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Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Unit and Sociology of Religion Unit and Critical Research on Religion (/pu/critical-theory-and-discourses-religion-unit-and-sociology-religion-unit-and-critical-research)

Theme: **Bringing Back the Social into the Sociology of Religion (and Religious Studies) (Haymarket Books, 2019)**

Monday, November 30, 1:45 PM–3:15 PM (EST UTC–5)

Rebecca Catto, Kent State University, Presiding (/users/catto-rebecca-kent-state-university)

In her award-winning book, *From Yoga to Kabbalah* (2014), and her recent co-edited volume, *Bringing Back the Social into the Sociology of Religion* (2018), sociologist Véronique Altglas has argued that recent sociologists of religion focused on topics and methods such as rational choice theory, spirituality versus religion, lived religion, and religion as consumption have shifted away from what should be sociology's foremost focus: the power of the social world and its institutions to push, propel, enable, and constrain us; to dynamically mold our comforts, discomforts, desires, repulsions, and the religious activities and ideas we embrace or reject. In this roundtable, we ask four scholars (two from religious studies and two sociologists of religion) to reflect on and assess Altglas' argument, their own work, and the current state of sociology of religion and religious studies. These presentations will be followed by a response from Véronique Altglas and then audience discussion.

Panelists

Sean McCloud, University of North Carolina At Charlotte (/users/mcccloud-sean-university-north-carolina-charlotte)

Katja Rakow, Utrecht University (/users/rakow-katja-utrecht-university)

J.P. Reed, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale (/users/reed-jp-southern-illinois-university-carbondale)

Fareen Parvez, University of Massachusetts (/users/parvez-fareen-university-massachusetts)

Responding

Veronique Altglas, University of Cambridge (/users/altglas-veronique-university-cambridge)

Religion in Europe Unit and Sociology of Religion Unit and Critical Research on Religion (/pu/religion-europe-unit-and-sociology-religion-unit-and-critical-research-religion)

Theme: **Faith, Knowledge, and Rational Freedom: A Roundtable on Jürgen Habermas' *Also a History of Philosophy* (Suhrkamp, 2019)**

Tuesday, December 1, 11:00 AM–1:00 PM (EST UTC–5)

Warren S. Goldstein, Center for Critical Research on Religion, Presiding (/users/goldstein-warren-s-center-critical-research-religion)

This panel explores philosopher and social theorist Jürgen Habermas' recently published two-volume work on philosophy and religion, *Auch eine Geschichte der Philosophie* [Also a History of Philosophy, Vol 1: The Western Constellation of Faith and Knowledge; Vol 2: Rational Freedom. Traces of the Discourse on Faith and Knowledge] (2019). In this work, Habermas "traces how philosophy successively disengaged itself from its symbiosis with religion and became secularized," moving from the Axial Age through modernity to the present. Habermas also reflects on "the function of a philosophy that adheres to the rational liberty of communicatively socialized subjects." The panel will examine the extent to which this new work revises and expands his theory of communicative action and connect this to his view of religion's place in society. Panelists, all scholars of Habermas, will situate this new work within Habermas' long career and his contributions to sociology, philosophy, and religious studies.

Panelists

Eduardo Mendieta, State University of New York, Stony Brook (/users/mendieta-eduardo-state-university-new-york-stony-brook)

Francis Schussler Fiorenza, Harvard University (/users/fiorenza-francis-schussler-harvard-university)

Maeve Cooke, University College Dublin (/users/cooke-maeve-university-college-dublin)

Sociology of Religion Unit (/pu/sociology-religion-unit)

Theme: **Conceptualizing Religion and Rethinking Methods in the Sociology of Religion**

Thursday, December 3, 11:00 AM–1:00 PM (EST UTC–5)

Dusty Hoesly, University of Southern Mississippi, Presiding (/users/dusty-hoesly-university-southern-mississippi)

This panel uses multiple social sciences methodologies to rethink what counts as religious, showing us the importance of methodological choices for how we conceptualize and interpret the data of religious studies and the sociology of religion. Presentations include the use of geospatial imaging and ethnography to interpret Christian–Muslim social dynamics in Nigeria, interviews and analysis of photographs to reveal lived religion in personal homes in Latin America, qualitative and quantitative findings from a large survey of U.S. Jews, Christians, and Muslims regarding their perceptions of vocation in work settings, and historical and interview research into the lives of Boston-area fire chaplains. These papers highlight how social science research can help scholars of religious studies and the sociology of religion develop theories from the ground up and not take our categories for granted.

- Amidu Elabo, Princeton Theological Seminary (/users/elabo-amidu-princeton-theological-seminary)

Faith and Topography: A Remote Sensing Analysis of Religious Interaction in Jos North, Nigeria

Abstract

This paper explores how the spatial transitioning of Jos North engendered a way of being that is leading its heterogeneous inhabitants to strategically and uncritically appropriate its physical topography. Jos North, created as a geopolitical entity in 1991, has an area size of 291 km² and lies within the latitude 9.916667 N and Longitude 8.900000 E. Its average elevation is 1168.1 meters above sea level with the highest peak of 1409 meters at Gwom Nabor. An analysis of its 2020 January 30th Landsat image shows its urban development since the early 20th century has grown to appropriates 88.795602 km² of its landcover. While 55.766242 km² remain undeveloped, 100.338514 km² of its topographical features are rugged and hilly terrains, with most parts of them constituting the highest elevation points of the city. By using a remote sensing analytical approach and ethnographic data, the argument of this paper unpacks how sociological and histo-political conditions shaped and is shaping the geospatial sensibilities of Christian and Muslim inhabitants of Jos North urban center. Ultimately, it delineates the anxieties and uncertainties that such evolving spatiality of the Jos North creates.

- Gustavo Morello, Boston College (/users/morello-gustavo-boston-college)

Modernity and Sacralization Practices: Photographs and the Sacred

Abstract

As technology has incorporated into daily life, it has also made its path into the religious realm. One nineteenth century modern creation, photography, became widely spread in the twenty first century. Photography was born in at the same time than sociology, Daguerre and Comte were contemporaries. (Williams R. , 2015) Photography is at the core of the process of modernity: a technological development that establishes a new relationship with space, time, life and death. (Suárez H. J., 2008) Today, photo cameras incorporated into cellphones are in the hands of millions. Some people use photos to portray sacred things, but how do some pictures become sacred objects? What pictures are printed and displayed at home? Where are they showed? In which context? With which other objects? Who or what are represented in the pictures? Why these and no others? What do these pictures tell us about Latin American religiosity? What is the sacred they show?

- Brenton Kalinowski, Rice University (/users/brenton-kalinowski-rice-university)
- Elaine Howard Ecklund, Rice University (/users/ecklund-elaine-howard-rice-university)
- Rachel Schneider, Rice University (/users/schneider-rachel-rice-university)

Perceptions of Work as Calling

Abstract

This paper seeks to explore how religious individuals perceive the idea of work as a spiritual calling, and in particular, how individuals at different levels of workplace organizational position in the US have differing narrations of their work with relationship to the idea of spiritual calling. Drawing on approximately 200 in-depth interviews with Christians, Muslims, and Jews, we work to expand the meaning of Weber's concept of beruf or "calling" to understand the religious meanings of work for individuals within different social

locations in their workplaces. We find that those at the top of their organizations seem more likely to experience work as a spiritual calling. However, we also find that different frameworks emerge for viewing work as a calling between the top, middle, and bottom of organizations and that religion assists in the meaning making process around work among those at all levels of the workplace hierarchy. These findings have important implications in terms of understanding how religious individuals across different class position value their work and the conditions under which they experience conflict or compromise between their religious identity and work

- Wendy Cadge, Brandeis University (/users/cadge-wendy-brandeis-university)

The Value Added of "Holding the Space:" A Case Study of Chaplains in Boston and their Changing Roles over Time

Abstract

Chaplains usually work on the periphery of organizations, even those where they are required. They spend time with people at some of their most difficult moments – as they die, in the midst of traumatic and life altering situations, and at transition points when the line between what was, what is, and what will be is – perhaps - at its thinnest. This paper explores what chaplains in Boston see themselves most contributing to the organizations and individuals with whom they work. While I expected chaplains to talk with me about how they help people wrestle with existential questions of theodicy - why bad things happen and what role, if any, God places – such talk was relatively rare. More often chaplains spoke about the space they help people create and hold in the midst of difficult moments rather than the content they contribute to that space. I conclude by considering the language chaplains use to articulate their unique contributions or value added and the ways most code-switch between more traditional religious languages and more broadly accessible emotional languages as they do their work make sense personally of it in the everyday.

Business Meeting

Dusty Hoesly, University of Southern Mississippi, Presiding (/users/dusty-hoesly-university-southern-mississippi)

Rebekka King, Middle Tennessee State University, Presiding (/users/rebekka-king-middle-tennessee-state-university)

Sociology of Religion Unit (/pu/sociology-religion-unit)

Theme: Crossing Global and Religious Boundaries: Social Change, Identity, and Power

Tuesday, December 8, 4:00 PM–5:30 PM (EST UTC–5)

Jonathan Calvillo, Boston University, Presiding (/users/calvillo-jonathan-boston-university)

This panel centers stories of boundary crossing in a variety of geographic locations, religious traditions, identity formations, and power relations. Using social science methods, each paper will illuminate how these shifts reveal not only the socially-constructed and porous nature of religious boundaries but also the relationships of power in which such crossings are embedded and policed. Papers include a qualitative study of Judaizing evangelical Christians in Latin America, long-term ethnographic research on Afro-Cuban religious multiplicity, a qualitative exploration of Christian-Muslim interfaith couples in Europe, a mixed-methods analysis of the stigmatization of Muslims students on U.K. college campuses, and a textual analysis of South Asian Buddhist converts' autobiographies as social revolutionary texts.

- Francesco Cerchiaro, Ku Leuven (/users/francesco-cerchiaro-ku-leuven)

Christian-Muslim couples dealing with religious difference A qualitative inquiry in three European countries

Abstract

Based on 172 biographic interviews with partners from Christian-Muslim couples gathered in Italy, France and Belgium, the article explores how they deal with religious pluralism in everyday family life. These couples represent an emblematic case study of "mixedness" since they incorporate more layers of differences: religious, as the two partners are socialized into both Islam and Catholicism, racial-ethnic, as a partner from the majority group is married to an immigrant partner from a minority stigmatized social group. Despite this interplay between different levels of differences, religious difference is assumed as the mainly conflictual dimension between the partners. The analysis shows how partners, united by the common purpose of minimising their differences often overcome religious pluralism. Various strategies to accomplish this are distinguished. The analysis shows how partners' daily religious experiences often reconstruct their former religious identities that tends to decline, become privatised or spiritualised. It is concluded that what is defined in the literature as 'mixed' – in terms of religious differences – conceals substantial differences across couples.

- Mathew J. Guest, Durham University (/users/guest-mathew-j-durham-university)

Stigma and Suspicion in the Lives of Muslim Students: How the 'radicalisation' narrative has changed higher education in Britain

Abstract

This paper reflects on findings from a project - 'Representing Islam on Campus' – that explores how Islam and Muslims are represented within UK universities. This five-year project encompassed a national survey of 2,000 students and qualitative fieldwork across six higher education institutions including extended interviews and focus groups with 253 students and staff. Conceptually, it has been framed around key points of tension, frequently invoked in the 'othering' of Muslims within the British context: gender and gender identities; inter and intra-religious relations and 'radicalisation'. The current paper explores how the idea of 'radicalisation' has become embedded, configured, and reconfigured as an idea circulating within higher education contexts. These processes share an overall tendency towards the heightening of suspicion, reinforcement of a securitized regime of anxiety, and an expansion of the stigmatisation of Muslims. And yet, these patterns are also framed by distinctive institutional contexts and different patterns of negotiation among staff and students, factors that highlights localized agency and the strategic management of emerging tensions.

- Jualynne E. Dodson, Michigan State University (/users/dodson-jualynne-e-michigan-state-university)

"INTEGRATED RELIGIOUS MULTIPLICITY": CHALLENGE TO SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION

Abstract

This paper presents findings from fifteen years of qualitative sociological field research in eastern, Oriente Cuba. The research demonstrates that Cubans continue customs within religious traditions that are Africa-inspired, organic and distinct to the island but, more significant, perform rituals from two or more of the island's seven traditions, *integrated religious multiplicity*, and do so without conflict or contradictions. This practice challenges standard Western understandings about religion but also suggests the viability of crossing boundaries between sociology of religion, religious studies, and other academic disciplines for better comprehension of humankind's socially constructed meanings within and despite oppressive social structures. The conceptual and analytical perspective for the research is/was the African Diaspora and the presentation will discuss findings as well as how the African Diaspora framework, without imposing external conceptual approaches, facilitated comprehension and allowed analyses to retain the integrity of practitioners' lived sacred experiences.

- Drishadwati Bargi, University of Minnesota (/users/bargi-drishadwati-university-minnesota)

Social revolution by other means: The writing of conversion in dalit autobiographies in postcolonial India

Abstract

This paper seeks to read three texts from South Asian anti-caste literature in order to understand the relationship between conversion to Buddhism and social revolution. The three texts are B. R Ambedkar's Buddha and his Dhamma (2011), Urmila Pawar's The Weave of my Life (2003) and Dr Tulsiram's Murdhayia (2016). Political scientist Gopal Guru has criticized these literary expressions for being too emotional, hence subjective and amenable to co-optation by the academia (Guru and Sarukkai 2017). However, it is my contention that these autobiographies, through their subjective expressions not only help us understand Ambedkar's work but also constitute and actively intervene in the conception of dalit politics that Ambedkar pioneered in colonial India. Dalit autobiographies reveal that conversion gets enacted through these small changes, or techniques that depart from a modern conception of knowable, programmatic and total change thereby shedding light on the meaning of social revolution in Ambedkar's thought in particular and anti-caste writing in general: maybe the social that dalit intellectuals are pursuing is not an agglomeration of knowable interest blocs (Laclau 1990).

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Religion
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