



Kents Hill, Milton Keynes | February 19-21, 2018

#OURS2018

Themes | Education, Media, Pilgrimage, Politics, Ritual, Spirituality

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/contemporary-religion-in-historical-perspective-publics-and-performances-tickets-41013559661>

At a time when the public role of the University is under increasing scrutiny, how can we ensure that research and teaching about religions reaches new publics? What can we do to enhance religious literacy both within and beyond religious and non-religious communities? How is ritual and performance involved in communication between religious communities, the academy, policy makers and the broader public? Are there ways in which we can learn from the past in better understanding such channels of communication?

Bringing historical perspective to the contemporary role of religion in the public sphere, this conference will include contributions from practitioners and third-sector organisations, who bring their perspectives to the academy to consider the public impact of Religious Studies.

TIMETABLE

MON 19th

12:00	Registration opens
13:30	Welcome
14:00	Keynote 1 Bettina Schmidt
15:30	Coffee break
16:00-16:30	Panels 1
18:00	Dinner
19:00	Social time

TUES 20th

9:00	Panels 2
10:30	Coffee break
11:00	Panels 3
13:00	Lunch
14:00	Panels 4
16:00	Coffee
16:30-18:00	Keynote 2 Stephen Sutcliffe
19:00	Conference dinner

WED 21st

9:00	Panels 5
11:00	Coffee break
11:30	Keynote 3 Philip Williamson
13:00	Depart / Social Media Training Sessions (see page 4)

KEYNOTES

Prof Bettina E. Schmidt, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

The contentious field of the study of religious experience: The challenging influence of Rudolf Otto, Andrew Lang and other founding fathers

The study of religious experience is a challenging field, not only due to the debate about the term “religious” but also about the methodology. Often scholars shy away from it as the research depends on something we cannot see and for what we do not have supportive evidence. The argument of some scholars that we need to overcome cultural bias by turning our attention towards the collective or ‘lived’ experience of a religious community is suspicious of others who argue that subjective experience cannot be seen as important as empirical or scientific verification. The lecture will look at the beginning of the study of religious experience and discuss the contribution of some of the early scholars. The focus will be on Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), R.R. Marett (1866-1943) and Andrew Lang (1844-1912), three nowadays often overlooked and even disregarded scholars. Otto who has been rightly accused of a lack of academic standard continues to be popular as he argued in favour of a subjective approach to religion. Lang who advocated the importance of experience for the development of religion became side-lined due to his own involvement in spiritualism. And Marett who argued for emotion as the essence of religion is nowadays usually limited to a footnote as Tylor’s successor in Oxford. All three have in common an approach to religion that acknowledges a sensual dimension that was ahead of its time. The lecture will discuss their ongoing influence but also their flaws and shows what we can learn from them for the study of religious experience today.

Steven Sutcliffe, University of Edinburgh

Playing the Long Game: The Predicament of the Scholar of Religion/s between Academic Researcher and Public Intellectual

The growth in student population, the rise in tuition fees, and the creep of ‘impact’ in the Research Exercise has raised anew the question of the public value of theory-driven research in the Study of Religion/s. This is a new version of an old question about the nature of the relationship between ‘town and gown’, as this was once quaintly termed, recast in the recent debate in our field about the scholar of religion as academic researcher versus the scholar of religion as public intellectual. Some argue for embracing the latter, drawing inspiration from the work of Chomsky and Said (for example), while others defend the continuing relevance of a Weberian tradition of ‘science as a vocation’. I will rehearse this debate with brief reference to historical iterations. I will argue that, despite recurrent anxieties about relevance and impact, scholars of religion water down their commitment to theoretically driven enquiry at their peril, since explaining religion/s, rather than merely describing their features or interpreting their effects, remains our *sine qua non* as a disciplinary field. It follows that we need to find new ways

to articulate the public value of theoretically-informed research on religion/s and to identify new audiences, both in and out of the academy, to support us as we play this long game.

Philip Williamson, Durham University

Remembrance Day: the British churches and national commemoration of the war dead since 1914

Most historical work on commemoration emphasises the civil creations from 1919 onwards: Armistice day, the two-minutes silence, the Cenotaph, the War Graves Commission and war memorials, and the British Legion. Aside from the burial of the Unknown Warrior, the churches are treated almost as adjuncts. Yet British church leaders had been involved with remembrance since 1914, and from 1919 they created their own religious commemoration of Remembrance day, which in 1946 replaced Armistice day as the official occasion for national commemoration. Against the supposed trends towards secularisation, the churches acquired and retain a leading part in remembrance of the war dead. Yet some tension always existed between the civil and religious commemorations, and what secured the place of the churches in national rituals also brought compromises. This paper will consider how the protestant churches created a new religious commemoration of the war dead; how remembrance contributed to co-operation between leaders of the various British churches; how the character of Remembrance has changed; and how in national commemoration the churches and the state arrived at an alliance of church religion and civil religion.

On Wed 21st, FASS are running a Social Media Training Day at Walton Hall. Conference delegates are invited to take part in the afternoon training sessions (see below). There will be a party departing following Philip Williamson's keynote on Wednesday at 12:45. Details to follow.

📄 *Using your phone to make videos/ Front of camera training (Andrew Rix, Ex BBC)*

📄 *Using Facebook and/or Twitter/ Impact (MJ Barker)*

📄 *Social media clinic – helping people set up accounts, link together, etc. (Sue Chevel/Damon Miller) + filming 'Who's Who'*

📄 *Pitching for a short course on OpenLearn/ broadcast/The Conversation*

📄 *Writing for Blogs (David Robertson)*

PANELS

Session 1 – Mon 19th, 16:00

1.1 | CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITIES

Brisbane and Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the 1970s: local, national and global perspectives

John Maiden, the Open University

Michel de Certeau: The Practice of Mysticism in the Writing of Everyday Life

Owen Coggins, the Open University

“Post-feminist but not Post-sexist: An examination of male Anglican clergy attitudes towards women.”

Alex D. J. Fry, Durham University.

1.2 | PILGRIMAGE AND ENGLAND’S CATHEDRALS, PAST AND PRESENT: EXPERIENCES, OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

Chair: Marion Bowman Participants: Dee Dyas, John Jenkins University of York

From Archive to Digital Humanities: Modelling Canterbury and Durham Cathedrals

Dee Dyas, John Jenkins, University of York

Cathedrals as shape shifters in the 21st century

Marion Bowman, The Open University

‘Now I have a word for it!’: making an impact

Dee Dyas, University of York; Marion Bowman, The Open University

1.3 | RELOCATIONS: NRMS IN DIASPORA

Brazilian Neo-Gnostic Churches in the UK

David G. Robertson, The Open University

The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Madrid: The avoidance of the media as a ritual of reinforcement.

Leonardo Vasconcelos de Castro Moreira, University of Warwick

Rastafarianisms in Motion

Hilde Capparella, The Open University

Session 2 – Tues 20th, 9:00

2.1 | CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN LAW AND RELIGION

Inventing Traditional Religion

Hugh McFaul, The Open University

Freedom of Religion in the Human Rights Act 1998: the first twenty years

Simon Lee, The Open University

Current issues in law and religion

Jessica Giles, The Open University

2.2 | UNBELIEF, MAGIC, AND MODERNITY

“A place beyond belief”: unknowing and enchantment in Orkney

Richard Irvine, The Open University

Magic and unbelief: a Cyprus case study

Theodoros Kyriakides, The Open University

Practical magic: British paganism from religious affiliation toward popular enchantment

Jonathan Woolley, University of Cambridge

2.3

2.3 | EDUCATION

Why Universities Must Be Secular Institutions (But Cannot Be): Religion as Everyday Practice and Object of Study in Higher Education

Clive Marsh, University of Leicester

The Birmingham Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education: promoting religious literacy in schools?

Céline Benoit, Aston University

Are We Free Yet? The Continuing Non-Realisation of the Weberian Ideal

Jonathan Tuckett, University of Stirling

2.4 | MAKING CONNECTIONS

Panel chair: Marion Bowman

Panel participants: Hilde Capparella, Alison Robertson, Aled Thomas, Sarah Thomas, Claire Wanless, Theo Wildcroft

Session 3 – Tues 20th, 11:00

3.1 | PILGRIMAGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WEST

Celtic pilgrimage, past and present: from historical geography to contemporary embodied practices

Avril Maddrell, University of Reading, & Richard Scriven, National University of Ireland, Galway.

Journey of the Space Butterflies: CoxCon 2017 as Pilgrimage

Vivian Asimos, Durham University

Bringing the historical concept of pilgrimage as a search for spiritual healing into a contemporary space.

Marlene Lorraine Martin, University of South Africa

‘Thin Places’ and Mystical Tours – Sacred Tourism in Ireland

Nadine Eckmann, University College Cork

3.2 | “RELIGION” IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Then and Now: Limitations on the Right to Manifest Religion or Belief in the Public Sphere

Caroline K Roberts, University of Bristol

Holy Disobedience: Political Resistance in the London Catholic Worker Community

Anna Blackman, Durham University

An Occult Royal Wedding: Public State Ceremonies as Rituals of Civil Irreligion

Nick Toseland, Durham University

Cause or Treatment: Religious faith and the Treatment of Lunatics during the Nineteenth Century

Frank Hughes, The Open University

3.3 | PRACTITIONER-ACADEMIC IDENTITIES: APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Graham Harvey, Susanne Newcombe, Alison Robertson, and Theo Wildcroft (all The Open University)

3.4 | INFORMATION AND RELIGION

The (Un)bearable Whiteness of Informationalist Religion

Syed Mustafa Ali, The Open University

Information & religion: a three-fold taxonomy

David Chapman, The Open University

“There is no God but Kek and Pepe is His Prophet”: The Alt Right, Kekistan and the Utilization of the Islamicate

Hizer Mir, University of Leeds

Informing the sacred: an informational analysis of religious rituals

Magnus Ramage, The Open University

Session 4 – Tues 20th, 14:00

4.1 | ISLAM & CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ISSUES

Shia jurisprudence and public policy-making

Mohammad Khezri, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, & Matin Anjomrooz, Islamic Azad University, Rasht, Iran.

Gender and leadership in progressive mosques in Germany and the UK

Stefanie Sinclair, The Open University

Arbaein a Social Ritual in a Civilizational Shape; Civilizational Potential and Subsystems

Hossein Mohammadi, Imam Sadiq University, Tehran

4.2 | CREATIVE METHODS AND ENGAGING PUBLICS: SPIRITUALISM, COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS.

Chair: Marion Bowman

Participants: Sara Mackian; Steve Pile; Nadia Bartolini; Amy Whitehead; Marion Bowman

Spiritualism and its communities

Exhibiting Spiritualism in Stoke-on-Trent in partnership with the Gladstone Museum

Unplanned Exhibitions: what popped up.

Mobile Methods and Adaptive Exhibits.

4.3 | INFORM: THIRTY YEARS OF THE STUDY OF CONTROVERSIAL RELIGIONS

Chair: Graham Harvey

Changing contexts, changing cults – reflections on 30 years of Inform

Suzanne Newcombe, Inform/The Open University

Perceptions of Paganism: 30 years from the Inform Archives

Sarah Harvey, Inform/University of Kent

Sex and British Muslims: 30 Years after the Rushdie Affair

Shanon Shah, Inform

From Ayodhya to the electoral triumph of the BJP: scholarly responses to the rise of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva)

Gwilym Beckerlegge, The Open University

Session 5 – Wed 21st, 9:00

5.1 | INTERFAITH

Interfaith and Intercultural Spirituality in a Faith-Based Organisation

Fiona Bowie, King's College London

One Nation, Many Faiths: Representations of Banal Nationalism, Religious Pluralism and Public Space in Scottish Interfaith Literature

Liam Sutherland, University of Edinburgh

Spaces of Secular Faith? Shared assets and intangible values in diverse and changing communities.

Katie McClymont, UWE, Bristol

The identical boundaries and religious resurgence in the Middle East and North Africa

Mahdi Baratalipour, Karazami University

5.2 | CONTEMPORARY FUNERARY PRACTICES

Deathscapes and religious diversity in the UK: Negotiating mortuary rites in a minority context

Avril Maddrell (University of Reading), Katie McClymont (UWE), Yasminah Beebeejaun (UCL), Danny McNally (University of Reading), Brenda Mathijssen (University of Reading)

Blowing the spirit. The tradition of brass band performances on funerals in Poland.

Maciej Kierzkowski, The Open University

Mother of the Outcast Dead: The Virgin Mary at the Crossbones Graveyard

Melanie Landman

'Who is this beautiful girl?' The Identity of 'mortu' / 'the dead one' as a Modern Influence in Contemporary Romanian Funerals

Maria Nita, Trinity St. David

5.3 | THEORY AND METHODS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS: EXAMINING PRACTITIONERS IN THE FIELD

Twenty years in Avalon: the advantages and downsides of longitudinal ethnology

Marion Bowman, The Open University

The Challenges for Scholarly Engagement with the Church of Scientology and Free Zone in the Field

Aled Thomas, The Open University

Becoming a reliable narrator: ethnography and religion

Paul-François Tremlett, The Open University

Approaches to the study of individualised spirituality - theory and practice

Claire Wanless, The Open University