



Contemporary Religion in Historical Perspective: Publics and Performances

Walton Hall, Milton Keynes | February 19-21, 2018

#OURS2018

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

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 John Wolffe (Associate Dean [Research Scholarship and Enterprise], FASS) & Paul-François Tremlett (HoD, Religious Studies)
14:00	Keynote 1 Bettina Schmidt (<i>Chaired by Paul-François Tremlett</i>)
15:30	Coffee break
16:00-17:30	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 Steven Sutcliffe (<i>Chaired by David G. Robertson</i>)
19:00	Conference dinner

WED 21st

9:00	Panels 5
11:00	Coffee break
11:30	Keynote 3 Philip Williamson (<i>Chaired by John Wolffe</i>)
13:00	Depart / Social Media Training Sessions (see page 4)

KEYNOTES

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

Explaining the Economy of New Spiritualities with the Help of Bourdieu

Earlier work on how practitioners interact with institutions in the ‘cultic milieu’ emphasised the agentive role of the ‘seeker’ in exploiting resources for their own benefit. While usefully emphasising the pragmatics of practice, the result is an overly individualistic model of action which accords inflated agency to a de-socialised seeker self. Campbell’s seminal analysis (1972) of ‘seekership’ as a social role provides structure and interactivity to this representation. However, the account remains incomplete insofar as it does not engage the symbolic goods available within the wider field of religion in which contemporary spiritualities engage.

In order to highlight the economy of this wider environment and its effects upon practitioners, in this presentation I re-work the data for seekership, considered as a key function of new spiritualities, in light of Bourdieu’s schema of field, capital and habitus. I argue that, far from constituting either an aimless or virtuosic role, seeking expresses a habitus adapted to the pluralisation of authorities which constitutes the economy of the post-Christian religious field. In

this way, seeking is modelling a form of symbolic capital which expresses skilful engagement with multiple authorities (Wood 2007). By applying Bourdieu's model of the constitution of the religious field to new spiritualities, I aim to extend its applicability beyond its relatively rigid generative matrix, to show that 'new spiritualities' – far from exotic or marginal – are 'playing the game' of the religious field like any other formation.

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 one of the parallel afternoon training sessions (see below). There will be a party departing following Philip Williamson's keynote on Wednesday at 12:45.

- 📄 *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 G. Robertson)*
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PANELS

Full book of abstracts available at http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/religious-studies/?page_id=636

Session 1 – Mon 19th, 16:00

1.1 | CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITIES

Chair: Theo Wildcroft

The charismatic turn of the long 1960s: contexts and characteristics

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

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

Chair: Aled Thomas

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

Chair: Hugh Mcfaul

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 | EDUCATION

Chair: Stefanie Sinclair

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

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

Part of the value of Religious Studies is the making of connections between different ways of thinking. In this panel Open University PhD students will explore the connections across apparently disparate areas, to create new insights. Each panel member will introduce a provocative, thought-provoking or otherwise interesting strand in their research and challenge other panel members to bring their own research into a conversation around that issue.

Session 3 – Tues 20th, 11:00

3.1 | PILGRIMAGE IN THE CONTEMPORARY WEST

Chair: Marion Bowman

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 | PRACTITIONER-ACADEMIC IDENTITIES: APPLICATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

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

The status of researcher as insider or outsider to the communities they study has long been of debate. Within long term ethnographic research into cultural practices, a world of nuance arises in the possible relationships of researcher and researched. We are engaged in complex processes of reconciliation between the under-represented communities whose stories we aim to tell (Shaw 1999: 108; Orsi 2013: 5), and the power an academic position confers to “define reality for others” (Hufford 1999: 298).

Besides the issue of positionality, questions of communication, distinct embodied skillsets and more-than-human relationships are intimately involved in any ethnographic research endeavour. The resulting implications for the researcher are further complicated and enriched when the researcher is also a practitioner. Practitioner identities are in constant dialogue with academic identities.

This panel aims to continue that dialogue, as four diverse practitioner-academics in round-table format discuss the applications and implications of their negotiations with positionality in the study of religion.

3.3 | 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

3.1 | 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.

3.2 | 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

3.3 | "RELIGION" IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Chair: Claire Wanless

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

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)

Session 5 – Wed 21st, 9:00

5.1 | INTERFAITH

Chair: Alison Robertson

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

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

Maciej Kierzkowski, The Open University

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

Chair: Marion Bowman

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