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# Oxford Symposium on Religious Studies: Presenters

11-13 March 2024



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01

**Presenter List**

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# 02

## Introductions

By Date of Presentation

 11 March

 12 March

 13 March

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**11 March**  
**Presenters**

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# Prof. Donald H. J. Hermann



9:10 - 9:40 A.M.

Donald H. J. Hermann is Professor of Law and Philosophy at DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois (USA). Professor Hermann is recipient of the degree Ecumenical doctor of Ministry from Catholic Theological Union, Chicago; recipient of a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Northwestern University and law degrees from Columbia University and Harvard University. His current research focuses on Roman Catholic and Anglican relations involving the sharing of Eucharistic communion and the question of the validity of Anglican orders. Professor Hermann is the author of a number of law-related monographs and over one hundred articles in legal journals.





# Tarin Christopher Griswold



9:40 - 10:10 A.M.

Tarin Christopher Griswold is an MLitt Analytic and Exegetical Theology postgraduate student at the University of St Andrews. He holds a Bachelors degree in Political Science with minors in Japanese and Military Science. He holds two distinction masters degrees in International Relations and Linguistics. Prior to studying at St Andrews, Christopher was a Lecturer of Strategic Studies and Senior Lecturer of Japanese at the U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA). Christopher's authored the following theology books and narrated associated audiobooks: T.C. Griswold, Gospel of John, King James Version: Introduction and Reflections, Apple Books and Audible, 2022; T.C. Griswold, How Do I Become Christian? 3 Steps | Lord Jesus Christ, Apple Books and Audible, 2022; and T.C. Griswold, The God Vacuum: Exploring Heart Abyss and Divine Ascent Paradigms, Apple Books and Audible, 2021.



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**Dr. Jeffrey Mooney**



**10:30 - 11:00 A.M.**



# Nathalie Tremblay



11:00 - 11:30 A.M.

Nathalie Tremblay is a PhD candidate in Sciences of Religions with a speciality in feminist studies at Université du Québec à Montréal. Her doctoral research is dedicated to mapping the variety of commitment from feminine religious congregation in Canada to social justice from 1975 up to today and how do they anticipate the transmission of all those initiatives as most of those congregations will disappear within the next ten years. Nathalie's research interests are related to the question of religion in society, applied theology, spirituality in health care system and social justice: the variety of interest is a reflect of her academic background in sexology, in ethics and in death studies. Nathalie Tremblay is also a chaplain in pediatric intensive care at the Montreal Children Hospital, a teaching center affiliate to McGill University.



# Dr. Nixon S. Cleoplat



11:30 - 12:00 P.M.

Nixon Cleoplat, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor of Religion. He is currently the coordinator of the Religion and Society program. He holds a Ph.D. in Systematic Theology and Social Ethics from Union Theological Seminary at Columbia University and earned a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Harvard University. In 2003, he obtained an undergraduate degree in English Literature and General Education from Salem State University's Honors Program. His research focuses on indigenous religions, including African-derived Caribbean religions such as Haitian Vodou, systematic and constructive theologies such as black theology and Latin American liberation theology, womanist and feminist theological and ecological ethics, queer theory, pneumatology, Pan-African critical thought, and post-structuralist theory of language and power. He has co-authored *Critical Approaches to Religion* (2018), and co-edited *Vodou in Haitian Memory* (2016) and *Vodou in the Haitian Experience* (2016). He has published two book chapters, "Vodou as the Embryo and Marker of Haitian Sociohistorical Identity," in *Shackled Sentiments: Slaves, Spirits, and Memories in the African Diaspora* (2019) and "Vodou, an Inclusive Epistemology: Towards a Queer Eco-Theology of Liberation," in *Vodou Service: Vodún and Vodou in the African Atlantic World* (2022).



# Muhammet Selim Altınpınar



1:00 - 1:30 P.M.

Selim is pursuing his second master's degree in philosophy at Central European University. Prior to this, he completed his undergraduate studies at Galatasaray University and his first master at KU Leuven. His interests are philosophy of religion mainly epistemology and Abrahamic religions' theologies.



# Dr. Gaven Kerr



1:30 - 2:00 P.M.

Dr Gaven Kerr received his PhD in 2011 from Queen's University Belfast writing a thesis on the philosophical thought of St Thomas Aquinas and Immanuel Kant. Since graduating, Gaven has published numerous articles on the thought of Aquinas, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of religion, and is the author of two monographs on Aquinas, both with OUP, and a book of collected articles. He is currently working on books on the metaphysics of the resurrection and epistemological realism. He is currently a lecturer in philosophy at St Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth Ireland. Outside of the academic world, Gaven is a married father of three, third order Dominican, and martial artist.



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**Dr. Katsuhiko Sasuga**



**2:00 - 2:30 P.M.**



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**Dr. Yun Ding**



**2:50 - 3:20 P.M.**



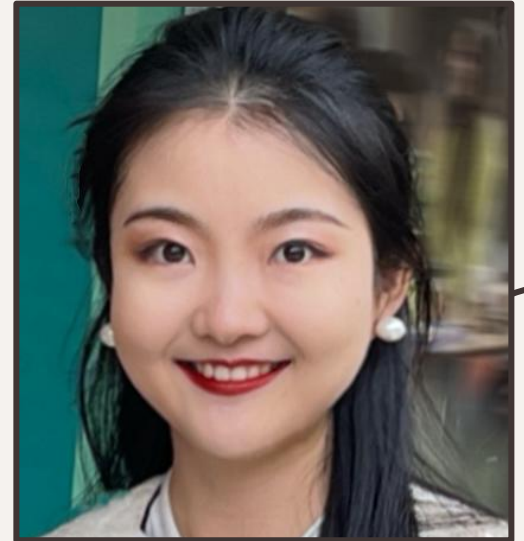


# Yuxin Zhao



3:50 - 4:20 P.M.

My doctoral research examines urban design in revitalization with the cultural heritage and identity in smart cities. I am actively involved in the process of compiling and authoring international smart city standards. In addition, I engage in a number of academic conferences related to Future City Design and Digital Architecture. I am currently researching at the intersection of geography of religion and cultural anthropology.



# Dr. David W. Kim



4:20 - 4:50 P.M.

David W. Kim (PhD: Syd) is A Visiting Scholar, Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University and Associate Professor of History, Kookmin University, Seoul, Korea. He is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, UK, a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, UK, a Mission Specialist at the Institute for Space (Australian National University), and the Editor of the Book Series in East Asian Religions and Culture (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK). Asso. Prof. Kim has published nine books and 82 peer-review articles, including Sacred Sites and Sacred Stories Across Cultures (Palgrave Macmillan 2021), The Words of Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas: the Genesis of a Wisdom Tradition (Routledge 2021), Daesoon Jinrihoe in Modern Korea (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2020), New Religious Movements in Modern Asian History (Rowman and Littlefield 2020), Colonial Transformation and Asian Religions (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2018), Religious Encounters in Transcultural Society (Lexington 2017), and Religious Transformation in Modern Asia (Brill 2015).



# Dr. Stephen Asma



4:50 - 5:20 P.M.

Stephen Asma is Professor of Philosophy at Columbia College Chicago. He is author of ten books, including *The Evolution of Imagination* (Chicago) and *Why We Need Religion* (Oxford). He writes regularly for the *New York Times*, and the *Boston Globe*. And he is the cohost, with Academy Award nominated actor Paul Giamatti, of the hit podcast *Chinwag*.



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**12 March**  
**Presenters**

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# Prof. John T. P. Lai



9:10 - 9:40 A.M.

Prof. John T. P. LAI received his DPhil. (Oriental Studies) from Oxford (2005), and is currently a Professor in the Department of Cultural and Religious Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests focus on Religion and literature in China, Biblical reception in Chinese contexts, and Missionary Yijing (Book of Changes) studies. He is now working on a major research project “The Global Yijing: The Cross-Cultural Translation and Transnational Reception of the Yijing (Book of Changes) in Western Religion and Literature”. He has published more than ten books, including *Literary Representations of Christianity in Late Qing and Republican China* (2019), and *An Annotated Anthology of the Yijing Commentaries by the Early Qing Jesuit Joachim Bouvet* (2020).



# Dr. Massimiliano Tomasi



9:40 - 10:10 A.M.

Massimiliano Tomasi (Ph.D. Nagoya University, Japan). Professor of Japanese at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington, USA. Main area of expertise: modern Japanese literature. Publications include *Rhetoric in Modern Japan: Western Influences on the Development of Written and Oratorical Style* (University of Hawaii Press, 2004), *The Literary Theory of Shimamura Hōgetsu and the Development of Feminist Discourse in Modern Japan* (Mellen, 2008); *The Dilemma of Faith in Modern Japanese Literature: Metaphors of Christianity* (Routledge, 2018); and the edited volume *Religion and Spirituality in Japanese Literature* (Association for Japanese Literary Studies, 2016). Professor Tomasi is currently completing a monograph that explores the intersections between Christianity and Japanese literature during the postwar period.



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# Nans Mousset



10:30 - 11:00 A.M.

I got a graduate degree in Philosophy from the university Aix-Marseille in June 2022 and started my PhD on Nietzsche's philosophy of religion (the exact intitel of my PhD is « Nietzsche's religiosity: the sacralisation of immanence) in October 2023 in cotutelle with both Aix-Marseille University and Tübingen University under the direction of Pr. Sebastian Hüscher. I'm a member of the Centre Gilles Gaston Granger at Aix-Marseille University and of the French-German Doctoral college at the University of Tübingen.



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# Prof. John Gee



11:00 - 11:30 A.M.

John Gee is the William (Bill) Gay Research Professor at Brigham Young University. He received his Masters from the University of California at Berkeley and his Doctorate from Yale University.





# Dr. Fred Glennon



11:30 - 12:00 P.M.

Fred Glennon, PhD (Emory University), is the Associate McDevitt Chair of Religious Philosophy at Le Moyne College in Syracuse, New York. His field of teaching and research is in the areas of Religion, Social Ethics, and Society, particularly their interrelationship with public policies on welfare, poverty, and labor markets. His most recent book is *Christian Social Ethics: Models, Cases, Controversies* (Orbis Books, 2021), a text that combines theory, cases, and analysis.



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**Dr. J. Cody Nielsen**



**1:00 - 1:30 P.M.**



# Tamar Kojman



1:30 - 2:00 P.M.

Tamar Kojman is in the final stages of completing her PhD studies in German History at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She is a research fellow at the Richard Koebner Minerva Center for German History and a member of the research group “The Evolution of Attention” at the Mandel Scholion Center. Her dissertation, “From Kultus to Kultur: Debating the Germans’ Mission in the World, 1830–80,” examines religious disputes between German liberals and conservatives surrounding the nature of the German nation’s spiritual mission in the world. Her research explores the nexus between political, cultural, and religious formations of nationhood in the nineteenth century, and contributes to scholarship on the history of nationalism, history of secularism, gender history, and history of antisemitism. She has published in the peer-reviewed journals *Nations and Nationalism* and *Central European History*.



# Dr. Nandini Deo



2:00 - 2:30 P.M.

Nandini Deo is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Lehigh University where she teaches collaborative courses on Comparative Politics, Social Activism, Religion and Politics, and Indian Politics. She is spending 2023-24 as Fulbright Nehru Scholar at SNDT Women's University in Mumbai. Her research engages South Asian politics, civil society organizations, religion and secularism, gender and childhood. Deo wrote *The Politics of Collective Advocacy in India* with Duncan McDuaie Ra (Lynne Rienner 2011). Her second book, *Mobilizing Religion and Gender in India: The role of activism* (Routledge 2016) compares the rise and fall of women's movements and Hindu nationalism. Her edited volume *Postsecular Feminisms? Religion and Gender in Transnational Context* (Bloomsbury 2018) suggests that postsecularism is context specific. Her forthcoming book *Corporations and Civil Society in India* (Anthem 2024) examines how corporate money and practices are reshaping Indian civil society. Inspired by her experience as a homeschooling parent, Deo is launching new research on children and democratic experiments.



# Jordyn de Veer



2:50 - 3:20 P.M.

Jordyn de Veer is a senior at Wellesley College double majoring in Anthropology and Religion. With an interest in biblical studies, they actively engage in research regarding social scientific approaches to the Bible, as well as demonstrating a strong passion for ancient Near Eastern artifacts. Jordyn is looking forward to continuing with higher education after finishing a Bachelor of Arts degree at Wellesley, with several acceptances to graduate programs. They aspire to make a positive impact in Religious studies and promote gender diversity and inclusivity within the field.



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# Eliza Powers



3:20 - 3:50 P.M.

Eliza Powers is an English and Religious Studies major at Pomona College in Claremont, California whose work focuses on gender and Christianity.



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**Dr. Lydia Bremer-McCollum**



**3:50 - 4:20 P.M.**



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**Kimberly Arevalo Diaz**



**4:20 - 4:50 P.M.**





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**13 March**  
**Presenters**

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# Dr. Miguel Aguilera



9:10 - 9:40 P.M.

Miguel Aguilera is an Arizona State University Associate Professor of Religious Studies. He specializes in Indigenous Mesoamerican cosmovisions, especially as focused on Maya cosmology and personhood, and conducts holistic interdisciplinary past to present investigations of ontological related rites, rituals, and ceremonies associated with the environment. Trained as a sociocultural anthropologist and archaeologist, specializing in the study of religion, Aguilera's research is transdisciplinary in method and theory.



# Dr. Lidija Kovacheva



9:40 - 10:10 A.M.

Born in Skopje, where she obtained a bachelor's degree and completed her master's and doctoral degree at the Institute of classical studies at the Faculty of Philosophy - Skopje, at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. She has participated at numerous conferences, both at national and international level, as well as in different projects in the field of art, culture and education. She is the author of the "Dictionary of Macedonian folk feasts, customs and beliefs", 1 audio edition of „The story about Alexander“ intended for blind and people with visual impairments and various scientific papers. She is a member of the Team of authors of 2 textbooks for high school vocational education „The cultural and historical heritage“ for the 2nd and 3rd year of education. She has been appointed by the Ministry of Education as Reviewer of bilateral projects with Montenegro and with Austria. She is a proof-reader in Macedonian language and has been appointed as a Member of Honour of the Chamber of mediators. Since 2023 she is a Member of the Management Board of the Association of Classical Philologists „Antika“ at the Faculty of Philosophy, at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University - Skopje.



# Dr. Donald Braxton



10:30 - 11:00 A.M.

Donald M. Braxton is the J Omar Good Professor of Religious Studies at Juniata College in the United States. He has been in this position for twenty-two years. Prior appointments were to liberal arts colleges in Columbus, Ohio, and Green Bay, Wisconsin. Braxton earned his Ph.D. in the human sciences in 1993 from the University of Chicago. He has published mostly on religion and science, the evolution of religion, the cognitive science of religion, computer simulations, and transhumanism. Most recently, in the fall of 2023, he was a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the National Yang-Ming Chiao-Tung University of Taiwan.



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**Dr. Robert Bianchi**



**11:00 - 11:30 A.M.**



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**Dr. Akintunde Akinade**



**11:00 - 11:30 A.M.**



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**Dr. Muhammad Modassir Ali**



**11:00 - 11:30 A.M.**



# Dr. Daphne Desser



11:30 - 12:00 P.M.

Daphne Desser is Associate Professor of English at the University of Hawai'i, specializing in rhetoric, Jewish identity, autobiographical writing, and Holocaust studies. Dr. Desser has published on her great-grandfather, Mordecai Ben-Ami, a writer and journalist who immigrated to Tel Aviv in the 1920s. He was a committee member of Hovevai Zion and a delegate to the first Zionist Congress in 1897. She is a 2021 recipient of the Schusterman Center's Summer Institute for Israel Studies fellowship. Drawing on her father's experience as a childhood escapee from the Shoah in Amsterdam, she has published on the memoirs of second and third generation Holocaust survivors. She has been selected as a speaker for "Americans and the Holocaust," a touring library exhibition sponsored by The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the American Library Association. Representative of her current research is a recent article, "My Mother is a Sabra and Other Inconvenient Truths." Since Spring 2023, she has been teaching graduate and undergraduate courses on the memoirs of Israelis and Palestinians.





# Dr. Khodadad (Khodi) Kaviani 1:00 - 1:30 P.M.

Khodadad (Khodi) Kaviani, Ph.D., is professor of education at Central Washington University in Washington state. His research and teaching include the Middle Eastern politics and culture, democratic education, and the intersection of education and ideology. He is the author of Rethinking Khayyaamism: his controversial poems and vision and three illustrated books about selected Iranian and Zoroastrian traditions. They are (1) Norooz with My Family; (2) Mehregaan: The Triumph of Liberty Over Tyranny; and (3) Iranian Calendar Stories: Myths, Legends, and History. He has produced 16 cultural songs about the living Iranian traditions that have been celebrated and kept alive by the Zoroastrians. These songs are available through the digital archives at Central Washington University.



# Dr. Alina Isac Alak



1:30 - 2:00 P.M.

Alina Isac ALAK (postdoctoral researcher - University of Vienna) is specialized in contemporary Islamic hermeneutics, contemporary reformist Muslim thought, gender studies, and local Muslims' identity constructions. She has published numerous academic articles and four authored books regarding contemporary Qur'anic exegesis and, respectively, Islamic jurisprudence from a gender perspective. Last co-authored book together with Adis Duderija and Kristin Hissong is *Islam and Gender. Major Issues and Debates*, Routledge, 2020. Between 2021-2023 she worked as a MSCA postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Vienna in "Uncharted Anti-Radicalism Strategies: Challenging the Interpretative and Hermeneutical Methodologies of the Salafi-Jihadi Theology" Project, coordinated by Univ. Prof. Rüdiger Lohlker. Currently she is working as a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of Vienna.



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# Dr. Malik Muhammad Sohail



2:00 - 2:30 P.M.

Malik Muhammad Sohail is serving as Director, Center for Religion, Science and Social Wellbeing, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Chakwal, Pakistan. He is a non-resident faculty scholar at the Duke Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health. His research interests include religion/spirituality, wellbeing, illness experiences, inter-faith harmony and religion and modernity.



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**Alhaji Khuzaima Mohammed  
Osman**



**2:50 - 3:20 P.M.**



# Cláunei Crístian Delgado Dutra 3:50 - 4:20 P.M.

Pastor Cláunei Crístian Delgado Dutra, BA, MA. Baptist pastor for 25 years and Military Chaplain at Brazilian Air Force since 2008. Graduated in Theology (1999) at Southern Baptist theological seminary in Brazil and Sao Paulo's Methodist University. Professional Mastering in Aerospace Sciences (2021) at the Air Force University-UNIFA

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5884-7915>



# Dr. Henrique de Souza Rocha



3:50 - 4:20 P.M.

Dr. Henrique de Souza Rocha, BSc, MSc, DSc. Graduated in Physics (1998) and PhD in Nuclear Engineering (2007), from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He was a researcher in several projects at the National Synchrotron Light Laboratory and at the Nuclear Instrumentation Laboratory (COPPE/UFRJ) where he developed projects in biology, medicine and industry. He is currently a Collaborator Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Aerospace Sciences at the Brazilian Air Force University-UNIFA, where he teaches CBRN Defense discipline of focused on Aerospace Power. He is an institutional leader researcher in CBRN projects promoted by CAPES and the Brazilian Ministry of Defense.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1807-7359>



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03

**Abstracts**

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Prof. **Donald H. J. Hermann**, Professor of Law and Philosophy, Depaul University, US

*Contemporary Theological Resources Supporting An Anglican Claim to Greater Sharing of Roman Catholic Eucharistic Communion*

**Keywords:** eucharistic theology, ecclesiology, ecumenical dialogue

Three areas of theology are considered for their contribution to establishing a claim of Anglicans to receive Eucharist at Roman Catholic liturgies. The three areas considered include: Eucharistic Theology, Ecclesiology and Ecumenical Dialogue as understood from a Roman Catholic perspective.

Eucharistic Theology is considered with reference to Eucharistic memorials, presence and sacrifice. Issues examined include the view that asserts that the consecration of the elements for the Eucharist are attributed to the action of Christ which is mediated by the presiding priest, and the view that the Eucharist sacrifice is attributed to the presiding priest as he represents the church community. Similarly understandings of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist are explored. Statements of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission on Ministry and Ordination will identify a convergence of views by Anglicans and Roman Catholics on the important elements of Eucharistic Theology.

Ecclesiology and Ecumenical Dialogue will be discussed in a similar way to address the issues of the relation of the Church of Christ to the Roman Catholic Church and other churches. Special attention will be given to the relationship of Eucharist to church unity. The conflict between the view that shared Eucharist should be a means to church unity or follow the achievement of the goal of church unity. Ultimately the question is whether there is sufficient unity between the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church to support sharing of Eucharistic communion.





Mr. **Tarin Christopher Griswold**, Student, University of St Andrews, UK

*Exploring Becoming Christian in Trinitarian Terms as Theosis*

Keywords: Christian, theosis, trinitarian, deification

Four Proposition:

Becoming Christian in trinitarian terms as theosis is a lifelong process which entails four fundamental elements. I label these as four propositions: a) Filial love of God (as the Holy Trinity) amidst ecclesial love as a community of believers in Christ; b) the will to overcome sin through love of Christ; c) sanctification and regeneration by the Holy Spirit; and d) A synergistic process of triune Christian theosis by the ineffable Holy Trinity.



Dr. **Jeffrey Mooney**, Professor, Old Testament Interpretation and Theology, California Baptist University, US

*Mum's the Word: Key Terminology in the Prohibition of the Blemished Priest in Leviticus 21:16-24*

Keywords: priest, blemish, disability

Much biblical scholarship asserts that the Priestly voices in the scriptures pillory people with disabilities by assuming a social bar of physical perfection (תְּמִיִּם). No text seemingly makes this case better than the prohibition for the blemished priest in Leviticus 21:16–24.

Biblical scholars often employ sociological and anthropological categories while reading this text, which provides rich hermeneutical discussions. Sarah Melcher, combining historical critical methodology with theories of social stigmata and semiotic meaning, explores “how Leviticus stigmatizes and devalues ‘persons based on physical attributes or appearance.’” (Sarah Melcher, “Visualizing the Perfect Cult: The Priestly Rationale for Exclusion,” pp. 55-71 in Eiland and Saiers, *Human Disability and the Service of God*, Abingdon Press, 1998). Her work exemplifies much of both Biblical and Disability Studies' approach to this text. However, the current conversation lacks a deductive etymological analysis and theological reflection of the key terms, namely “blemish” (מִוֶּמֶת) and “unblemished” (תְּמִיִּם).

In this paper, I demonstrate that “blemish” (מִוֶּמֶת) relates to the non-stigmatized conceptual world in Israel rather than the marginalized. I plan to prove my thesis by examining each use of מִוֶּמֶת, the core term in Leviticus 21:16-24, give attention to the unique state of being without מִוֶּמֶת in Israel, and analyze its correlative term, תְּמִיִּם. I will conclude by incorporating the Priestly voice into the final form of the Torah, arguing that Leviticus does not devalue people with disabilities but provides them and all of Israel eschatological hope.



Ms. **Nathalie Tremblay**, Student, Université du Québec à Montréal, Canada

*Dialogue Between Religions Through the Promotion of Tikkun Olam*

Keywords: Tikkun Olam, ethic, dialogue

In 1965, rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel expressed the statement that “no religion is an island”. Almost sixty years later, looking at the conflicts between cultures this claim highlighted by Heschel seems to still be accurate. It ponders the question “how can we mobilize in an ethic perspective the concept of tikkun olam and how monotheist traditions understand it”? The essay will outline the concept of dialogue as developed by Heschel, define the notion of tikkun olam in monotheist traditions and discuss the ethical foundations and potential of tikkun olam to promote a culture of dialogue between cultures and religions.



Dr. **Nixon S. Cleopha**t, Associate Professor of Religion, Bloomfield College of Montclair State University , US

*Vodou, Rastafarianism, and Spiritual Aesthetics: Toward an Emancipatory Ancestral Epistemology and Praxis*

**Keywords:** Vodou, rastafarianism, liberation, empowerment, roots

The idea of a youth wearing their hair in dreadlocks, smoking ganja (marijuana), and practicing Haitian Vodou makes them a villain in Haitian society. Interestingly, more and more Haitian youth, particularly in urban areas of Haiti, are finding the aesthetic of Haitian Vodou and Rastafarianism to be a means of resistance and emancipation. This paper investigates the phenomenon behind why a large number of Haitian youth are now embracing Haitian Vodou and the aesthetics of Rastafarianism. It provides a critical analysis of how the concepts of liberation and the affirmation of identity may contribute to the attraction of Haitian youth to Vodou and Rastafarianism. They are embracing these traditions as a reclamation of Afro-cultural heritage. Lastly, I contend that the future of socio-cultural emancipation of Caribbean nations such as Haiti would require the marginalized in Haitian society to return to the philosophy and praxis of Afro-based spiritual traditions such as Vodou and Rastafarianism.



**Muhammet Selim Altınpınar**, Student, Central European University, Vienna

*An Ethical Interpretation of Akedah via a Thought Experiment*

**Keywords:** Akedah, philosophy of religion, faith, thought experiment, trust

This paper offers an ethical account of the Dialogism (Binding of Isaac) and presents Abraham's faith as an act of epistemic and ethical trust. In order to pursue this objective, I initially explore Thomas Aquinas' and Immanuel Kant's interpretations of the case by addressing the salient aspects of their arguments. Thereafter, by taking Abraham's prophecy into account, I introduce a thought experiment within which Abraham's obedience is ethically justified. Finally, building on the premise that Abraham's obedience is a concrete example of faith, I conclude that the thought experiment may be counted as a supportive argument for Aquinas' defense of Abraham's act.



Dr. **Gaven Kerr**, Lecturer, St Patrick's Pontifical University Maynooth, Ireland

*Scripture and Metaphysics*

**Keywords:** scripture, metaphysics, realism, nominalism, divine name

In this paper, I argue that metaphysics is essential for reading scripture. This is because the intelligibility of language is derived from the conceptual contents signified by the language, which contents are derived from either reality (realism) or the mind (nominalism). Given the metaphysical backbone of language, the approach that one takes to scripture will be one in which the language of scripture signifies either some reality or some meaningful content that the writer imposes. We will end with a consideration of how these approaches affect the interpretation of the revelation of the divine name in Exodus.



Dr. **Katsuhiko Sasuga**, Professor, School of Global Studies, Tokai University, Japan

*Religion and Politics in the US and Japan: The Resurgence of Religious Nationalism*

**Keywords:** religion, politics, nationalism, evangelical, Shinto

The study of religious nationalism in the US and Japan has been a relatively understudied sub-field of research. Religion may help bind society together by providing its citizens with a sense of belief, identity, and credibility leading to the development of national identity. Although secularization has been apparent in both countries, there has been a substantial revival of religion in politics. In the US, Christian conservative groups is a new phenomenon claiming “America is a Christian nation” and supporting for the slogan of “America First”. The presidential election in 2016 showed the influence of Evangelical’s conservatism. Religious nationalism continues to play a more crucial role in the domestic and foreign affairs of the United States.

On the other hand, the assassination of former Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in 2022, shed light on the influence of the controversial religious organization on politics. This event also raised the question of the repercussions of religious nationalism in Japan. Many of Abe’s cabinet members belonged to nationalistic groups, known as Nippon Kaigi (Japan Conference) and Shinto Seiji Renmei (Shinseiren).

While religion is not a necessary component of nationalistic ideologies, the religious groups have continued to gain more political power and to impose their religious visions on all of society. The election supports by religious groups for increasing vote-gathering power cannot be ignored by the candidates to win the national or municipal elections. This paper introduces empirical and descriptive study of the impact of religion on politics in the US and Japan.



Dr. **Yun Ding**, Associate Professor, Tennessee Tech University, US

*A Half-Marxist in Exile*

**Keywords:** Dalai Lama of Tibet, buddhism, marxism

In his modernist attempt at synthesis, the Dalai Lama of Tibet traffics with doubt as often as with plain affirmation of modernity in its three intertwined areas: politics, religion, and science. The ideas he comes to endorse regularly are characteristic of religious modernism that promotes affirmative use of secular culture. By far, the most startling invention of its kind is the social and economic blueprint the Dalai Lama draws for future Tibet, which blends Buddhism with various elements of Marxism, Socialism, Capitalism and democracy. Marxism is a major element in the eclectic mix. He now describes himself as “half-Marxist, half-Buddhist.”





Miss **Yuxin Zhao**, Student, Lancaster University, US

*Correlations Between the Developmental Trajectories of Religious Attitudes Among Chinese Buddhist Communities and Extrasensory Perception*

**Keywords:** buddhist behaviour, abhijñā and ESP, religious ecology

The study addresses the connection between preaching actions and Extrasensory Perception (ESP) among three categories of members in Chinese Buddhist groups. It describes three religious groups' perspectives on the subject matter of ESP, as well as how these perspectives are influenced by the developmental patterns of these groups. Firstly, those who have a stake in Buddhist groups that are sanctioned by the state have a mindset that acknowledges ESP but does not actively promote it. Additionally, Buddhist groups and associations that have a not quite legal status that acknowledge the significance of ESP and employ it to facilitate the spread of Buddhist doctrines. Lastly, there are groups and associates that are not accepted by the State Administration for Religious Affairs that exaggerate the experience and function of ESP. The last groups and their members excessively amplify the significance and role of ESP, employing it for personal benefit and operating covertly.



Dr. **David W. Kim**, Researcher, Harvard University / Kookmin University, US / Seoul

*Bomunjong: Bhikkhuni Buddhist Order in Contemporary Korea*

**Keywords:** Korean buddhism, Bhikkhuni, Jungupwon, Templestay

When Korea was liberated in 1945, the decolonisation movement was one of the leading social phenomena. The ideological conflict between celibate and married monks caused the Korean fusion of Buddhism in legal and violent chaos. Then, how was contemporary Buddhism transformed? Which new altered groups emerged in the post-Korean war society? This paper examines the Bomunjong, the sole Bhikkhuni movement, which was innovatively reinvented by Seorwoldang Geungtan in the transitional society of industrialisation and democratisation. It argues that Bomun's defense of the meditational environment was part of their fundamental purpose for the social status of gender equality.



Dr. **Stephen Asma**, Professor of Philosophy, Columbia College Chicago, US

*Reconsidering the Occult: An Embodied Cognition Approach to Esoteric Religion*

Keywords: occultism, spiritualism, esoterica, embodied cognition, philosophy of religion

Occult knowledge is hard to define and consolidate, but two of its key aspects are (a) intuitive mental content (e.g., non-empirical belief states or inner perceptual apprehensions), and (b) ritualistic craft (e.g., alchemical or therapeutic techne). It's my contention that the metaphysical causal origins of occult knowledge have been misunderstood to be supernatural by both believers and critics. In this paper I will offer a naturalized version of occult knowledge as a form of tacit embodied cognition. This opens a path to occult practice as epistemically valuable sense-making or practical knowledge (skillful coping).



Prof. **John T. P. Lai**, Professor, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

*Chinese Religion in Postwar American Literature: The I Ching and The Man in the High Castle*

**Keywords:** The I Ching (Book of Changes); Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*; religion and literature

This paper investigates the cross-cultural reception of the Chinese philosophical/religious classic I Ching (Book of Changes) in postwar American literature. Through a critical analysis of Philip K. Dick's Hugo Award-winning novel *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), this paper scrutinizes the profound and multifaceted influences of I Ching upon Dick's literary creation, and the ways in which the characters draw from the ancient oracle and wisdom of the I Ching to tackle the day-to-day anxiety and oppression in the fictional world where the United States was occupied by Japan and Nazi Germany.



Dr. **Massimiliano Tomasi**, Professor of Japanese, Western Washington University, US

*Defamiliarizing the Scriptures: Literary Representations of the Sacred in Endō Shūsaku's Fiction*

**Keywords:** Christianity, Japanese literature, pantheism, religious pluralism

Many Japanese writers converted to Christianity in the late nineteenth century. Their embrace of the Christian faith was short-lived, however, as most of them relinquished it within a few years. At the root of their renunciation were the tensions between the monotheistic tenets of the foreign religion and the pantheistic tenor of native religious sensibilities. This paper discusses how Catholic author Endō Shūsaku (1923-1996) strove to overcome those tensions by defamiliarizing the Holy Scriptures and developing a Christology that informed by his later readings of John Hick culminated in the religious pluralism of his final novel *Deep River* (1993).



Mr. **Nans Mousset**, Student, Aix-Marseille Université, France

*Nietzsche's Views on Islam*

**Keywords:** Nietzsche, Islam, religion, Christianity, culture

This paper aims to analyze the ambivalent position Nietzsche adopts with regard to Islam. On the one hand, Islam, as a religion, is targeted by Nietzsche's general criticism of religion or ideologies as ways to "invent" an ideal back world, in which it is not different from Christianity. However, on the other hand, one can state that at several places Nietzsche talks of Islam quite positively. The paper will argue that this paradox can be explained by considering the importance of cultural practices in Nietzsche's thought of religion in the perspective of his vitalism.



Prof. **John Gee**, William (Bill) Gay Research Professor, Brigham Young University, US

*Who Objects to Religious Freedom?*

**Keywords:** religious freedom, public discourse, United States

Religious Freedom is the right to believe what one wishes—even if it might seem illogical to others. It also entails the right to express one’s beliefs in the public square. Not everyone, however, is in favor of religious freedom. Some, for example, see religious freedom as antithetical to sexual minorities. Using data from the fourth wave of the NSYR, one of the few large-scale studies to ask the questions, I will examine which groups oppose the right to make religious arguments in the public square. Surprisingly, some religious groups are opposed to religion in the public square. While sexual minorities are generally opposed to religious freedom in the public square, they are not the group most strongly opposed to the participation of religion in public forums. I will look at what the data shows, note limitations, and suggest lines for further research.



Dr. **Fred Glennon**, Professor, Le Moyne College, US

*“And the wall came tumbling down.” The U.S. Supreme Court and the Dismantling of the Wall of Separation Between Church and State*

**Keywords:** Separation of Church and State

The focus of this research is to explore the reasoning of the majority of the U.S. Supreme Court in several key First Amendment decisions where the majority authorized exemptions from generally applicable laws for Christian plaintiffs and opened the door for the establishment of one religious framework to dominate policies on reproductive rights and education. Their decisions along with the emergence of the Christian nationalist agenda in Congress are contributing to efforts to tear down the separation of church and state in the U.S.





**Dr. J. Cody Nielsen**, Director, center for Spirituality and Social Justice, Dickinson College, US

*Lies We Can No Longer Tell: White Christian Supremacy in the Interfaith Movement*

**Keywords:** interfaith, Christian supremacy, colonization

The Origins of the interfaith movement, for all its good intentions, were an act of Christian dominance. In the 130 plus years since its coinage at the first Parliament of the World's Religions, the "interfaith" movement has routinely sought to bring together Christians, Jews, Muslims, and occasionally others for dialogue and discussion. Yet, religious equity, overcoming Islamophobia and antisemitism in clear methods, has not been overcome. This paper presents upon research in the United States higher education system that demonstrates the perpetuation of white Christian privilege, hegemony, and supremacy within the movement itself an introduces a new form of Engaged Critical Pluralism as the next step toward equity and justice.



Ms. **Tamar Kojman**, Student, Hebrew University, Israel

*Subversively Orthodox – Hermann Müller’s Biblical Criticism*

Keywords: biblical criticism, Eurocentrism, German culture wars

In 1844, Hermann Müller (1803–76), a Catholic law professor from Würzburg, published a hefty volume on Northern Greekdom and the Original History of North-Western Europe. The study claimed to hold definitive proof of the Germanic origins of Hellenism, Abrahamic monotheism, and the entire human race. The Garden of Eden, Müller argued, referred to the same region as the Greek mythical northern land of Hyperborea. The four Rivers of Paradise, it followed, were the Rhine delta. Müller employed the same epistemological tools as the Young Hegelians David Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Bruno Bauer, whose biblical criticism in the 1830s and 40s infamously contested the truthfulness of the Bible. Yet he staunchly defended the truth of Christian Revelation and the Catholic Church as its bearer. My paper will analyse Müller’s work and its reception as an atypical example of biblical criticism, contextualising it within the broader discourse surrounding the Young Hegelians. The analysis will lay emphasis on the Eurocentrism inherent to both Müller and the Young Hegelians’ reinterpretations of the Bible, which either renounced or denied the non-European origins of Christian civilization. I will argue that German biblical criticism in this period created new and confusing distinctions between the pronouncement of faith, the assertion of fact, and ethical judgment. Far from shutting down theological debates, these distinctions reinvigorated age-old theological queries concerning Christian universalism, human perfectibility, and the existence of a European civilizing mission.



Dr. **Nandini Deo**, Associate Professor, Lehigh University, US

*Religious Nationalism and the Gender Alibi*

**Keywords:** religion, nationalism, gender

This paper provides an overview of how gender is shaped by and shapes religious nationalism in the world today. Women are often the manifestation of cultural ideologies and how they are to dress and conduct themselves become objects of public debate. In these debates we see different groups- secular and religious actually arguing about national identity. In debates over head coverings in France, or Love Jihad in India, or circumcision in North Africa and North America what is being contested and negotiated are the terms of public religion. Who has the authority to determine these outcomes and whose voices and perspectives are foregrounded is how polities define their relationship to religion. Seeing this dynamic requires a step back, the adoption of a new perspective, one that doesn't get involved in the substance of the debate itself.



**Mx. Jordyn de Veer**, Student, Wellesley College, US

*The Misappropriation of Ancient Law in Contemporary Society*

**Keywords:** abortion, Exodus, historical precedent, misappropriation

Contemporary legal decisions around abortion (e.g., *Dobbs v. Jackson*; *Roe v. Wade*) frequently make recourse to ancient laws for precedent and validation. Yet, the ancient law codes portray an array of ideologies and perspectives characterized around a single legal case. This case—wherein a woman miscarries her fetus after being accidentally involved in a physical altercation between two men—is found in the adjudicating principles of the Hammurabi Code, Hittite Law, and Middle Assyrian Law. Perhaps most famously, though, the same case is invoked in Exodus 21:22–23, which inevitably forms the “foundation” of many modern judicial verdicts surrounding bodily autonomy. In this paper, I argue that while contemporary legal decisions appeal to these ancient laws as historical precedent, they do so by misappropriating the historical and legal contexts of their ancient counterparts. In doing so, I will demonstrate that current judiciary decisions that negatively impact the lives of people today, are anachronous and situated in religious and historical inaccuracy.



**Eliza Powers**, Student, Pomona College, US

*The Politics of Procreation: The Evolution of Female-Led Negotiation in Genesis*

**Keywords:** Old Testament Genesis, gender/sexuality, Christianity

God gives Moses clear instructions on top of Mount Sinai in terms of sexual sin: “thou shalt not commit adultery” and “thou shalt not covet” (Exodus 20:14, Exodus 20:17). But before Exodus comes Genesis, a lawless playground and tangled web of incest, adultery, fornication, implied sodomy, and original sin. Genesis is hardly interested in prosecuting sexual sin. Instead, the logic of Genesis presents four female-led negotiations that grow in sophistication as they advocate for procreation.

My methodology will include analyzing four of these female-led negotiations to track the growing stakes of God's original covenant with Adam and Eve to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 1:28). These include Eve's accidental negotiation with Adam, Lot's daughters' simplistic plan against their father, Rebekah's premeditated scheme against Isaac, all the way to Tamar's duplicitous, psychological warfare enacted against Judah.

Ultimately, female-led negotiation evolves throughout Genesis to produce a logic wholly uninterested with the commandments against adultery and coveting spelled out in Exodus. Genesis is a revolutionary evolution of motherhood, free from the shackles of the commandments in Deuteronomy and notions of fornication in the New Testament. Eve's negotiation produces an unintentional birth of Cain and Abel, Lot's daughters' scheme produces the Moabites and Ammon, Rebekah's deceit ensures the the fortitude of Jacob's progeny, and Tamar's duplicitous enterprise catalyzes the entire Davidic line. Genesis, then, ultimately advocates for treachery, and is game for women's involvement. The dirtier these women play, Genesis asserts, the greater success of God's lineage is ensured.



**Dr. Lydia Bremer-McCollum**, Postdoctoral Fellow in Digital Humanities, Oklahoma University, US

*Teaching About Jesus as Feminist Praxis in 2023*

**Keywords:** critical pedagogy, diversity, feminist praxis in religion

This paper will offer critical reflection of a large-enrollment lecture course on Jesus offered in the Department of Religion at Princeton University, where I served as Visiting Lecture in 2022-3. As a feminist scholar of religion, my pedagogical goal was to think critically with students about Jesus as a material-discourse from antiquity to today. Together we analyzed ancient gospels, art, films, and a contemporary Jesus ad campaign. I introduced students to different ways of asking questions about Jesus stories or categories of analysis—including gender, race, dis/ability, class, and sexuality. Together, we considered how each category helped us notice and contextualize elements in the written narratives, films, and visual art we analyzed in lectures and discussion sections. In doing so, students learned to close-read and interrogate questions of positionality, power, and persuasion in a diverse range of discursive environments.

My presentation will introduce my course as a case study to contextualize feminist critical pedagogical tools for de-marginalizing teaching methodologies and syllabuses in religious studies (broadly defined). I will reflect on the successes and failures of my teaching project and goals and also on the larger implications for the study of religion. In doing so, I will ground my analysis in relevant writing on pedagogy as critical praxis, both generally and in the study of religion.



Ms. **Kimberly Arevalo Diaz**, Student, University of California, Riverside, US

*He's Got the Whole World in His Hands: Critically Examining the New Imperialist Origins of American Muscular Christianity*

Keywords: American sport and religion, muscular Christianity

Within American sport and religion, scholars designate its origins to muscular Christianity (1860-1920), a social movement that fostered an organic connection between physical health and Christian manliness. Beginning in England, muscular Christianity's diffusion to the United States is accepted as a self-evident occurrence due to amicable relations. While the English gentleman became realized through his own Christian code of ethics on/off the rugby field, it resonated with the American commitment to individual freedom. Utilizing Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical method, I argue that American muscular Christianity's start was complex, ultimately centering around white American men and preserving their own socioeconomic status.



Dr. **Miguel Aguilera**, Associate Professor, Arizona State University, US

*Tolkien's Tree and Leaf: Cross Cultural Comparisons with Indigenous Mesoamerican Ontologies*

**Keywords:** Tolkien, indigenous, Mesoamerica, ontology, cosmology

This paper's research objective concerns Indigenous Mesoamerican cosmologies anchored around relationships between human-to-human-to-nonhuman persons. Methodology applied is both temporal and spatial trans-social cultural comparison. Similarity findings especially regard ancient European concepts concerning other-than-human beings vis-à-vis Maya-Mesoamerican worldviews. Conclusions will demonstrate that within pre-Modern worlds exist non-human entities communicating with each other and, that within certain circumstances, also with humans. J.R.R. Tolkien's concern, as partial focus, was not the supernatural but humans' embeddedness within a holistic universe. Tolkien portrayed "Celtic-Like-Worlds" and "Indigenous-Worlds" at large. What Western-Moderns consider Tolkien "supernatural fantasy" has been, and still remains within many Indigenous societies, perceived reality.





Dr. **Lidija Kovacheva**, Associate Professor, University Euro Balkan Skopje, North Macedonia

*Demonic Depiction of Karakondjol During 'The Twelve Unbaptised Days' in the Orthodox Folk Tradition in the Republic of North Macedonia*

Keywords: karakondjol, kallikantzaros, Vasilicari, Babari, Rusalii

This paper provides an insight into folk beliefs and customs during the period from Christmas until the Epiphany (7-19 January) also known as The twelve unbaptized days. The research objective is to present methodologically the Macedonian folk beliefs of demons karakondjol/kallikantzaros and customs to cast them out by playing ritual games in masked groups known as “Vasilicari”, “Babari” or “Rusalii” all over the Balkan during this period of the year. The aim is to show that rudiments that have been incorporated from Pagan into Christianity, although modified in some parts, are still strongly present in the folk traditions in R.N.Macedonia.



Dr. **Donald Braxton**, J Omar Good Professor of Religious Studies, Juniata College, US

*The Use of Digital Simulations of Religious Behaviors in the Classroom*

**Keywords:** computer simulations, pedagogy, anthropology of religion

The presentation explains the pedagogical reasons why scholars of religion might want to consider acquiring programming skills, or at least availing themselves of people who do possess such skills already. Referencing two of my multi-agent models of the evolutionary emergence of religion in prehistory, the talk illustrates how students can advance and deepen their understanding of religious behaviors as complex, emergent outcomes of social and cognitive dynamics. Analyzing religion in this way encourages students to look for causal mechanisms in religious behaviors, similarities and differences with other cultural behaviors, opportunities to experiment with alternative scenarios for the evolution of religion as well as its current manifestations, and analyze the impact of differing natural and cultural ecologies on religious activities such as the structures of institutional organization, the distribution of cultural artefacts in built and natural environments, and the staging and witnessing of varying types of ritualized action.

Two caveats: although the discussion will include content related to the prehistory of religion, its focus is really on the pedagogical benefits of exposing students to the academic investigation of religion via digital technology.

Similarly, the assumption of the paper is that acquiring programming skills for this mode of research and teaching is not for everyone. Yet, for those who may be so inclined, it is suggested that the impact upon instruction is well rewarded.



Dr. **Robert Bianchi**, Associate Professor, Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar, Qatar

Dr. **Akintunde Akinade**, Professor in Comparative Literature, Georgetown University, Qatar

Dr. **Muhammad Modassir Ali**, Senior Researcher, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, Qatar

### *A Multiversity Approach to Inter-Religious Education in Qatar*

**Keywords:** reading, religious studies, multiversity, higher education, collaborative learning

According to Krahtwohl's (2002) revision of Bloom's Taxonomy, the highest levels of cognitive processing activities are 'analysis' and 'creation.' Yet, it is challenging to create opportunities for this kind of deep learning in traditional classrooms (Manalo 2019). The current study remedies this by bringing together students and faculty from a variety of majors in different courses at three different institutions to create a more engaging, student-centered learning environment, i.e., a "multiversity" approach. This dynamic "cross-course" pedagogical approach (see Nwokeji & Frezza 2017) distinguishes itself from the more conventional in-course learning where students' interaction are often limited to their immediate classmates at the same institution.

The present research draws on several different yet complementary theoretical frameworks within educational psychology, pedagogy, and religious studies to develop a more nuanced, interactional approach to learning in a multicultural and multidisciplinary context. Using four chapters of Wilson's (1992) *World Scriptures: A Comparative Anthology of Sacred Texts*, as core reading material, three partner universities at Education City in Doha, Qatar explored the following teaching-related questions: 1. What impact do inter-institutional, cross-course, interdisciplinary learning experiences in the field of religious studies (RS) have on student learning when compared to more traditional ones? 2. How do students and faculty perceive such experiences? A discursive analysis of student narratives collected through this case study reveals that inter-institutional cross-course learning environments foster more dynamic engagement, greater inter-religious literacy, and deeper discussion when compared to traditional single-institution in-course learning environments, demonstrating the potential and value of the multiversity concept.



Dr. **Daphne Desser**, Associate Professor, University of Hawaii, US

*Dialogism in the Classroom: Teaching the Memoirs of Palestinians and Israelis*

**Keywords:** pedagogy, dialogism, Middle East

This presentation's focus is an undergraduate course on the memoirs of Israelis and Palestinians, guided by the following questions: what can we learn from writers from different groups who have lived in this region and the family stories they tell? What is the responsibility of the reader to these different histories? I describe the memoirs, secondary readings, teaching methods, and my syllabus. I also evaluate these decisions, assessing their strengths and weaknesses. Finally, I discuss what I would do differently given the events of October 7th and their aftermath and how I envision teaching the course in the future.



Dr. **Khodadad (Khodi) Kaviani**, Education Professor, Central Washington University, US

*Distorted Stories: When Textbooks Misrepresent Zoroastrians in the Islamic Republic of Iran*

**Keywords:** Zoroastrians, Iranian festivals, cultural heritage, political Islam

The research findings show the current textbooks used in Iranian schools misrepresent the Zoroastrian-related concepts and their experiences. The conceptual framework of socialization and imagined communities are used to examine 1-12 social studies and Persian language textbooks, travel diaries, media reports, and personal experiences of Iranian Zoroastrians. Zoroastrians have a special connection to Iran as the birthplace of Zoroaster, and members of a religious community that have been celebrating Iranian festivals for generations. Additional research is encouraged in studying the conditions of Zoroastrians and other religious groups in Iran.



Dr. **Alina Isac Alak**, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Vienna, Austria

*Interpreting Qur'an From an Exclusivist Salafi Perspective*

**Keywords:** Qur'anic hermeneutics, Qur'anic interpretations, Salafi, Islamic extremist thought

In this presentation I will argue why exclusivist Salafi hermeneutics is a Qur'anic theory and methodology of interpretation that completely denies any interference of the human factor and/or limitation of the human comprehension on the following levels: on the level of the source of the revelation itself, of the process of the revelation itself, of the product of the revelation itself, and of the level of the interpretation of the Qur'an itself. The result is an arrogant teo-centric, logo-centric, truth-obsessed, static, dualistic, politically framed type of hermeneutics that has negative socio-political effects.



**Dr. Malik Muhammad Sohail**, Assistant Professor, Center for Religion, Science and Social Wellbeing,  
Department of Sociology, University of Chakwal, Pakistan;  
**David Eagle**, Duke University, US

*Exploring Mental Health and Wellbeing of Imams in a Muslim Majority Society*

**Keywords:** mental health, wellbeing, muslim society, Imam, Pakistan

**Background:** Keeping in view the significant role of imams as religious leaders, moral regulator and counsellor in society, there is a dire need to understand how mental health is understood and conceptualized by imams. Mental health conceptualization has never been studied among imams.

**Methods:** An exploratory study was conducted to understand how Imams conceptualize what is mental health. Twenty imams participated in in-depth interviews and responded to the questions including “What does mental health mean to you? and what does it mean to be mentally healthy?”

**Results:** This study revealed that imams conceptualize mental health in emotional, cognitive, physical, religious/ spiritual, and social/ relational dimensions. Imams felt mentally healthy when they have good workplace milieu, financial affluence and receive appreciation. Guilt of being less religious, dissatisfied congregants, poor appreciation and harsh behavior of congregants make them feel mentally unhealthy.

**Conclusions:** In conclusion, this exploratory study shed light on the unique perspectives of imams regarding their mental health. The findings underscore the multifaceted nature of mental health as perceived by imams, encompassing emotional, cognitive, physical, religious/spiritual, and social/relational dimensions. The identification of factors contributing to the mental well-being of imams, such as a positive workplace milieu, financial stability, and appreciation, provides valuable insights into the complexities of their roles in Muslim societies.



His Eminence **Alhaji Khuzaima Mohammed Osman**, Chairman of the Fundraising and Finance Committee, National Peace Council of Ghana (NPC), GA region, Ghana

*Comprehensive Approach to Counter Terrorism*

**Keywords:** counter-terrorism, Islamic perspective, religion

This article aims to explore the crucial link between counter-terrorism efforts and the preservation of human security. As acts of terrorism continue to pose significant threats to societies worldwide, it is imperative to develop effective strategies that mitigate risks while safeguarding the rights and well-being of individuals. This paper discusses key aspects of counter-terrorism and human security, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive approach that integrates intelligence, prevention, response, and resilience-building measures. By highlighting successful case studies and lessons learned, this article provides valuable insights for policymakers, law enforcement agencies, and practitioners in their quest to address terrorism and foster human security.





Mr. **Cláunei Crístian Delgado Dutra**, Student, Universidade da Força Aérea, Brazil;

Dr. **Henrique de Souza Rocha**, Collaborator Professor, Universidade da Força Aérea, Brazil

*Religion and Resilience in Disasters: Experiences of Brazilian Air Force Service Members*

**Keywords:** religion, resilience, disasters, military, Brazilian air force

Religion can be an important provider of resilience in stressful situations, including in major disasters. In Brazil, according to the Datafolha Institute, in 2023, 89% of the population declared themselves to be adherents of some religion. Among the military personnel of the Brazilian Air Force (FAB), the percentage of religious people reaches 90% of the total force.

Part of a master's research conducted at the University of the Brazilian Air Force, by this author, in 2021, sought to understand how FAB service members relate religion and resilience in disaster situations, and found that most of the service members participating in the research attributed great relevance to religion in coping with and overcoming the suffering caused by disasters, despite FAB haven't a specific doctrine for chaplains in operations.

There is a vast theoretical framework relating religion and resilience, demonstrating that both religiosity and spirituality, as well as the provision of religious and spiritual assistance, have been considered important tools to support trauma victims, for the benefit of mental health and contributing to resilience, including in military personnel and response teams in events of mass destruction.

Based on the theoretical frameworks, testimonies, experiences of FAB service members and data collected during the research conducted at UNIFA in 2021, this article aims to reveal how religion is understood by FAB service members that were engaged in stressful operations, and what measures to employ their religious assistance service can be adopted in order to strengthen the resilience of service members involved in disaster situations.

