location:** Special Venue (TBD)

 **Highlights:**

- Presentation of the **CSSR Book Prize** and **Student Awards**
- Complimentary **drink and hors d'oeuvres**
- A chance to celebrate and connect with fellow members

Book Prize

Learn more about the **CSSR Book Prize**, past winners, and submission details [on our website](#).

Student Prizes

Congratulations to our 2024 Student Essay Contest Winners! 🎉

🏆 Undergraduate Contest

- **1st Place – \$250**
 - **Winner:** James Nowak (St. Michael's College, University of Toronto)
 - **Essay Title:** *"Regarding Creation: Praise, Visual Perception, and Double Movement in John Scottus Eriugena's Periphyseon"*
- **2nd Place – \$100**
 - **Winner:** Antonio Rodriguez (Wilfrid Laurier University)
 - **Essay Title:** *"Religion of the Colonized: Towards a Fanonian Theory of Religion"*

🏆 Graduate Contest

- **Master's Prize – \$300** (*Not awarded due to insufficient applicants*)
- **Doctoral Prize – \$650**
 - **Winner:** Joshua Zentner-Barrett (Saint Paul University)
 - **Essay Title:** *"With Orca, Goose, and Bear: Expanding Canada's Ritual Body"*

🌟 New Prize Alert: Publicly Engaged Research in Religion (PERR) Student Prize

This new prize recognizes student research that extends beyond traditional academic essays. Eligible projects include:

- ✓ **Policy papers**
- ✓ **Podcast episodes**
- ✓ **Blog posts & editorial articles**
- ✓ **YouTube videos & Wikipedia entries**
- ✓ **Photo essays & other creative research outputs**

📌 Eligibility:

- Open to undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at a Canadian university or college for the current or previous academic year (September–August).
- Group and co-authored projects are welcome!

🏆 **First Prize: \$300**

👁️ **Full contest details:** [Visit our website](#)

Dining Options Near the Venue

On-Campus: See dining options at [George Brown College – Where to Eat](#) (scroll to *Waterfront Campus*).

Off-Campus: The **Waterfront neighbourhood** has many dining options nearby.

Social and Wellness Room



Need a break? A **Social & Wellness Room** will be available from **8:00 AM – 5:00 PM** daily.



Location: Room WFL-433 and collab area (near our meeting area).

This space is for **quiet time or socializing** as needed.

Questions or Comments About the Program

Thank you to **Ken Derry and Anna Heychuk**, our local area coordinators, for this year's meeting!

Contact Program Chairs: Paige Thombs & Alyshea Cummins



Email: programchairs@cssrscer.ca



Visit our **Annual Meeting page** for updates: [CSSR Website](#)

SHORT PROGRAM

Saturday, May 31

1:00-2:30pm	WFL-438	Session: Ritual, Symbol, and Transformation in Contemporary Culture
	WFL-405	Session: Religion and Social Cohesion in Conflict
2:30-3:00pm	Afternoon Break	
3:00-4:30pm	WFL-438	Session: Religious Resilience, Ethics, and Human Flourishing
	WFL-405	Session: Negotiating Boundaries: Theology, Social Identity, and Belonging
4:30-5:00pm	Break	
5:00-6:00pm	WFL-438	CSSR Annual General Meeting
6:00-8:00pm	Special Venue	CSSR President's Reception

Sunday, June 1

9:00-10:00am	WFL-438	Special Session: Globalization and the Changing Landscape of Religious Studies
10:00-10:30am	Morning Break	10:00-10:30am
10:30 am-12:00pm	WFL-438	Author Meets Critics: <i>Yogalands: In Search of Practice on the Mat and in the World</i>
	WFL-436	Session: Eco-Spirituality and Justice: Reimagining Religion, Nature, and Ethics
12:00-1:30pm	Lunch Break	

	WFL-605	CSSR Student Lunch
1:30-3:00pm	WFL-438	Roundtable: Emerging Sikh Solidarities in Early Twenty-first Century Canada
	WFL-436	Panel: World Christian Togetherness: Beyond Religious Nationalism
3:00-3:30pm	Afternoon Break	
3:30-5:00pm	WFL-438	Author Meets Critics: <i>Occasional Religious Practice: Valuing a Very Ordinary Religious Experience</i>
	WFL-436	Roundtable: <i>Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Ecstasy</i> - A Discussion

Monday, June 2

8:30-10:00am	WFL-438	Session: Religion, Disability, and Marginalized Epistemologies
	WFL-405	Panel: Method and Theory in the Study of Religion in Historical Perspective: Views from the University of Toronto
10:00-10:30am	Morning Break	
10:30 am-12:00pm	WFL-438	Roundtable: Three New Books on Translocal Secularisms
	WFL-405	Session: Christianity, Colonialism, and Cultural Hybridity
12:00-1:30pm	Lunch Break	
1:30-3:00pm	WFL-438	Session: Wellbeing and Meaning-Making
	WFL-405	Session: Reason Beyond the Bounds of Bare Religion
3:00-3:30pm	Afternoon Break	

3:30-5:00 pm	WFL-438	Roundtable: “We Take Them on Together”: How Canadian Women Religious are Resisting Orders and Transcending Traditional Church Hierarchies
	WFL-405	Session: Ethics, Law, and Theodicy in Religious Thought

FULL PROGRAM

Saturday, May 31

Time	Location	Session Title	Participants and Presentation Titles
1:00-2:30pm	WFL-438	Session: Ritual, Symbol, and Transformation in Contemporary Culture	<p>Chair: Alison Marshall</p> <p>Presenters: Trent Atkinson, “Gym, Tan, Laundry: An Investigation of the Homosocial Implications of the Masculinity Ritual of GTL in Jersey Shore”</p> <p>Aaron Ellsworth, “Sinful Echoes: Emblem Symbols, Ethics and Comic Book Narratives”</p> <p>Keren Gottfried, “Beyond the Brew: Ayahuasca, Reconciliation, and the Limits of Western Healing”</p>
	WFL-405	Session: Religion and Social Cohesion in Conflict	<p>Chair: Margie Patrick</p> <p>Presenters: Wendy Fletcher, “Diversity as a Baseline for Togetherness in Competing Ecclesiological Models”</p>

			<p>Bouchra Mossman, “Transience and Ties: Exploring Togetherness and Community in Northern Canada”</p> <p>Frederic Strack, “How can we live together after so many conflicts? Local initiatives of togetherness in Montréal”</p> <p>Joycelin Van Caulart, “‘We Have Faith to Endure It’: The Role of Rural Amazonian Christianity in Shaping Social Cohesion and Hazard Resilience in Ucayali, Peru”</p>
2:30-3:00pm	Afternoon Break		
3:00-4:30pm	WFL-438	Session: Religious Resilience, Ethics, and Human Flourishing	<p>Chair: Paige Thombs</p> <p>Presenters: C. William Campbell, “Divine-Human Capital: Aspiring to Theosis via Mormon 'Self-Reliance'”</p> <p>Robyn Drodge, “The resilience of past religious: Exemplars for our time”</p> <p>Nicola Mooney, “The Integrated Relations of Social and Environmental Justice in Sikh Sevā”</p>
	WFL-405	Session: Negotiating Boundaries: Theology, Social Identity, and Belonging	<p>Chair:</p> <p>Presenters:</p> <p>Michael Gillingham, “Portrait of a Mixed Marriage: Irish Jewish writer David Marcus and Irish Catholic writer Ita Daly”</p> <p>Emmanuel Israel, “Discussion Between Pauline Theology and Social Identity Theory in Response to Othering – A Humanity's Historically Rooted Problem”</p>

			James Nowak, "Regarding Creation: Praise, Visual Perception and 'Double Movement' in John Scottus Eriugena's Periphyseon"
4:30-5:00pm	Break before CSSR AGM		
5:00-6:00pm	WFL-438	CSSR Annual General Meeting (AGM)	Open to all CSSR Members
6:00-8:00pm	Special Venue	CSSR President's Reception	Open to all CSSR Members. Complimentary Drink and Hors D'Oeuvres will be served. Announcement of Book Prize winner and Student Award winners.

Sunday, June 1

Time	Location	Session Title	Participants and Presentation Titles
9:00-10:00am	WFL-438	Special Session: Globalization and the Changing Landscape of Religious Studies	Chair: Donald Weibe, "Globalization as Trojan Horse in the Academic Study of Religion"
10:00-10:30am	Morning Break		

10:30am-12:00pm	WFL-438	Author Meets Critics: <i>Yogalands: In Search of Practice on the Mat and in the World</i>	Moderator: David Seljak Critics: Rachel Brown, Pamela Klassen, Adheesh Sathaye, Jennifer Selby Author Respondent: Paul Bramadat
	WFL-436	Session: Eco-Spirituality and Justice: Reimagining Religion, Nature, and Ethics	Chair: Alison Marshall Presenters: Hinna Hussain, “Environmental Stewardship and Muslim Engagement in Canada” Chris Miller, ““It’s Like Nature is My Religion”: The Green Burial Movement and Transforming Religious Identities” Lauren Strumos, “Reorienting Ethics: Religion, Nonreligion and Interspecies Justice”
12:00-1:30pm	Lunch Break		
1:30-3:00pm	WFL-438	Roundtable: Emerging Sikh Solidarities in Early Twenty-first Century Canada	Chair: Zabeen Khamisa Participants: Amardeep Kaur, Zabeen Khamisa, Sharanpal Rupral, Sasha Sabherwal

	WFL-436	Panel: World Christian Togetherness: Beyond Religious Nationalism	<p>Chair: Ryan Dunch</p> <p>Panelists: Lingshu Liu, “Re-igniting Hope Across the Country: The American Donors of Chinese Christian Posters”</p> <p>Shu-chen Hsuhsiung, “Watchman Nee as a World Christian: Debating the Assigned Chineseness for Nee's Christian Legacy”</p> <p>Zhixi (Jordan) Wang, “Sinicization and Its Discontents: Christian (Anti)Nationalism and Historiography of Christianity in China under Xi Jinping”</p>
3:00-3:30pm	Afternoon Break		
3:30-5:00pm	WFL-436	Author Meets Critics: <i>Occasional Religious Practice: Valuing a Very Ordinary Religious Experience</i>	<p>Moderator: Rachel Brown</p> <p>Critics: Brian Clarke, Stuart Macdonald, Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme</p> <p>Author Respondent: Sarah Kathleen Johnson</p>
	WFL-436	Roundtable: <i>Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Ecstasy—A Discussion</i>	<p>Chair: Rubina Ramji</p> <p>Participants: Alison Marshall, Rubina Ramji, Michael Wilkinson</p>

Monday, June 2

Time	Location	Session Title	Participants and Presentation Titles
8:30-10:00am	WFL-438	Session: Religion, Disability, and Marginalized Epistemologies	Chair: Margie Patrick Presenters: Paige Thombs, "The Longterm Impact of Christianity on Deaf Education" Rupee Kahlon, "Disentangling the Epistemic Silencing: Exploring the Hair Experiences of a Punjabi-Sikh Woman in the Canadian Diaspora"
	WFL-405	Panel: Method and Theory in the Study of Religion in Historical Perspective	Chair: Pamela Klassen Panelists: Albert Yang, "Method and Theory in the Study of Religion: A 50-year Critical Retrospective of RLG1000Y Course Syllabi at the University of Toronto, 1976-2026" Alison Cleverley, "A Land-Education Relationship: Cosmologies on the Historical U of Toronto Grounds" Martin Pinckney, "A House for Many Hats: A Short History of the Study of Jewish Thought at the University of Toronto"
10:00-10:30am	Morning Break		
10:30am-12:00 pm	WFL-438	Roundtable: Three New Books on Translocal Secularisms	Moderator: Jennifer Selby

			Participants: Andrea Paras, Amélie Barras, David Seljak, Géraldine Mossière, Sanober Umar, and Jennifer Selby
	WFL-405	Session: Christianity, Colonialism, and Cultural Hybridity	Chair: Ryan Dunch Presenters: Clara A.B. Joseph, “Reframing Togetherness Through the Thomas Christian Lens” Ejay Tupe, “Kapwa as Mission” Lu Wang, “Developing a Hybrid Identity for Indigenous Taiwanese Christians - An Intersectional Study of Coordinating Faith and Culture”
12:00-1:30pm	Lunch Break		
1:30-3:00pm	WFL-438	Session: Wellbeing and Meaning-Making	Chair: Presenters: W.Y. Chan & Margie Patrick, “Seeking meaning towards flourishing: How neurodivergent adults understand and explore spirituality” Celia Rothenberg, “Reframing Togetherness in the Classroom” Romy Zhang, “(Non)religious meaning-making and correlations with psychological wellbeing, global wellbeing, and EEG temporoparietal alpha asymmetry”
	WFL-405	Roundtable: Reason Beyond the Bounds of Bare Religion	Moderator: Munema Moiz Participants: Alessandro Graheli, Swamini Sagar, Vivek Shah

3:00-3:30pm	Afternoon Break		
3:30-5:00pm	WFL-438	Roundtable: “We Take Them on Together”: How Canadian Women Religious are Resisting Orders and Transcending Traditional Church Hierarchies	Chair: Catherine Holtmann Participants: Christine Gervais, Amanda Watson, Shanisse Kleuskens
	WFL-405	Session: Ethics, Law, and Theodicy in Religious Thought	Chair: Presenters: Anne-Marie Fowler, “Hierarchies of origin and limit: The Tower of Babel as a test of truth-making” Michael Hemmingsen, “Occasional Intervention, Threshold Deontology and the Free Will Defense” Faezeh Izadi, “Zakat Foundations in the Qur'an: Shia Interpretive Insights”

INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

Trent Atkinson, Queen's University

Paper Title: "Gym, Tan, Laundry: An Investigation of the Homosocial Implications of the Masculinity Ritual of GTL in Jersey Shore"

Airing on Music Television - MTV - from 2009 to 2012, "Jersey Shore" follows the lives of eight Guidos and Guidettes as they spend the summer working and partying on the Jersey Shore. On the show, the Guidos engage in a ritual referred to as GTL; gym, tan, laundry. The show depicts the men engaging in the repetitive ritual before they emerge from the house on to the boardwalk of the Jersey Shore in order to make themselves from regular Italian-American men into Guidos. The men note that the purpose of the ritual is to make themselves presentable for the Guidettes so that they may then take them home. However, I argue that the role of GTL is in effect rather a ritual of homosociality which allows the men to subvert traditional masculinity and engage in emotional conversations which go against patriarchal and hegemonic norms.

C. William Campbell, University of Victoria

Paper Title: Divine-Human Capital: Aspiring to Theosis via Mormon 'Self-Reliance'

We know that (neo)liberal capitalism serves to formulate humans as discreet manageable units and "ability machines" for the purpose of (re)producing and expanding individuals' human capital (Foucault [1978] 2008). As the abilities of the homo oeconomicus of (neo)liberal capitalism expand, so too does its human capital, and this expansion is an end unto itself. During my fieldwork, I observed Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormons) participating in the Church's relatively new Self-Reliance Initiative which deployed familiar economic market rationalities, but to decidedly different ends. Instead of seeking to generate human capital, I argue that the LDS Self-Reliance Initiative's ends are premised on generating what I call 'divine-human capital'. Rooted in a theology of close, intimate, and biologically-understood togetherness between humanity and LDS conceptions of God, the principles of LDS Self-Reliance reframe economic rationalities as tools to achieve the ultimate end of LDS aspiration: theosis.

W.Y. Alice Chan, The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy &

Margie Patrick, The King's University

Paper Title: Seeking meaning towards flourishing: How neurodivergent adults understand and explore spirituality

The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy (CCRL) and three agencies in Metro Vancouver's community living sector are exploring how neurodivergent adults understand and engage with spirituality in its religious and non-religious sense. As part of a larger research project, CCRL completed six interviews with participants in a series of spiritual engagements led by a Peer Spirituality Explorer at Curiko, an organization established by the three agencies to enhance flourishing and meaning by providing online and/or in-person experiences. In this paper, we (members of CCRL) present interview findings and highlight the participants' experiences and insights regarding spirituality, including how they define spirituality, and their reflections on connections to self, others, nature, and the transcendent. Insights were informed by a co-analysis

process with five interviewees using the Critical Communicative Methodology. “Togetherness” in spirituality appeared in expected and unexpected ways.

Robyn Drodge, Nipissing University

Paper Title: The resilience of past religious: Exemplars for our time

My presentation is based on existential reflections: can one sustain mental and spiritual health during challenging times – times of natural crises, a decay in democracy, an increase in conflict, and suspicion of expertise? Broadly, can humanity avert an existential crisis of non-existence, or at the least a demise of compassionate character, especially if we are isolated or in insular / polarized environments? Where can we look for inspiration if we are to maintain dignity and empathy in such a zeitgeist? I study exemplars of various religious autobiographers (Boethius, Julian of Norwich, Viktor Frankl, etc.) who have faced similar societal challenges. In learning their techniques for resilience, relevant knowledge could be produced for this time and place. In doing so, a prescription for future success might be gleaned – a timely recipe based on their learning method of the trivium, their intentional spiritual imagination, and their propensity for radical hope.

Aaron Ellsworth, University of Calgary

Paper Title: Sinful Echoes: Emblem Symbols, Ethics and Comic Book Narratives

Emblem books, a popular Renaissance genre which combined text and image, live on in today's comics. Wrath and Gluttony appear in the graphic narratives *Kid Eternity* and “*Foligatto*” containing the symbolic roots of emblematic depictions of the Seven Deadly Sins. Following Peter M. Daly's tracing of certain snake images from emblems into advertisements, I will examine how emblems indicate the sins, and how the comics' creators reuse the symbols for their own narrative purposes, thus bringing moral discussions from a religious sphere into one with a secular audience. Comics “echo” emblem symbols, because they have entered the Western world's popular consciousness through emblems, been replicated in other artforms, and now appear in these comics, even as their creators reshape meaning. My paper contributes to Religious Studies by demonstrating the endurance of Christian philosophy through emblem symbols and contemporary comics, thus situating these narratives within a broader visual and cultural history.

Wendy Fletcher, Renison University College, University of Waterloo

Paper Title: Diversity as a Baseline for Togetherness in Competing Ecclesiological Models

In an era of continuing decline in religious practise in Western societies, interest in the question of religious vitality has risen. In the North American Christian context we see illustrations of vitality which can be framed in two distinct, yet analogous modes. These two modes are named as: the spiritual revival model and the congregational growth model. Although different in form, function, and focus, they are also resonant phenomenon. Each in differing ways grounds their model in an affirmation of the importance of inclusivity and diversity. This paper tracks these parallel phenomena by considering a macro and a meso narrative: at the macro level the rise of Spirit based communities which gave birth to early Pentecostalism, and a current meso narrative exploring the life of an individual congregation in Ontario, as an example of the institutional

growth model. Conclusion: embracing diversity provides both key opportunities and challenges to communal vitality.

Anne-Marie Fowler, University of Toronto

Paper Title: Hierarchies of origin and limit: The Tower of Babel as a test of truth-making

Genesis 11: 1-9 spends surprisingly little time on an event of considerable epistemic rupture. One language unites a people. They construct a tower to account for what had been accomplished to date, thereby circumscribing future categories of difference or doubt. An acute reopening of categories in a scattering of languages is followed immediately (10-32) by a genealogy. Proposing a reading of Genesis 11 as an examination of hierarchies of knowledge construction, I will compare linear and arboreal structures of truth-making as a clash between origin and limit, and of negative and positive frames of truth construction. I will activate Hermann Cohen's interaction with Bertrand Russell regarding conceptions of the derivative dx of the Calculus, with Cohen proposing a reading of origin and Russell a reading of limit. In doing so, I will suggest reading the Babel narrative alongside the shattering of political/partisan media's former truth-making categories of origin and limit.

Michael Gillingham, University of Alberta

Paper Title: Portrait of a Mixed Marriage: Irish Jewish writer David Marcus and Irish Catholic writer Ita Daly

David Marcus was an influential and widely respected author and editor of Irish writing in the last half of the twentieth century. Marcus addressed his conflicted Jewish identity in both his fiction and also in his autobiographies. Marcus' marriage to Irish Catholic writer Ita Daly served as a challenge to both of their families of origin and represented a relatively rare occurrence in Ireland in the 1960s. Daly's 2016 book *I'll Drop You a Line* complements her husband's autobiographies with her portrait of their marriage. I will be discussing how this couple navigated the social pressures and religious traditions of their day in their efforts to build a marriage and family together. This is illustrated particularly with rituals like weddings and funerals. While Ireland today has quickly become a secularized state, this couple's experience speaks to the very real opportunities, challenges, and drawbacks of "models of togetherness that promote diversity."

Keren Gottfried, University of Ottawa

Paper Title: Beyond the Brew: Ayahuasca, Reconciliation, and the Limits of Western Healing

Westerners continue to flock to the Global South to drink ayahuasca, a psychedelic brew, in pursuit of spiritual, physical and mental healing. My paper positions ayahuasca tourism as a response to the wounds caused by living under the 'power-over paradigm' and its corollaries: an inability to reconcile with Indigenous peoples and non-human life on earth. Using a literature review, I weave Indigenous scholarship from Canada and the Global South, ethnographic research on Western ayahuasca participants, and literature on the rise of nonreligion and 'mundane enchantment.' I argue that Western ayahuasca tourists seek healing beyond the epistemic, ecological, religious, and material structures of their home country and link these gaps to Indigenous genocide and environmental degradation. I submit that these wounds cannot be healed by passively drinking ayahuasca but rather through reconciliation, which the brew's insights often directly address.

Michael Hemmingsen, Tunghai University

Paper Title: Occasional Intervention, Threshold Deontology and the Free Will Defense

The Free Will Defense remains one of the most influential responses to the problem of evil, arguing that the value of human free will justifies God's non-intervention in human affairs despite the resulting suffering. This paper challenges a key assumption of this defense: that free will's value is lexically prior to the prevention of suffering, such that no amount of suffering could justify overriding free will. Drawing on threshold deontology – which holds that even stringent moral duties can be outweighed when consequences become severe enough – I argue that free will's value should similarly have limits. While free will might justify God's general non-intervention, this cannot explain His failure to prevent extreme evils through minimal interventions at key points. The paper suggests that many historical evils exceed any plausible threshold for justified intervention, suggesting the Free Will Defense cannot adequately account for the extent of evil we observe.

Hinna Hussain, University of Ottawa

Paper Title: Environmental Stewardship and Muslim Engagement in Canada

Religious worldviews and ideas deeply influence how Muslims perceive environmental issues, but their motivations for environmental action are not solely religious (Foltz, 2006, p. 208). This paper explores the relationship between Muslim individuals and their involvement in environmental activities in Canada. It examines whether environmental concerns serve as common ground for interaction among Muslims and people from various religious and non-religious backgrounds. Through interviews and participant observation, the study aims to understand the motivations, perspectives, and experiences of Muslims engaged in plant stewardship in Ottawa, Toronto, and Victoria. Using the "lived religions" lens, it highlights the dynamics of interaction between Muslims and others, emphasizing collaboration in addressing environmental challenges. In the contemporary socio-political context, Muslims' environmental actions contribute to positive integration and challenge stereotypes associated with their identities.

Emmanuel Israel, Toronto School of Theology

Paper Title: Discussion Between Pauline Theology and Social Identity Theory in Response to Othering – A Humanity's Historically Rooted Problem

Allan Kagedan analyzes othering in U.S. and Canadian politics, viewing it as a human tendency rooted in ethnocentrism, racism, and xenophobia exhibited by political/public figures. He argues that othering marginalizes minority/ politically weaker groups. He advocates for the principle of inclusiveness through education, establishing institutions, and enacting laws to mitigate the public/political drive to other minority groups. While valuable, he fails to distinguish legitimate/illegitimate othering and how othering is an integral aspect of identity formation.

So, what resources does Paul's theology offer in defining a biblical/theological alternative to othering? To respond, I will differentiate between appropriate othering that helps individuals/groups define their identities healthily and the illegitimate practice of othering. Second, I will explain how othering is achieved/justified. Third, I will propose an alternative: a

durable practice of inclusivity that avoids the illegitimate practice of othering through Paul's theology. I will use textual analysis to interpret these concepts.

Faezeh Izadi, University of Calgary

Paper Title: Zakat Foundations in the Qur'an: Shia Interpretive Insights

My paper aims to explore the foundations of Zakāt in the Qur'an, with a focus on Shia interpretive insights. It will examine the term's occurrences in the Qur'an, analyzing its meaning in both Meccan and Medinan verses and how its use may differ in early Islamic contexts. I will discuss the historical development of the term, including its possible origins and how it was adapted in the Qur'anic context. The paper will also explore different scholarly perspectives on the role of Zakāt, including its connection to earlier prophetic traditions. Additionally, I will investigate the broader Shia views on Zakāt, considering how it might encompass all forms of financial obligation, including Khums and other social duties. I will also discuss key categories of Zakāt recipients, such as "those employed to collect it" and "those whose hearts are reconciled," analyzing jurisprudential debates surrounding their interpretations and the practical implications within Shia thought.

Clara A.B. Joseph, University of Calgary

Paper Title: Reframing Togetherness Through the Thomas Christian Lens

This project explores how the history of the Thomas Christians of India, of precolonial Christian heritage, challenge dominant narratives that frame colonialism primarily as a religious event, reinforcing binaries between Christian colonizers and non-Christian colonized. Works such as *Decolonization: A Short History* by Jansen and Osterhammel and Dos's *Colonialism and Communalism* highlight missionaries' roles in fostering communalism but overlook the socio-economic and political complexities within colonial and decolonial movements. Using a recent incident in Balasore, Odisha, India where women were tied and accused of conversion during Christmas celebrations—underscored by rhetoric linking missionaries to communal strife—this project critically examines how religion, colonialism, and decolonialism intersect. By centering the Thomas Christians' lived experiences and employing interdisciplinary methods, this work rethinks coexistence beyond simplistic binaries. It proposes models of togetherness that embrace diversity while addressing the challenges of communal narratives, contributing to broader conversations on coexistence and justice in colonial and postcolonial contexts.

Rupee Kahlon, Nipissing University

Paper Title: Disentangling the Epistemic Silencing: Exploring the Hair Experiences of a Punjabi-Sikh Woman in the Canadian Diaspora

For one Punjabi-Canadian woman, the Sikh religio-cultural imperatives of her community, combined with mainstream colonial dictates made her hair a space of overlapping silencing and epistemological oppression. In my presentation I will share the research on this topic that I am currently conducting for my PhD project. Using endarkened narrative inquiry and a postcolonial, post-structural feminist perspective, I explore how my research participant's patriarchal Punjabi culture was heavily invested in her embodying the ideal of female modesty and virtuosity by following the Sikh *Maryada* (religious code of conduct) to keep *kesh* (uncut bodily, facial and head

hair). Simultaneously, however, racist mainstream Canadian societal standards deemed her un-styled head hair, and hairy face and body as signifying unwomanliness, pseudo-animalism and reduced societal worth. My research seeks to understand how these patriarchal and colonial dictates prevented this woman from developing her own ways of religious and cultural knowing and self-determined identity formation.

Chris Miller, University of Toronto

Paper Title: “It’s Like Nature is My Religion”: The Green Burial Movement and Transforming Religious Identities

Green burial describes an alternative to conventional burial that seeks to minimize environmental impact. Principles of green burial include no embalming and using only natural, biodegradable materials. Drawing on conversations with people interested in having a green burial, this paper analyzes transforming outlooks on death and afterlife. I examine green burial against the backdrop of religious transformation. More specifically, Canada is witnessing the rise of religious ‘nones’ and people who identify simply as spiritual. Customary rites associated with death reflect Christian beliefs regarding death and heavenly resurrection. As Christian affiliation declines, people increasingly view such traditions as unnecessary. Instead, many yearn for rituals which promote proximity to soil and a natural process of decay. This paper maps out dominant motivations among people who desire natural burial. Through death practices that foregrounds relationships to nature, I argue that green burial reflects broader changes in nonreligious afterlife imaginaries.

Nicola Mooney, University of the Fraser Valley

Paper Title: The Integrated Relations of Social and Environmental Justice in Sikh Sevā

Sikhism emerges within and has a strong history of social reform. The concept of sevā or selfless service to others, as perhaps most well-recognized in the practice of langar, is foundational and central to Sikhi and at the core of Sikh social justice action, although its efficacy is challenged by ongoing hierarchies of caste and gender among Sikhs. A less known dimension of sevā is its holistic extension to the environmental, the planetary, and the more-than-human. These aspects of sevā are extended to social, political, and environmental action within the pragmatics of contemporary environmental, sustainability, and agricultural movements. This paper considers how these pluriversal, and political, aspects of sevā might relatedly advance the cause of human equality to which Sikhism has long committed.

Bouchra Mossmann, University of Southern Denmark

Paper Title: Transience and Ties: Exploring Togetherness and Community in Northern Canada

How is togetherness understood and experienced in Canada’s northern territories?

This work-in-progress examines community life in Yellowknife (NWT), Inuvik (NWT), and Whitehorse (Yukon) as part of my PhD project on Muslim lived experiences in northern Canada. Based on field notes and interviews, it primarily explores narratives from members of the respective local Muslim congregations, offering insights into broader communal dynamics—with a key focus on interactions between local First Nations, Inuit, and Muslim newcomers. These interactions emerge most visibly in the face of struggle, such as the 2023 Yellowknife wildfire

evacuations or recent expressions of solidarity with Gaza, highlighting the interwoven nature of these relationships. Ultimately, the paper identifies a central paradox: while economic opportunities attract newcomers through various immigration pathways, contributing to the transient nature of these communities, strong communal ties foster a sense of belonging, encouraging many to stay and cultivate deeper connections and understandings of togetherness.

James Nowak, University of Toronto

Paper Title: Regarding Creation: Praise, Visual Perception and 'Double Movement' in John Scottus Eriugena's Periphyseon

This paper explores the role of praise in the Periphyseon ('On the Division of Nature'), a five-volume dialectic treatise of apophatic Christian theology composed by the ninth-century Irish philosopher John Scottus Eriugena. Specifically, it looks at the relationship between the activities of 'praise' (laus) and 'visual perception' (visio), and it argues that, for Eriugena, practicing 'praise' (i.e. inner gratitude and its outward verbal expressions) improves how a person literally sees the world. To make the argument, the paper close reads passages on 'praise' and 'visual perception' and brings them into conversation. It then applies Alexander Hampton's notion of "double movement" (usually invoked in discussions of mystical theology) to interpret Eriugena's claims. Finally, the paper closes by inferring some potential ecological implications, which may prove useful to modern people – secular and religious alike – seeking to address the increasingly urgent ecological crisis. How ought one look upon such a world?

Celia Rothenberg, McMaster University

Paper Title: Reframing Togetherness in the Classroom

This paper explores the challenges and strategies of teaching the required (and often dreaded!) theory course for diverse cohorts of graduate students entering Masters and doctoral degree programs in Religious Studies. Students come to religious studies with a wide range of academic and personal backgrounds as well as vastly different areas of interests and research projects. How and what should be taught in the required theory seminar for such a group? What works? What doesn't? Apropos of this year's conference theme, "Reframing togetherness," this paper will speak to a range of pedagogical practices as well as key substantive issues and concepts that can be successfully addressed in a seminar with a heterogenous student group. The goal is to explore ways to unite students in their shared objective of understanding religion.

Frederic Strack, Université de Sherbrooke

Paper Title: How can we live together after so many conflicts? Local initiatives of togetherness in Montréal

This presentation explores models of togetherness that promote religious diversity in Montréal. It examines local initiatives designed to mend relationships between Hassidim and non-Hassidim citizens in the Outremont district. In polarized societies, secular institutions and secular societies oftentimes clash with deep-seated religious commitment (Campbell, 2016). In Montréal, no district has better embodied this than the Outremont district, whose Hassidim population has drawn nationwide attention from elected officials and the media, from 2010 onward. From the request to blur the windows of a sports center to the request to build new synagogues and

eruvim (Gaddi, 2019; Dejean, 2021), they sparked decade-long conflicts with the neighborhood and the local public institutions. We discuss the initiatives local authorities have implemented in the 2020s to heal the wounds of these conflicts and elaborate on this case study to contribute to the consensual management of conflicts related to religious diversity (Prideaux, Dawson, 2018; Griera, 2012).

Lauren Strumos, University of Ottawa

Paper Title: Reorienting Ethics: Religion, Nonreligion and Interspecies Justice

Drawing on semi-structured interviews with settler activists in British Columbia, this paper explores how the perspectives of individuals opposed to an oil pipeline project represent principles of interspecies justice. Interspecies justice extends moral consideration beyond the human, challenging a norm of human exceptionalism embedded in traditional conceptions of justice. The analysis focuses on how justice principles as represented by individual settler activists intersect with their religious, nonreligious, and spiritual identities. In so doing I employ the term 'terrestrial' as proposed by Bruno Latour (2018). For Latour, the language of 'terrestrial' draws us back to earth, away from grand ideas of the universe and toward the soil beneath us, for it is here we must reorient our identities and politics. Overall, I aim to demonstrate how individuals—religious, nonreligious, and spiritual—embody a terrestrial identity in representing principles of interspecies justice. I conclude by considering the implications of 'the terrestrial' for decolonizing ethics.

Paige Thombs, University of Victoria

Paper Title: The Long-Term Impact of Christianity on Deaf Education

In 1880, the Second International Conference on Deaf Education was held in Milan, Italy during which it was decided by participants--largely clergy--that Deaf education switch from manual instruction (sign language) to Oralism (speech). The belief was that Oralism was "superior" to manual language, and that teaching children to speak would allow them the opportunity to communicate with God. At the time of the conference, one of the leaders of the Oralism movement declared that "The minister of Christ must open the mouth of the deaf...the mutes must speak." While oral schools still exist today, the Christian rhetoric around Deaf education has largely disappeared. Still, these early Christian attitudes continue to loom large on a community that continues to have its language and culture stolen by oral schools and other interventions. This paper will explore the impact of Christianity on Deaf education and the long shadows it continues to cast.

Ejay Tupe, Toronto School of Theology

Paper Title: Kapwa as Mission

This paper critically examines the concept of mission from a Filipin@-centric perspective, addressing the enduring impacts of colonialism on Filipino identity and theology. Drawing from postcolonial theory, it highlights the historical complicity of colonial missions in cultural subjugation and economic exploitation, particularly in the Philippines. The work explores colonialism's psychological and sociological effects, including the internalization of cultural inferiority and the diaspora phenomenon. Through the indigenous Filipin@ concept of kapwa, which emphasizes relational intimacy and shared humanity, the paper proposes a transformative framework for mission. Kapwa reimagines mission as an inclusive, reciprocal engagement that transcends the hierarchical and oppressive legacy of colonial missions. This perspective challenges Western missional paradigms, inviting global theological discourse to embrace diversity and mutuality. Ultimately, my paper envisions mission as a tapestry of radical belonging, positioning the Filipino diaspora as agents of this redefined missional ethos.

Joycelin Van Caulart, University of Toronto

Paper Title: We Have Faith to Endure It': The Role of Rural Amazonian Christianity in Shaping Social Cohesion and Hazard Resilience in Ucayali, Peru

Religion is often overlooked when studying natural hazards. While religion has been shown to foster trust and mutual aid leading to cohesion and resilience, it can also create rifts within the social fabrics of communities, which affects adaptive capacities to hazards. In disaster-prone regions with heightened vulnerability, understanding religion is crucial. This thesis examines how rural Amazonian Christianity contributes to both social cohesion and fragmentation in two rural floodplain communities in Ucayali, Peru. This paper discusses the extent to which rural Amazonian Christian lived religion and practices contribute to social challenges and fragmentation through theodicies, disunity, and distrust while simultaneously fostering cohesion through hope, meaning making, and 'affective therapeutics.' This paper demonstrates that considering lived religion more deeply when studying hazards is not only useful for enhancing our understanding of vulnerability and resilience, but also for considering the psychological aspects of building (personal) resiliency towards environmental change and challenges.

Lu Wang, Know College, Toronto School of Theology

Paper Title: Developing a Hybrid Identity for Indigenous Taiwanese Christians - An Intersectional Study of Coordinating Faith and Culture

This essay examines the complex interactions between Christianity and Indigenous Taiwanese cultures, focusing on the tension between cultural preservation and spiritual disruption. From the Dutch colonial era through Japanese occupation, Christianity often functioned as both a tool of cultural suppression and a means of cultural survival. While missionaries and Christian doctrines labeled Indigenous traditions as pagan and sought to replace them, elements of Indigenous culture found ways to persist within Christian frameworks, often through Indigenous agency. This study explores these dynamics by analyzing historical contexts, the cultural conflicts and identity crises induced by Christianization, and the potential for reconciliation between Indigenous and Christian identities. Employing a decolonial perspective, the paper considers how

reclaiming cultural agency can enable Indigenous Taiwanese Christians to forge hybrid identities that balance tradition and faith. Though tensions persist, this work underscores the importance of dialogue and decolonization in fostering harmony and cultural autonomy.

Donald Wiebe, University of Toronto

Paper Title: Globalization as Trojan Horse in the Academic Study of Religion

At the first founding of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) in 1900, the Paris historians of religion envisioned the possibility of establishing and promoting the scientific study of religions in their academic institutions. Their vision for that mandate included both disseminating the results of their research to “scholars of all nationalities,” and encouraging adoption of this approach to the study of religion globally by means of periodic international congresses. At its second founding and legal incorporation at the 7th international congress in Amsterdam in 1950, a radically different notion of globalization of their enterprise emerged. I argue here that this new sense of globalization effectively undermined the Paris objective by promoting an “accommodationist” adoption of a plurality of aims, objectives, and methodologies, making the IAHR an omnibus organization like that of the AAR.

Romy Zhang, University of British Columbia

Paper Title: (Non)religious meaning-making and correlations with psychological wellbeing, global wellbeing, and EEG temporoparietal alpha asymmetry

Research shows a well-established link between religiosity, meaning, and positive wellbeing. Exploring meaning-making (reconciling new experiences with overall beliefs) can analyze this relationship. Furthermore, electroencephalography (EEG) studies link wellbeing to temporoparietal asymmetrical alpha brain activity (alpha asymmetry), indicating greater motivation to approach reinforcing stimuli and avoid aversive stimuli, which conceptually aligns with meaning-making. However, religion-health research often conflates nonreligious identities and to date, no studies have utilized EEGs to examine meaning-making. We aim to combine wireless EEG, questionnaires, and interviews to explore whether the strength of (non)religious belief is positively correlated with wellbeing in undergraduate religious and nonreligious individuals, as well as whether wellbeing will be positively correlated with temporoparietal alpha asymmetry. We expect a positive linear relationship to appear between the intensity of religious (non)belief, wellbeing, and temporoparietal alpha asymmetry, which can inform meaning-making-related brain-behaviour relationships. We expect to begin data collection in February and data analysis in March.

PANELS

World Christian Togetherness: Beyond Religious Nationalism

Lingshu Liu, University of Alberta, “Re-igniting Hope Across the Country: The American Donors of Chinese Christian Posters”

This research explores the engagement of Christianity in China by looking into lay people in the West. It examines the Milton Stewart Evangelist Funds (SEF). From the 1910s, the SEF funded the print of tracts and posters and remained one of the largest donors for the evangelical literature in China up to the 1930s. This research investigates why the SEF funded Chinese Protestant publications and how Milton Stewart, an American Fundamentalist, understood China's place in evangelism. It argues that the SEF evinced the transnationality of the Protestant church that bridged China to the world. Across denominational, national, and gender boundaries, Protestants, missionaries and lay people alike, formed a unified evangelical force to transport machinery, money, and sources for printing and distributing literature which would eventually lead China to the world Protestant community. The religious network framework can shed new light on exploring the global movement of technology, ideas, and materials.

Shu-chen Hsuxsiung, University of Alberta, “Watchman Nee as a World Christian: Debating the Assigned Chineseness for Nee's Christian Legacy”

This panel examines the dynamics of World Christianity by exploring the intersections of transnational networks, global theological identities, and nationalist tensions within the Chinese Christian contexts. Lingshu Liu investigates the transnational evangelical collaboration of American donors and Chinese Protestant publishers in the early 20th century. She reveals a network that transcended denominational, national, and gender boundaries. Dr. Shu-chen Hsu Hsiung challenges the nationalist framing of Watchman Nee's legacy by arguing instead for his identity as a “World Christian” whose theological contributions surpass cultural and national boundaries. Dr. Jordan Wang analyzes contrasting historiographies of Christianity in China under Xi Jinping, highlighting the ideological conflict between the state's Sinicization agenda and the counter-narrative of anti-nationalistic resistance within the Chinese house church community. Together, these papers illustrate the ways Christianity in China engages with and disrupts nationalist frameworks by fostering a vision of Christian togetherness that transcends borders, ideologies, and historical divides.

Zhixi (Jordan) Zhang, University of Alberta, “Sinicization and Its Discontents: Christian (Anti-) Nationalism and Historiography of Christianity in China under Xi Jinping”

This article compares two fundamentally divergent textbooks on the history of Christianity in China: the first one, History of Christianity in China (HCC), is produced by the state-sanctioned Three-Self Church in 2019, and the second one, History of House Churches in China (HHCC), concurrently by an urban house church dissident leader. By situating the comparison within the scholarly discourse concerning nationalism and Christianity in modern China, it argues that while HCC offers, through the new hermeneutical lens of Sinicization, a longstanding nationalistic interpretation of the Christian past in China, HHCC emerges as the first work by Chinese Christian

authors to adopt an unambiguously anti-nationalistic stance. The stark contrast between the two textbooks not only highlights the ongoing struggle within the Chinese Christian community between compliance and resistance but also underscores the broader thematic conflict between national sovereignty and religious freedom.

Method and Theory in the Study of Religion in Historical Perspective: Views from the University of Toronto

Alison Cleverley, University of Toronto, "A Land-Education Relationship: Cosmologies on the Historical University of Toronto Grounds"

The large lawn and ravined park in the center of the University of Toronto's campus have remained important to the university's ideological construction project for the past two centuries. This paper analyzes archival images for the role these green spaces played in shaping and naturalizing the university and education. First, I discuss how maps and design proposals laid claims to the land. Second, how the conceived relationship between nature and humans, underlaying this landscaping plan, fit into and reinforced a Christian cosmology. Third, I argue that these green spaces were fundamental to the educational plan in Canada. Finally, this paper connects the past into the future by discussing how these green spaces remain important to the university's ideological construction project, looking at the recent inclusion of space for indigenous ceremonies, recognizing and reflecting a shift in views of sacredness of the land and corresponding relationships to education in the institution.

Martin Pinckney, University of Toronto, "A House for Many Hats: A Short History of the Study of Jewish Thought at the University of Toronto"

Today the University of Toronto hosts a number of scholars of Jewish thought and philosophy. For many outside the university, this strength has become almost synonymous with the legacy of Emil Fackenheim. As this paper demonstrates, Fackenheim's initiative, while certainly playing a pivotal role in laying the foundations for Jewish studies, actually had little to do with its current composition and strengths. Drawing upon faculty interviews, institutional histories, and departmental data, it begins by highlighting the obstacles preventing the initial success of Jewish studies during Fackenheim's tenure, and then turns to the circumstances which helped to remove them. The result is a surprising story more interesting and illuminating than the initiative of any one individual, department, or administration. It speaks to the broader relationship between the simple narratives overlaying our disciplines and the more complex associations lying at their foundation.

Albert Yang, University of Toronto, "A 50-year Critical Retrospective of RLG1000Y Course Syllabi at the University of Toronto, 1976-2026"

"Method and Theory in the Study of Religion," has been a core doctoral course in the Department for the Study of Religion (DSR) at the University of Toronto since 1976. While its primary goal of equipping first-year doctoral students with critical tools for studying religion remains unchanged, both the course content and pedagogy have evolved significantly over the past five decades. This evolution reflects broader historiographical trends and the inclusion of feminist, postcolonial,

Indigenous, and Queer studies, among others. This paper analyzes changes in course content and pedagogy in relation to developments in the field of religious studies from 1976 to 2025. By examining archived RLG/REL1000Y syllabi and Academic Calendars from the School of Graduate Studies (SGS), it details the foundational role of "Method and Theory in the Study of Religion" at the Department for the Study of Religion from 1976 to the present.

ROUNDTABLES

"We Take Them on Together": How Canadian Women Religious are Resisting Orders and Transcending Traditional Church Hierarchies

Moderator: Catherine Holtmann, University of New Brunswick

Discussants:

Christine Gervais, University of Ottawa

Shanisse Kleuskens, University of Ottawa (Alumni)

Amanda Watson, Simon Fraser University

By drawing on central themes emerging from our forthcoming book, *Resisting Orders*, our roundtable discussion will shed light on how feminist women religious in Canada prioritize community and equity by resisting, and in many cases transcending, the traditional Catholic Church and its patriarchal tendencies. Exploring their perspectives on and reactions to the clerical abuse of children, the Church's stance on the criminalization of women's ordination, reproductive injustice, and its rejection of 2SLGBTQI+ people, we will consider what it means for women religious to agitate for change at a time of reckoning for the Roman Catholic Church. By extension, we will attend to the diversity of women religious as a group, making space for their evolving, unexpected, varied perspectives, and lived experiences.

Emerging Sikh Solidarities in Early Twenty-first Century Canada

Moderator: Zabeen Khamisa, University of Winnipeg

Discussants:

Amardeep Kaur, University of Toronto

Zabeen Khamisa, University of Winnipeg

Sharanpal Ruprai, University of Winnipeg

Sasha Sabherwal, Northeastern University

This roundtable will critically examine the organization of new progressive socio-political solidarities formed by Sikhs in twenty-first century Canada, who at times mobilize among themselves, and with other marginalized non-Sikh communities. We draw from our individual research and/or direct experience focused on new Sikh Solidarities in Canada to address issues such as caste oppression, gender queer experiences, immigration and labour, and global sovereignty movements. These Sikh Solidarities are expressed in a range of aesthetic and political modalities. We discuss ways these Sikh activists draw on multiple sources for ethical guidance to form a progressive praxis of solidarity including Sikh values, historical Sikh political experiences, and anti-oppression justice. We also consider the diverse mechanisms of change utilized to form

these new Sikh solidarities including gurdwaras, museums, digital networks, grassroots activism, and government. Finally, we will explore the hopefulness these movements offer and ponder the limits of certain expressed Sikh solidarities.

Three New Books on Translocal Secularisms, featuring Amélie Barras, Géraldine Mossière and Jennifer Selby

Chair: Jennifer Selby, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Discussants:

Andrea Paras, University of Guelph
Amélie Barras, York University
David Seljak, University of Waterloo
Géraldine Mossière, Université de Montréal
Sanober Umar, York University
Jennifer Selby, Memorial University of Newfoundland

This roundtable features three new books that examine the local and transnational politics of secularism in Francophone contexts from ethnographic and discourse analysis perspectives. Following a short overview by each author, we will hear from Andrea Paras (University of Guelph) on Amélie Barras' book, *Faith in Rights: Christian-Inspired NGOs at Work in the United Nations* (Stanford UP, 2024), David Seljak (University of Waterloo) on Géraldine Mossière's *Portraits de la modernité (non) religieuse : quelques confidences de baby-boomers au Québec* (Presses U Laval, 2024), and Sanober Umar (York University) on Jennifer Selby's *Secular Sensibilities: Romance, Marriage, and Contemporary Algerian Immigration to France and Québec* (UNC Press, 2025). The authors will also think more broadly about what their books tell us about the future of Secularism Studies from socio-legal and religious studies vantage points. The session will take place in English.

Reason Beyond the Bounds of Bare Religion

Moderator: Munema Moiz, University of Toronto

Discussants:

Alessandro Graheli, University of Toronto
Swamini Sagar, University of Toronto
Vivek Shah, University of Toronto

The Nyāyasūtra of Gautama (second century CE) opens with the claim that salvation is achieved through the full mastery of the system of Classical Sanskrit Logic (CSL). This claim, however, is puzzling, because Gautama and his later commentators hardly engage in any theology or soteriology, while they rather construct a coherent system of logic, dialectics, and epistemology. Scholars have interpreted this claim in various ways. Specifically:

1. CSL would provide the rational foundation of one's spiritual path (K.C. Bhattacharyya's view).
2. CSL would serve as the rational protection during one's spiritual journey (Karl Potter).
3. CSL would be philosophy proper and that opening statement would just be an empty claim, a "propagandistic statement" for "charismatic appeal" (Daya Krishna).

The roundtable will discuss, from these three standpoints, the role of rationality in the Sanskrit discourse of South Asian religions.

Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Ecstasy - A Discussion

Moderator: Rubina Ramji, Cape Breton University

Discussants:

Alison Marshall, Brandon University

Rubina Ramji, Cape Breton University

Michael Wilkinson, Trinity Western University

The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religion and Ecstasy, co-edited by Alison Marshall, Rubina Ramji and Michael Wilkinson, presents global studies of religion and ecstasy, examining emotion, power, gender, bodies, mysticism, globalization and decolonization. This roundtable reflects on the Handbook's major themes – intoxication, spirit possession, charisma and modern manifestations of ecstasy. The editors present conclusive evidence, provided by the various authors, that religious ecstasy of the 2020s is available, accessible and obtainable for everyone, individually and collectively, and it is happening everywhere—at home, online, in the community, and through prayer, dance, song, possession, and the ingestion of drugs. It further examines how ecstasy is thought of in dualistic terms – such as miracle or madness – and how it may be playing out in religion and politics today.

AUTHOR MEETS CRITICS

Yogalands: In Search of Practice on the Mat and in the World

Author: Paul Bramadat, University of Victoria

Moderator: David Seljak, University of Waterloo

Critics: Rachel Brown, University of Victoria

Pamela Klassen, University of Toronto

Adheesh Sathaye, University of British Columbia

Jennifer Selby, Memorial University of Newfoundland

David Seljak, University of Waterloo

Attracted by the promise of physical and mental health benefits, community connection, and (for many) spiritual experiences, millions of people in Canada and the United States practice yoga. Paul Bramadat's new book *Yogalands: In Search of Practice on the Mat and In the World* (McGill-Queen's Press 2025) is the product of a seven-city, ethnographic study of postural yoga in Canada and the US. As both a yoga practitioner and teacher as well as a scholar of religion, Bramadat draws from his personal experiences, fieldwork, a survey, and interviews with hundreds of yoga teachers and students to understand how practitioners relate to the spiritual and religious elements of yoga and how yoga is influenced by national boundaries, experiences of trauma, debates around cultural appropriation and scandals around sexual misconduct. Critics will reflect

on yoga, religion, and spirituality, and may discuss their own yoga practice in light of Bramadat's work.

Occasional Religious Practice: Valuing a Very Ordinary Religious Experience

Author: Sarah Kathleen Johnson

Moderator: Rachel Brown, University of Victoria

Critics: Brian Clarke, Emmanuel College

Stuart McDonald, University of Toronto

Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, University of Waterloo

In *Occasional Religious Practice: Valuing a Very Ordinary Religious Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2025), Sarah Kathleen Johnson introduces the concept of occasional religious practice to describe a way of relating to religion that is characterized by participation in religious practices occasionally rather than routinely, most often in connection with certain types of occasions, including holidays, life transitions, and times of crisis. Anchored in three years of qualitative research in the Anglican tradition in Toronto, Johnson shows the complexity and depth of occasional religious practice. Integrating interdisciplinary perspectives from sociology of religion, religious studies, and liturgical theology, she argues that it is crucial to attend to occasional religious practice to understand the contemporary religious landscape, how religious rituals function in religiously diverse contexts, and the benefits of doing theology in conversation with people who relate to religion in a range of ways, especially those on the theological and liturgical margins.