



Stupa (detail), by Brandon, 2013. Used under CC BY 2.0 license.



CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN RELIGION & SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Working the Coast: From Matter to Metaphor

Celia Rabinovitch
CSRS Artist in Residence

Artists transform matter into metaphor, building the paint into something beyond itself to give visual form to experience. In traditional or archaic cultures, alchemists, shamans, and spiritual adepts used matter to transform the environment, allowing the elemental energies to emerge. In occult thought, the substance of matter enhanced spiritual processes through its essence. By contrast, contemporary culture sees matter as “stuff” or commodity. With globalized labor, international commerce reduces the power of matter to mere merchandise. The commodity-driven Canadian resource economy obscures our connection with the essential power of matter and nature. Nowhere is this more strikingly apparent than in the industrial movement of the working coast of the Pacific Northwest. But the countervailing forces of the creative imagination in myth and religion show how matter becomes metaphor, finding extroverted expression in art.



Along the Bay, oil on canvas, 24" x 48", © Celia Rabinovitch.

As a point of departure for my paintings, over time I have made numerous photo-documentaries of commodity freighters and ferries on the Northwest coast. These freighters fascinate me with a disturbing sensation of ambivalence as they intrude against the vast natural beauty of the coast. I work from a pivotal perceptual moment, an experience of an actual place, to uncover an essential depth in the image. From this visual epiphany, I create images of industrial forms or figures in marine environments that open to nuances of color, feeling, and uncanny atmosphere. Emerging from and receding into the elemental energies of water, air, and space, the architectonic forms of the freighters become forms against the formlessness of ocean. This theme underlies my paintings as an artist in residence at University of Victoria.

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God Gap Fictions

Christopher Douglas
Faculty Fellow

One of the most consequential transformations in the U.S. religious landscape over the last 50 years has been the social and political resurgence of conservative Christians. But American literary writers who sought to register, evaluate, or challenge the rise of the Christian right faced a complicated cultural field. Conservative Christians since the 1970s made ‘universal’ ethical claims in the public sphere – that Bible reading and creation science should be reintroduced in public school classrooms, that abortion and homosexuality were morally wrong. But they also sometimes made ‘cultural’ claims: that teaching evolution disrespected fundamentalist identities, or that requiring caterers to serve at gay weddings violated their beliefs and practices. Conservative Christians, in other words, sometimes spoke in the language of American multiculturalism, where diversity, pluralism, and respect for the god(s) of one’s ancestors are highly regarded values.

I am completing a book on American literary writers’ complicated fictional responses to the conservative Christian resurgence during this complex and confusing time. Looking ahead, I want to examine the resurgence from the opposite angle: what the rise of the Christian right looked like from the perspective of Christian right novelists.

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Message from the Director

Paul Bramadat

As I begin my eighth year at the CSRS, I see the truth in the adage that it takes seven years to feel like you have found a home somewhere.

One of the things that I enjoy most about the home that the centre has become is the opportunity to engage in an almost shockingly wide range of conversations. Some years our daily conversations revolve around the history or politics of Muslim or Indigenous spiritualities; some years we spend many of our coffee discussions talking about the ways religion and society are influenced by changes in the political and legal spheres.

Given the sorts of fellows we will be welcoming this year (for visits between two weeks and a year), I would expect many of our debates to focus on literary, artistic, and historical topics. However, although I am familiar with the curriculum vitae of the fellows who'll be joining us this year from all over the world, I now almost expect to discover, for example, that a fellow whose official research involves medieval Roman Catholic monasteries is also a Buddhist environmentalist who has spent three years working in South Africa. Such delightful surprises always lead to a deepening of our community conversations.

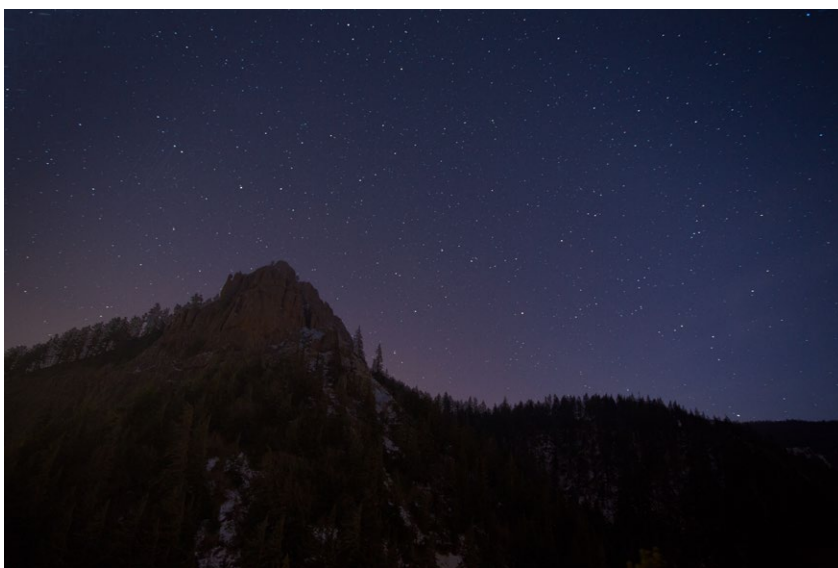
We will continue to work on a number of projects in the coming year. First, we'll expand our Found in Translation collection of modern artistic renderings of sacred texts from the major world religions. We anticipate that this collection will draw many people to the centre, and will inspire an academic conference. Second, this year we'll also lay the groundwork for a project on religion and spirituality in the "Cascadia" region.



Third, in Ideafest, we plan to host an event in which religious leaders and members of local Indigenous communities will discuss not just the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but also the future of a society that is struggling with the report's recommendations.

Personally, I will look forward to playing some constructive role in a conversation at Trinity Western University about their proposed law school. I will also be travelling to Germany to participate in a conference on globalization, "modern subjectivities" and religious identity. As well, this year I'm pleased to be part of the volunteer faculty for University 101, which connects teachers with those who would not otherwise be able to partake in what the university has to offer.

The 2015-2016 academic year promises to be rich and thought provoking. Along with my colleagues Robbyn and Bonnie, I look forward to involving you in the centre's activities.



Stars over Mitchell Point, by Ray Terrill, 2012.
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The Scarlet Ox and the Black Madonna: Religious Festivals in Italy

Annabel Howard *CSRS Artist in Residence*

I am delighted to join the CSRS this year as Artist in Residence. During my stay I will be researching and writing *The Scarlet Ox and the Black Madonna*, a book of creative non fiction which will explore the nature and role of religious festivals in Italy. Part travelogue, part memoir, and part meditation on the idea of community and tradition, the book will investigate the intersection of religion, folklore, and quotidian society.

I have chosen five festivals, all of which speak to different challenges we face in reconciling tradition with modern life and thinking. The festival of the Virgin at Montevergine, for example, has become a nexus for debate on gender. Because it contains a Byzantine image of a black Madonna, the church at Montevergine has traditionally attracted 'outsiders'. Most famous of these outsiders are the femminielli: Neapolitan trans-gender sex-workers whose roots extend to the middle ages and even – some argue – back to Greek colonisation of the Italian peninsula. The Christingle ceremony at Montevergine prompts a yearly conversation (read: protest) on gender rights as well as the Catholic Church's stance on this issue. Interestingly, when I visited, rage was less in evidence than fear: of change, of loss of traditional status for the femminielli, and of how the immigration of sex workers from South America was changing the status quo.

Beyond contemporary issues, I am interested in how the festivals combine a seemingly contradictory mix of different religious heritages. For example, at the festival of St. Dominic (see image below), a brand of ancient naturalism combines with Medieval pageantry to produce an idiosyncratic manifestation of modern Catholicism that seeks meaning in ritual and community.

All the festivals challenge an easy narrative by containing simultaneous yet paradoxical meanings for their observers and participants. At the famous Palio of Siena, a bareback horse race becomes both a deeply felt celebration of the Virgin and a cut-throat inter-urban competition. The contradictions are perhaps best summed up by the following scene of victory: I witnessed a military band escort a crowd of chanting, flag-waving locals to their church, where

they proceeded to take the horse to the altar and toss the jockey, crowd-surf him across their heads to join it.

Although the book is not an academic work by any means, I look forward to using my time at the CSRS to deepen my understanding of some of the broad arguments I have encountered in my research. Ultimately, I aim to translate this knowledge into a book that, at its heart, is an address to the nature of perception in a fast changing world.



Festival of St. Dominic, Cocullo, Annabel Howard, 2010.

2015/16 Fellowship Deadlines

UVic Faculty Fellowships

The CSRS offers fellowships to UVic Faculty providing course-release time and centre office space to facilitate the pursuit of scholarly research projects. Fellowship recipients join other visiting, post-doc and graduate student fellows at the centre in a dynamic interdisciplinary research environment. November 17, 2015 application deadline.

Visiting Research Fellowships

The CSRS offers fellowships to provide research space and an environment conducive to writing and reflection to scholars working on research projects related to our basic mandate. The application deadline is November 17, 2015; proposals submitted outside of this regular application deadline schedule may also be considered at the discretion of the director.

Vandekerkhove Family Trust and Ian H. Stewart Graduate Student Fellowships

The CSRS offers four fellowships to UVic graduate students valued at \$5,000 each. The deadline for applications for the 2016/2017 academic year is November 17, 2015.

CSRS Artist-in-Residence Fellowship

Chih-Chuang and Yien-Ying Hsieh Award for Art and Spirituality. The AIR Fellowship is valued at about \$4,000 plus space at the CSRS. Deadline: January 19, 2016.

Community Sabbatical Fellowships

The CSRS welcomes applications from interested members of the non-academic community to join us as short-term visiting members of our research community. Applications are accepted on an on-going basis.

For full CSRS fellowships details visit www.csr.uvic.ca/Awardsandfellowships

Passages, Mergers, & New Acquisitions

March 9, 2015 – Eli William Kellerman. Born to 2015/16 Visiting Graduate Research Fellow Rachel Brown and her partner Marc Kellerman.

March 25, 2015 – Tobias Theodore Lórien Nicholl born to 2015/16 Associate Fellow Scott Dolff and his partner Heloise Nicholl.



UVic's Annual Activities in the Middle East & Islamic Consortium of BC

Martin Bunton *MEICON UVic*

A number of significant events brought MEICON faculty together during this last year, in particular: Marcus Milwright's Fall 2014 series of weekly lectures on "Cultures of the First World War" featured a number of talks on the Middle East; and, the Centre for Global Studies sponsored in March 2015 an Ideafest panel discussion on Canada's participation in the military campaign against ISIS.

Both UVic students and faculty were very well represented at the 7th annual MEICON student conference hosted by the Centre for Comparative Study of Muslim Societies and Cultures (SFU). MEICON UVic very much looks forward to hosting the 8th annual student conference here in Victoria in Spring 2016. Please consult the CSRS website for updates.

In July 2015, UVic hosted an international conference reflecting on Iran's post-revolutionary struggle for social justice. Organised by Peyman Vahabzadeh, this interdisciplinary conference brought together a diverse range of academics, activists and artists to probe what social justice means in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, religion and sexuality. For more information see <http://socialjusticeini-iran.com/>

Satirizing the Sacred: Humor and Saint Joseph, ca. 1300-1530

Anne L. Williams *Visiting Research Fellow*

The relationship of satire to the sacred is a topic on the minds of many these days. Important questions have come to the fore—should there be limits when it comes to freedom of expression regarding religion, as Pope Francis stated on January 15th? Or were the cartoonists of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo indeed, as Ravi Somaiya wrote in the New York Times, a “radical, crude,” yet “vital strain of...[France’s] culture”? What is the value of satire in any culture, particularly with respect to the dignity of religion—one’s own and that of others? As we unravel this problem and seek solutions for the modern world, looking to the past can offer some understanding of the complexities of religious experiences. I am fascinated by one movement in Christianity’s past for which humor and satire were very much relevant, and even beneficial. Late medieval theologians and popes were not interested in supporting a devotion that made light of its own saints. Surviving art, however, tells a different story—of Saint Joseph of Nazareth, whose popularity among the laity rose exponentially between ca. 1300 and 1530, while artists and patrons produced and consumed religious images that sometimes highlighted the hilarity of the saint’s circumstances with surprising verve. In my work, religious iconography from early modern Germany, France, the Low Countries, and Italy is interpreted through the lens of contemporary ‘secular’ iconographic trends, as well as religious plays, legends, hymns, and jokes. Depictions of Joseph attest to the humorous and bawdy as inextricable

parts of the saint’s cult, even as he came to be taken more seriously as an object of popular devotion. The material and literary evidence reveals that the saint could be, for his late medieval devotees, a simultaneously beloved, revered, venerated, and hilariously ridiculous figure. These findings reconcile two strands of interpretation that have polarized the saint into distinct early and late manifestations, one comical and derogatory and the other idealized.

Scholars of Joseph’s history, and of early modern history in general, have treated the power and purposes of humor too categorically, incorrectly considering the sober ecclesiastical and the ‘irreverent’ popular consciousnesses as occupying completely separate realms in the late Middle Ages. Laughter and the bawdy—considered in prior scholarship to constitute merely ‘low’ culture—have been too often deemed appropriate to the laity and irrelevant to the sacred. While scholars are deeply attentive to theological literature and doctrine pertinent to the strength of Joseph’s cult in the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they see no accord between the saint’s humorous representations and his role as exemplar, and thus wrongly interpret such characterizations as purely ‘sober’ in nature. My research this year is focused on exploring the sociological and psychological functions of humor for religion and the veneration of a holy figure, while considering a range of artistic and literary evidence from regions beyond those geographically close to Aachen, the religious center for the late medieval cult of St. Joseph.

Working the Coast ...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Celia Rabinovitch *CSRS Artist in Residence*

Contemplating the industrial romance of the Pacific working coast, I hope to make visible the contradictions between matter and commodity, through tracing the elements of energy, passage, and stillness. My art seeks a more complete embodiment of matter that reflects the power of imagination to give form to wordless sensations. My work embodies the tension between form and formlessness, between opacity and the translucence of water, to make visible the atmosphere and energy of nature. As an artist in residence, I will explore the coast to give form to its force as matter and metaphor.



In English Bay, oil over acrylic on canvas, 24" x 48", © Celia Rabinovitch.

God Gap Fictions ...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Christopher Douglas *CSRS Faculty Fellow*

Books like Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins's *Left Behind* series, or William Paul Young's *The Shack*, or Frank Peretti's *Present Darkness* could be thought of as the 'literary arm' of the conservative Christian resurgence, echoing the way previous minority social movements (such as the Black Power movement) had entailed an aesthetic dimension (as the Black Arts Movement). This body of conservative Christian fiction was not being reviewed in *The New York Times Book Review*, but it was vastly outselling the literary fiction such periodicals attended to. Literary critics have sometimes wondered why there is almost no conservative literary tradition in the United States; one answer is that this hugely popular resurgent Christian fiction is it, but one that has flown under our radar for decades.



Follow Christopher Douglas on Twitter @croudglas

**Deepening the Feminist Divide:
Religious Faith, Motherhood & Ethnic Identity**

Lynne Marks *Faculty Fellow*

I am pleased to be joining the Centre as a Faculty Fellow in January. Having just completed a manuscript on the history of irreligion in BC, during my fellowship I will be working on a relatively new project, on the relationship between second wave feminism of the 1970s and 1980s and more marginalized activist women.

American women's historians have begun to recognize that the second wave women's movement was not one movement, but several, divided along lines of race and class. One source of conflict was over motherhood issues. While the mainstream women's movement viewed motherhood, particularly stay-at-home motherhood, as a damaging source of oppression for women, and saw entry into the paid workforce as the path to equality, scholars have noted that African American women and Chicana women viewed women's role in the family less as a source of oppression than as a source of pride, as well as a bulwark against a racist society. Religion was part of this tension. The mainstream women's movement was identified as largely secular, while for

many racialized and immigrant women, religious faith was an integral part of their pride in family, motherhood and ethnic/racial identity.

This project examines these issues in the Canadian context. The history of the Canadian second wave feminist movement remains understudied. Scholars have not explored either the religious/irreligious dimensions of the movement or competing attitudes to motherhood within it. I have conducted research and presented a number of papers with Dr. Margaret Little of Queen's University on differences in attitudes and conflicts over motherhood between the mainstream second wave women's movement and activist welfare rights mothers. We are now exploring a related topic: the tension between mainstream feminists and activist organizations of immigrant women over issues of motherhood and family. This project will also examine the role that religion (and the perceived secularism of mainstream feminism) may have played in deepening the divide between mainstream feminists and groups of activist immigrant mothers. For many within the latter group, it appears that the interconnection of religious and ethnic identity, and the central role of mothers in maintaining such identity within the family made the perceived secularity of mainstream feminists and their critique of motherhood and family less appealing.

Al-Andalus: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Spain – A Golden Age for Multiculturalism?

Hélène Cazes

Director, Medieval Studies Program and CSRS Program Committee member

In Portugal and in Spain, 2015 saw the adoption by both parliaments of bills granting citizenship to descendants of the Jews who were forced to either convert to Catholicism or leave the country some 523 years ago by the 1492 Edict of Expulsion. Celebrated and commented on world-wide by international, national and religious media, these bills were described as “making amends” for the infamous expulsion of the non-Christian communities enacted by the Spanish Portuguese monarchies after the so-called Reconquista. In 2014 Muslim communities demanded the restitution of Spanish or Portuguese citizenship for the Moorish descendants as well. The parliaments and courts of justice would in this manner right the wrongs of history: war, persecution, religious intolerance, anti-Semitism, and even, maybe, racism. For us, citizens of the 21st century, this inclusion into the modern nations of Spain and Portugal of the descendants of former inhabitants looks like a symbol of justice and enlightenment.

Actually, the medieval legacy of the Muslim province, emirate and then caliphate of Cordoba is an exceptional vantage point for the constitution, through history and myth, of collective identities in the Western World. Often referred to as “Al-Andalus”, the part of the medieval Iberian Peninsula that was ruled by Muslim powers between 711 and 1492 represents the unique combination of a place and a period. The Arabic name was passed unchanged in Western languages as of the Middle Ages, conflating history and geography to evoke a civilization of its own. An enclave within Christian Europe, Al-Andalus is known as a haven of cultural exchange and religious peace in a time when non-Christians, heretics, or witches were burnt at the stake everywhere else. The scientific, artistic, musical, philosophical, and literary achievements of Al-Andalus justly generated a consensual praise of this moment in history as a high point of Western civilization, which is said to have been characterized by cultural encounters and by the peaceful cohabitation of different religious communities. Millions of tourists visit the Alhambra Gardens, Toledo, Granada, Cordoba, and Sevilla to admire and celebrate this scintillating period. Whereas many people would be at pains to define the Umayyad Caliphate (from which Al-Andalus started as a province) or even



the Emirate of Cordoba, the name Al-Andalus is largely understood, beyond the circle of scholars and historians, as an historical period, taking place on the territories of the modern Spain and Portugal, which constitutes an exception in the Middle Ages, otherwise perceived as ages of intolerance and ignorance.

In the court palaces, in the “schools of translation” of Toledo and Cordoba, in the cities built and shared by Muslims, Christians and Jews, the transmission of the classical legacy is said to have fostered modern science. Arab commentaries and works, transmitting as well as updating and developing the heritage from Antiquity, advanced numerous domains of science, which were then discovered and passed on to the Christian Latin world. Moreover, classical scientific texts that were lost in the Latin tradition, such as treatises of anatomy (Galen), astronomy (Ptolemy), geography (Ptolemy), philosophy (Aristotle), that had been translated from Greek to Arabic, were adapted, sometimes via Hebrew and Castilian or Provençal, to Latin; their recovery is one of the acknowledged factors of scientific progress in the European Renaissance, with the recognition of the heliocentric astronomy and the development of perspective, mathematics, medicine, chemistry etc. The words starting with “al” in Spanish, English or French still attest to the impact of the cultural exchanges held through Andalusia: alchemy, abricot, adobe, alcazar, algorithm, almanach, amber, algebra, alcool, alkaline, alambic, azimuth, and azure depict the vitality of botany, chemistry, or navigational astronomy, for instance.

In the historiographical construction of European identities, the narration about Al-Andalus has been, as of the Enlightenment Encyclopaedias up until our own times, telling of the extraordinary artistic, philosophical and scientific progress that took place under the medieval Muslim rulers. The correlation was too good to be missed: many, like Voltaire, linked progress with tolerance and told the tale of a peaceful tolerant oasis of science, art, and dialogue. Mark Cohen, in "The 'Golden Age' of Jewish-Muslim Relations: Myth and Reality" – the prologue to *A History of Jewish-Muslim Relations*, Princeton University Press, 2013 – denounces as a myth the representation of Al-Andalus as "an interfaith utopia of tolerance and convivencia". The narratives describing an unrivalled religious tolerance within Al-Andalus stem from nineteenth century dreams of open societies and from the cult of scientific progress, linked by *les Philosophes* with civil liberties. They leave aside the unceasing conflicts and wars between Muslim rulers or between Muslims and Christians, as well the special status imposed to non-Muslims, the running policies against Jews, etc. Inheriting these depictions, some historians have praised a "Muslim tolerance", preferring an anachronism to the suspicion of feeding Islamophobic clichés. Soon enough, the question had become political as well and many chose to dream about Al-Andalus rather than to expose the second-class citizenship of non-Muslims or the violence of conquest and resistance wars. Often, then, the villain was the Spanish Inquisition, a choice that received wide consensus in Western Europe as of the 18th century, whereas glamour was surrounding luscious gardens and early scientific discoveries.

chess... symbolises here the harmony of great minds, beyond religions and nationalities...

With the book *Aristote au Mont Saint-Michel*, published in 2008, the French scholar Sylvain Gouguenheim kindled a heated controversy upon the notion of "European debt towards the Arabs". Allying a direct lineage for scientific and philosophical texts from the Greek Antiquity to Christian monastic libraries, he negated the importance of Andalusian cultural exchanges. Many historians read this claim as a political rejection of cultural dialogues. Some others demanded the right to political non-correctness for science. Finally, the historian of ideas Alain de Libera ended the debate by disqualifying the very notion of "debt" in cultural history. This tempest around a book illustrates the passionate desire of scholars to create and maintain the myth of a past paradise, built and shared by all the communities that make our own multicultural society. Our nostalgia for a civilization described in simplistic terms in order to keep the icon alive, the tourist pilgrimages to monuments of these medieval kingdoms, our own scholarly interest for Al-Andalus tell of our desire to build and share a society devoid of intolerance, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and other evils of Western

modernity. The supposed virtues of Al-Andalus are not medieval: monotheistic religions in political regimes based on theocracy are not tolerant. These virtues are ours; they are the goals we give to our own communities and government. In this perspective, the constructions of Al-Andalus are portraits of our ideal selves. The work of the historian is, then, to disentangle the threads of myth and facts, by looking at sources, documents, and historiography and by entering a dialogue with communities, times, and cultures that will enable an appreciation of anachronisms or projections.

By choosing Al-Andalus as the theme of the Annual Medieval Workshop, to be held on January 30, 2016 at the University of Victoria (see <http://www.uvcs.uvic.ca/Course/Medieval/ASMS006>), the program of Medieval Studies wishes to present the extraordinary legacy of science, art, and music of Medieval Spain. Papers will address poetry, philosophy, music, art and architecture of Al-Andalus and question our anachronistic longing for a "medieval exception".

An image summarizes this typification of Al-Andalus: taken from the *Book of Games* composed between 1251 and 1283, for Alfonso X, King of Castille, the miniature shows chess-players of different religions and costumes under a tent. This iconic portrayal alludes to the cosmopolitan and learned court of Alfonso X, where Jews and Muslims played prominent roles. It also evokes a dialogue of cultures, replacing war by intelligence. Introduced by the musician Zyriab, a friend of the King Abd Al-Rahman II, coming to Andalusia from Baghdad, chess comes from Persia and symbolises here the harmony of great minds, beyond religions and nationalities: a notion very much indebted to 18th century Enlightenment and 19th century Romanticism. Our modern cultures long to recognize roots and legacies for themselves in such a painting: it is one of the illustrations chosen for the Wikipedia entries on Al-Andalus. It is an indirect reproduction — the photography of an illumination found in a secondary source (Claude Lebedel, *Les Croisades, origines et conséquences*, Editions Ouest-France, 2006) — but it clearly exemplifies the desire to see the performance of interfaith respect and friendship. Entitled "Christian and Muslim Playing Chess. *Libros de juegos d'Alphonse X le sage*", the image is the "illustration" of our perception of a medieval space for tolerance. We elected to use it for the Annual Medieval Workshop dedicated to Al-Andalus as a reminder of our own anachronistic desires for roots and for recognition of modern aspirations in medieval legacies.

For more information, visit web.uvic.ca/medieval or contact H  l  ne Cazes at hcazes@uvic.ca.

The image shown on page 6 is a detail of 'Christian and Muslim playing chess in al-Andalus', from The Book of Games of Alfonso X, el Sabio, c. 1285.

TRANSNATIONAL RELIGIOUS PUBLICS, RELIGION, AND MIGRATION



Bindu Menon is the 2015/16 Harold Coward India Research Fellow, sponsored by UVic CSRS, CAPI, and CFGS. Menon is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication at Lady Shri College for Women, University of Delhi. She is this issue's CSRS featured scholar.

My research focuses on the relationship between religion, media and migration and the new transnational religious publics created through these relations. The specific context of this enquiry is what is known as the *Islamic Home Film Movement* in south-western Kerala, India. Traditionally a place which has had trade links with various parts of the world including Arab countries, China, and subsequently Europe, the contemporary state of Kerala is one of the most multi religious societies of the Indian federal republic. A significant aspect of contemporary Kerala society is the large scale migration of skilled workers for blue collar jobs and white collar jobs to different parts of the world and other parts of India. The Persian Gulf has been one of the most important locations of migration since the oil boom of the 1960s and a large number of the immigrants belong to the Muslim community of the state.

The Islamic Home films in this context have an audience that is spread over Kerala and the countries of Middle East. Beginning in 2003 the home films have since then grown into a wide network of circulation in about four districts in Kerala, and six countries in the Middle East, with an average viewership of 500,000 people. Home-films now circulate beyond their original audience of Muslim women in Kerala and have found an audience among Keralite migrants in the Arab Gulf, who organize public screenings in football fields and in their housing camps. Indeed, the large-scale migration of labour to the Middle East has led to the re-imagination of the moral geography of Keralite Muslim households to account for changing gender norms and family structures. Such processes have led to contestations about how to best visually mediate *quam* (an Arabic term locally understood as community) within globalized media worlds.

The transnational context of Islamophobia after the catastrophic event of 9/11 and the emergence of Hindu right-wing politics in India post-1990s both inform the political context of minority life in post-colonial India. My research is based on the premise that the crisis of secularism and developmentalism led to the new techno cultures to reflect on social life in terms that had not been done before. The experience of migration has brought in new social relations, gender relations and consumption patterns in the region. While political, consumption and lifestyle movements now take Muslim community almost as a given, the cutting edge of this new concern has come from the world of new digital cultures. This has not only generated critical contradictions within the cinematic narrative but also allowed for a certain distinction from the nationalist narratives of the past. The point is not that Home cinema's themes on the Muslim social experience were discrete narratives, separate from the mainstream, but in the historical crisis of post-colonial nationalism it emerged as an important expressive form of the crisis in minority social life.

By looking at the social life of Muslims in these set of films through a range of themes like space, gender, migration, language, myth, and technology the project argues for a deeper



Hand printed movie posters (detail), by Paul Keller, 2008. Used under CC BY 2.0 license.

interrogation and engagement with the religious cultures in post-colonial South Asia. The project situates religion and new media technologies as force fields through which nation, region, globalisation, migration and cosmopolitanism are complicated and addressed in ways that have not been done before. It seeks to re-evaluate the salience and resilience of religion in the South Asian context and its links with particular communication technologies.

While the main themes of these films are about social reform and centrally engage with questions related to practices like dowry, conjugality, consumption and new spending habits, it is also within their domain to reflect on new objects and practices like the mobile phone, television and the world wide web to be analysed and made sense for an Islamic way of life. The emotional and affective experience of migration and alienation forms an important landscape of these films. Increasingly many of the films in this genre are also shot in the Middle Eastern cities such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Doha, and Muscat. These new possibilities for religions to go public, and to assert their presence in the public sphere, involve paradoxes and tensions. Religion, it can be argued, cannot be analyzed outside the forms and practices of mediation that define it. This means that the current adoption of electronic and digital media by Islam, evangelical Christianity, and Judaism, should not be regarded as an anachronistic combination of matters belonging to different domains, namely, religion and technology. This raises certain questions: How does the adoption of the media as cassettes, TV, mass-reproduced tracts, or radio impinge on existing modes of religious mediation? What



happens to the message when cast through new mass media or broadcast through new, transnational channels of communication? Which conflicts and problems do these transitions evoke, and to what extent are religious leaders able to control the new technologies of circulation? What is at stake when religious members are addressed as audience and consumers and how does it impact upon religious authority? While the specific experience of South Asia plays a crucial role in our understanding of these narratives, the project attempts to raise broader issues of the religious life in a globalising contemporary world. While much has been written on media and religion, the focus of this project is on the cultural imagination of religious identities and its intersection with the media.



Transformations

Bonnie Sawyer *CSRS Administrative Assistant*

I was first introduced to the CSRS in September 2013 when I became the Winnifrid Lonsdale graduate student fellow. In September 2014 I transitioned from being a CSRS graduate student fellow to a CSRS employee when the position for administrative assistant became available. Already well-acquainted with the programs, employees and fellows, I couldn't have asked for a better way to begin my career.

One of the greatest benefits of working at the CSRS is that I continue to be intellectually stimulated by the innovative research all around me. I even get to be involved in projects surrounding my own research specialties which include the history of social work, sex work, and the Canadian Salvation Army. For example, this past year I organized the CSRS Ideafest on sex work in Canada titled, "Understanding Sex Work: Evidence, Faith and Popular Perceptions." Our event was a panel discussion at the Christ Church Cathedral with Bruce Bryant-Scott (Anglican Priest and former CSRS fellow), Cecelia Benoit and Dan Reist from the Centre for Addictions Research BC, Rachel Phillips (the executive director at Peers), Carin and Laurel (two experiential speakers), and Paul Bramadat as moderator. Our aim was to present the findings of Cecelia's national research project on sex work in Canada, and to discuss the ways in which factual evidence intersects with religious understandings and societal stereotypes.

This was a very exciting and rewarding experience for me since I wrote my Master's thesis on the history of social services for sex workers in Canada. I also worked as a research assistant on Cecelia Benoit's national research project and am a board member at Peers (the local non-profit organization for sex workers). I am very grateful to work at a centre where I am able to showcase my knowledge and skills, meet interesting researchers from around the world, and continue to learn daily.

Reassessing the Cultural and Religious Identities at the Necropolis of Makli, Thatta (Pakistan)

Munazzah Akhtar

Ian Stewart Graduate Student Fellow

In current art historical scholarship on South Asia there has been a tendency to classify historic sites developed by a Muslim ruler as 'Islamic', and a Hindu temple as 'Indic'. Such classification systems, based on geographic or religious identities, fail to acknowledge the complexities of intercultural interactions. The necropolis of Makli, a UNESCO world heritage site located in the city Thatta of Sindh (now a province of Pakistan), presents an opportunity to examine this key methodological issue. Makli is the largest pre-modern necropolis in the world, with thousands of artifacts and monuments spread over a hilly area of six square miles. Scholars classify this historic site through the inaccurate lens of its Muslim religious orientation, categorizing it as 'Islamic' in cultural character. However, the site contained secular structures, as well as those used for rituals by the multi-faith and multi-cultural inhabitants of Thatta. Moreover, the monuments in Makli share architectural elements with Hindu temples; modular units with Persian and Central Asian structures; iconography with Buddhist and Hindu mythological art; and building techniques with Sindhi and central South Asian traditions. Thus, to suggest that the overall artistic program of Makli reflects any single culture or religion does not fit with what the monuments evince.

Makli was founded in the late fourteenth century but its historical development continued through the next four hundred years, under four different dynasties. For my PhD research I am examining the Samma period (1351-1524), the first phase of Makli's development, as a case study. During their reign, the Samma Sultans of the Sindh Empire maintained political stability by promoting religious impartiality and keeping wider contacts with the neighboring lands. Over this period many Sufi scholars, educated patrons, and skilled artisans migrated to Thatta from different parts of Persia,

Central Asia, and the Indian sub-continent, contributing to the cross-pollination of artistic ideas, resulting in the unique hybrid architecture of this period, as exhibited in Makli necropolis.

The Samma period monuments in Makli are spread over a vast area towards the north of the site. They include eighteen standing and two ruined structures of monumental scale, in addition to hundreds of richly carved sandstone cenotaphs scattered around them. The monuments include a Jami Masjid (congregational mosque), pavilion and Chattri (canopy) tombs, tomb enclosures, and Khanqahs (hermitages). During my time as an Ian H. Stewart Graduate Student Fellow at the CSRS in 2015-16, I plan to focus on the study of the decorative program of these monuments. This will be aimed to identify the elements of design, epigraphy, ornament, and iconography; search for their meanings, origins and symbolic significances; and compare them to the traditional elements found in South Asian architectural and burial practices. This study will aid in placing Makli in its historic, political, religious and cultural contexts using supporting contemporary textual sources. Both the monuments and the primary textual sources will help examine if Makli's artistic program was designed deliberately, for the site to act as a key place of mediation between the multi-cultural and multi-faith residents of the region.

Today, this extremely significant, yet under-studied site is deteriorating fast, due to negligence, vandalism, and natural disasters (e.g. Makli became a makeshift refugee campsite for flood victims in 2010). My study is, therefore, eminently timed, in addition to promoting recognition of the site as critical to world heritage and intercultural understanding. My comparative analysis of Makli's architectural hybridity will surely impact its identity as a purely 'Islamic site'. I will follow this analysis by examining ways in which the site could be re-classified and re-conceptualized.



Group of royal tombs and stone cenotaphs towards the southern end of Makli Necropolis, Munazzah Akhtar.

Flight AC109

Terry Marner

CSRS Artist in Residence

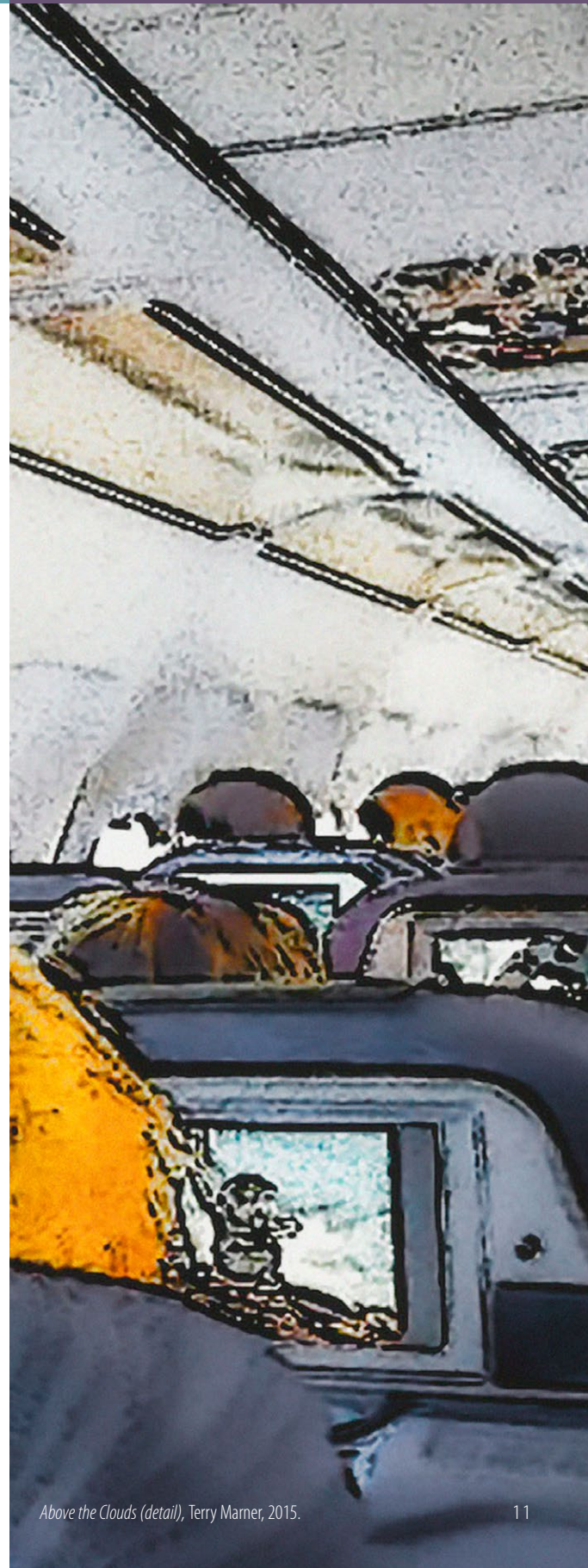
My formal undergraduate education did not include photography. In University, I quickly realized that I had a brain that tended to see the world made up of various kinds of abstractions. I separated the visual world from its identities, seeing it in terms of form, colour, line, etc. At the end of my first year I got summer work in my hometown, (which happened to be a holiday resort), at a photographic lab.

In those days, although many people had their "Box Brownie" to take on holiday the majority of holiday makers had no way of having pictorial memories to take home with them. So the company I worked for sent me out among the holidaymakers, gently persuading them that I could create happy holiday memories for them with my camera. I worked for a company called "Happy Snaps", and that was what I produced for their customers. Some posed photographs were inevitable, however, the preferred style was walking along with family or friends and obviously "happy."

As an introvert, I quickly learned that I was very comfortable using the camera as a way of becoming more engaged in the lives of the people around me. Looking back, I see that summer employment as an experience that became, over my undergraduate years, a seminal part of my spiritual development. Taking un-posed candid photographs helped me begin to understand more of the human condition. As John Donne famously remarked, "No man is an island". Taking "candid" helped me internalize Donne's aphorism.

I was recently travelling to Toronto on Flight AC 109. At thirty thousand feet the cabin was filled from the right with brilliant sunlight. I couldn't help reflecting on what I was actually doing at that moment in time. About two hundred people were crammed into what appears as an elongated cigar. Below us, an anxiety producing distance from where we were sitting to the ground. The flight attendant came up and down the cabin at intervals with her cart of food and drinks, a welcome distraction from a certain kind of boredom.

I took my new iPod Touch out of my pocket and over the space of a couple of hours took a number of images that somehow expressed my personal response to the situation we were in. Each image was shot from the vantage point of my seat. Most images were of people moving around or sitting. Others were abstract images of the various parts of the seat in front of me. Because of the wonders of modern technology I could shoot the images and then do all the "darkroom processing" in my iPod as I sat there. When I eventually returned home I uploaded the images to my computer to do a little more finishing work. Shooting a sequence is important because it places everything in its context. For example, I have found similar inspiration travelling the London Underground and also when I was working with community activists in the Caribbean.



Above the Clouds (detail), Terry Marner, 2015.

2015/16 FELLOWS

SCHOLARS-IN-RESIDENCE WHO FORM THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITY

VANDEKERKHOVE FAMILY TRUST GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS



Tim Personn (PhD Cand., UVic English)
"Morally Passionate, Passionately Moral": Philosophy and Affect in the Contemporary Fiction of David Foster Wallace, Richard Powers, Bret Easton Ellis, Dave Eggers, and Zadie Smith



Zsofia Surjan (PhD Cand., UVic History)
The Anxiety of Faith: Gendered Perspectives on Religious Conversion. Language Strategies in Correspondence of Central European Protestant Noble Women in the First Half of the 17th-Century

IAN H. STEWART GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP



Munazzah Akhtar (PhD Cand., UVic Art History & Visual Studies)
Cultural and Religious Identities at the Necropolis of Makli in the City of Thatta: Re-assessing the Architecture and Ornation of the Monuments built between the late 14th and mid 16th Centuries

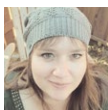


Emily Arvay (PhD Cand., UVic English)
Renewal without Revelation: Author Chris Adrian Reinvents Grace



Katrina Kosyk (MA Cand., UVic Anthropology)
Notes from the Past: Examining the Practice of Sound in Greater Nicoya Shamanism

RELIGIOUS STUDIES TA GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP



Justine Semmens (PhD Cand., UVic History)
A Thin Line between Love and a Crime: Marriage, Moral Delinquency, and the Courts in Counter Reformation France

WINNIFRED LONSDALE GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIP



Kamran Bashir (PhD Cand., UVic History)
Reading the Qur'an in British India: A Study of Ashraf `Alī Thānawī's Qur'an Commentary, Bayān al-Qur'ān

UVIC FACULTY FELLOWSHIPS



Christopher Douglas (English)
Theodicy's 19th Century Troubles



Lynne Marks (History)
Feminism, Family & Faith: Tensions between Mainstream Canadian 2nd Wave Feminists & Immigrant and Racialized Activist Women Regarding Questions of Motherhood, Family and Faith, 1970-1990

ASSOCIATE FELLOWS



Harold Coward
Word, Chant and Song as forces for Spiritual Transformation in Hinduism



Erica Cruikshank Dodd
Treasures of the Early Church



Scott Dolff
Practicing Place: Theology and the Local



Robert Florida
Ethical Issues in Modern Buddhism



Mona Goode
Muslim Taxation: The Evolution of Zakat as a "Sacred Tax"



Victor Hori
Little Jade: Language and Experience in Zen



Graham McDonough
The Catholic School as Public Ecclesial Space



Jordan Paper
The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng: Past and Present



Jarrad Reddekop
Rethinking Human-Nonhuman Relations: Between Western and Amazonian Thinking



Carolyn Whitney-Brown
Reflecting on past, present and future connections between the United Church of Canada and L'Arche in Canada and L'Arche International Founder's Project



Katherine Young
On Tamil Religion, Caste, and Politics: Non-Brahmin Srivaisnavas Speak Out

VISITING RESEARCH FELLOWS



Abby Day (University of Kent)
Researching the Religious Lives of Generation A: Older Laywomen in the Church



Nick Herriman (La Trobe University)
Sorcery, Law, and State: Indonesia's Proposed Anti-Witchcraft Legislation



Oriana Walker (Harvard University)
A Cultural History of Breathing



Anne Williams (University of Virginia)
Satirizing the Sacred: St. Joseph and Humor in Northern European Art, ca. 1300-1530

VISITING GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOWS

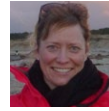


Rachel Brown (PhD Cand., Wilfrid Laurier University)
Immigration, Integration and Ingestion: The Use of Food and Drink in Religious Identity Negotiations for North African Muslim Immigrants in Paris and Montreal



Susie Fisher (PhD Cand., University of Manitoba)
Seeds from the Steppe: Material Culture and the Politics of Emotion among Mennonite Migrants in Canada, 1870-1950

COMMUNITY SABBATICAL FELLOWS



Ulla Thorbjørn Hansen (Roskilde Cathedral, Denmark)
The Theology of Pastoral Care in War, Crises and Disasters

HAROLD COWARD INDIA RESEARCH FELLOW



Bindu Menon (University of Delhi, India)
Transnational Religious Publics: Migration, Visual Culture and Jama'at-e-Islami in South Asia and the Middle East

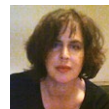
CSRS ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE



Annabel Howard (Writer)
The Scarlet Ox and the Black Madonna



Terence Marner (Photographer)
Searching for Home-Finding Fingerposts in Neuroscience



Celia Rabinovich (Visual Artist)
Working the Coast: From Matter to Metaphor



Library (detail), by Stewart Butterfield, 2006. Used under CC BY 2.0 license.

SELECTED NEW PUBLICATIONS

For a complete list of publications from CSRS fellows, check out our soon-to-be-renovated website.

- *In Press*: Paul Bramadat, Maryse Guay, Julie Bettinger, and Réal Roy, eds. *Public Health in the Age of Anxiety: Religious and Cultural Roots of Vaccine Hesitancy in Canada*. University of Toronto Press.
- *In Press*: Paul Bramadat and Rinku Lamba, eds. "Governance of Religious Diversity in China, Canada and India," Special Issue, *Studies in Religion*.
- Coward, Harold. 2015. *The UVic Centre for Studies in Religion and Society: My Story of its Birth and Development*. Victoria: University of Victoria.
- Reimer, Sam, and Michael Wilkinson. 2015. *A Culture of Faith: Evangelical Congregations in Canada*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

PROJECTS IN BRIEF

Snapshot: Projects in Progress

WHAT GIVES? THE IMPACT OF SECULARIZATION ON RELIGIOUSLY AFFILIATED VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES IN WESTERN CANADA

Duration: 2016 – 2018 – *Funding application submitted*

Aim: A team of researchers to hold a series of stakeholder interviews to understand some of the public implications of the decline in established religious groups in Canada.

Investigators: Paul Bramadat (UVic, PI), Carlos Colorado, (University of Winnipeg), and Calgary colleague (TBA).

Sponsor/Funder: Application submitted to Citizenship and Immigration Canada via Immigration Research West

Big Questions: What are the implications of secularization for the ways social services and support are provided for Canadian newcomers? Are religious and state settlement workers and activists in Western Canada interested in and prepared to respond to changes in a) the religious communities that have provided services over so many decades, b) the source countries of newcomers, and c) the public attitudes toward refugee and immigrant settlement? Will the effect on the settlement sector of declines in larger groups (e.g., Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans), be off-set by the growth of other groups (e.g., Pentecostals, Muslims, Sikhs)?

CASCADIAN SPIRITUALITY: RELIGION, NATURE, & SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Duration: 2015 – 2016 – *Research in progress*

Aim: An interdisciplinary team of scholars collaborate to investigate the nature and implications of the distinctive religious patterns evident in the “Cascadia” region of North America.

Investigator: Paul Bramadat (UVic)

Sponsor/Funder: Religion & Diversity Innovation Fund Grant

Big Questions: 1) How inclusive is Cascadia to newcomers from non-European and non-Christian societies; 2) What are the differences between Canadian and American expressions of this form of religion/spirituality?; and 3) What are the public implications of growth in this form of religion/spirituality?

FOUND IN TRANSLATION: ARTFUL REINTERPRETATIONS OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS IN CONTEMPORARY RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Duration: 2015 – 2016 – *Research in progress*

Aim: Create a collection of contemporary translations of sacred texts from the world’s six major religions (Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Sikhism).



Diversity mural in Abbotsford, by University of the Fraser Valley, 2012, used under CC BY 2.0 license.

Investigator: Paul Bramadat (UVic)

Sponsor/Funder: UVic Internal Research Grant

Big Questions: What texts or technologies do contemporary Canadian religious groups use to pass on their core sacred texts to community members who might not be able to read the original documents? What do creative translations and illustrations tell us about religion today?

RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ROOTS OF VACCINE HESITANCY

Duration: 2013 – 2015 – *In press: University of Toronto Press*

Aim: Experts from the health disciplines, humanities, and social sciences work together to understand the growing anxieties related to vaccines.

Investigators: Paul Bramadat (UVic), Maryse Guay (University of Sherbrooke), Julie Bettinger (UBC), Réal Roy (UVic), eds.

Sponsor/Funder: Réseau de recherche en santé des populations du Québec (RSPQ), Université de Sherbrooke, UVic CSRS.

Big Question: What do we know about why members of some religious and cultural groups are reluctant to vaccinate themselves and their children? How might physicians, nurses, scholars, and public health specialists better relate to these concerns about vaccine safety in order to prevent serious outbreaks of diseases?

THE GOVERNANCE OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN CHINA, INDIA, & CANADA

Duration: 2012 – 2015 – *In press: Special Issue, Studies in Religion*

Aim: To prepare a scholarly manuscript resulting from an international workshop held at UVic in the Fall of 2012.

Investigators: Paul Bramadat (UVic), Rinku Lamba (Jawaharlal Nehru University), eds.

Sponsor/Funder: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), University of Victoria (CSRS, Centre for Asia-Pacific Initiative, Faculty of Law).

Big Question: How do India, China, and Canada respond to or “manage” the challenges and opportunities of religious diversity?

THURSDAY PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES

CSRS public lectures are held 4:30 - 5:30 Thursday afternoons.

September - November lectures are held in the David Strong Building Room C118; January - April lectures are held in the Human and Social Development Building Room A240.

All lectures are free and open to the public. For lecture details visit the UVic online events calendar at www.events.uvic.ca

Sept. 17, 2015 ^H	Chris Douglas	<i>Carl Sagan's Good News: God and Aliens in Religious Science Fiction</i>
Sept. 24, 2015 ^H	Patrick Grant	<i>Vincent van Gogh Writes about Religion</i>
Oct. 1, 2015	Nick Herriman	<i>An Anthropology of Religious Persecution: Trigger, Stereotype, and Special Procedure</i>
Oct. 8, 2015	Kamran Bashir	<i>Reading the Qur'an as a Coherent Text: Muslim Understanding of the Qur'an in British India</i>
Oct. 15, 2015	Bindu Menon	<i>"One Teaspoon Thrice a Day": Middle Eastern Migration, Social Reform, and Modernity in the Islamic Home Film Movement of South India</i>
Oct. 22, 2015	Tim Personn	<i>Irony and Sincerity in Contemporary American Fiction</i>
Oct. 29, 2015	Zsofia Surjan	<i>Faith Reconsidered: Personal Accounts on War and Religious Conversion in Women's Correspondences from Early Seventeenth-Century Central Europe</i>
Nov. 5, 2015 ^H	Jarrad Reddekop	<i>Relating to the Forest in Amazonian Quichua Religious Traditions</i>
Nov. 12, 2015	Munnazzah Akhtar	<i>Identity in Death: The Makli Graveyard and its Relationship to the Culture of Thatta, Pakistan</i>
Nov. 19, 2015	Neilesh Bose	<i>Beyond "Minorities": The Many Histories of Islam in Modern India</i>
Nov. 26, 2015	Emily Arvay	<i>The New "End-of-World" Novel: Judeo-Christian Apocalypticism in Contemporary American Fiction</i>
Jan. 14, 2016	Annabel Howard	<i>The Scarlet Ox and the Black Madonna: Exploring Italy's Modern Festivals and their Creative Histories</i>
Jan. 21, 2016	Anne Williams	<i>Satirizing the Sacred in Early Modern Art: The Power of Humour in the Cult of Saint Joseph</i>
Jan. 28, 2016	Katrina Kosyk	<i>An Examination of Ancient Costa Rican Musical Instruments and Shamanistic Practices</i>
Feb. 4, 2016 ^H	Tom Saunders	<i>History, Faith & Preferred Futures</i>
Feb. 18, 2016 ^H	David Seljak	<i>The Pope, the Poor and the Planet: Francis on the Tyranny of Money</i>
Feb. 25, 2016	Andrew Gow	<i>Secularism: A 'Work in Progress' or an Ideological Obfuscation?</i>
Mar. 17, 2016 ^H	Susie Fisher	<i>Russian Watermelons and Red River Plums: Mennonite Migrants Settling Nostalgic Landscapes in Rural Manitoba, 1876-1930</i>
Mar. 24, 2016 ^H	Melia Belli	<i>Buddhism, Caste, and Art in an Egalitarian India</i>
Mar. 31, 2016 ^H	Lynne Marks	<i>Feminism, Family and Faith: Tensions between Mainstream Feminists and Immigrant Activist Women Regarding Questions of Family, Motherhood and Religion, 1970-1990</i>

^H indicates lectures generously supported by the Anglican Diocese of BC through the John Albert Hall Endowment.

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The CSRS also wishes to thank the many individuals who have generously contributed towards the Saint John's Bible.

GIVING TO THE CSRS

The Centre for Studies in Religion and Society has, from the outset, been supported by the generosity of individuals and groups. Through their charitable giving, our donors help young scholars achieve their life goals, help create a productive intellectual home for established scholars from UVic and all over the world, help create venues for public dialogue towards greater critical understanding of the role of religion in society, and assist in the creation of scholarly publications that inform public policy. Any and all donations are appreciated. Those interested in making a donation can visit <https://extrweb.uvic.ca/centre-for-studies-in-religion-and-society>.

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ADMIN. SUPPORT: Bonnie Sawyer



Basketball as a religion, by macinate, 2007. Used under CC BY 2.0 license.

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