



Kumbh Temple(detail), by Karunakar Rayker, 2008. Used under CC BY 2.0 license

# CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN RELIGION & SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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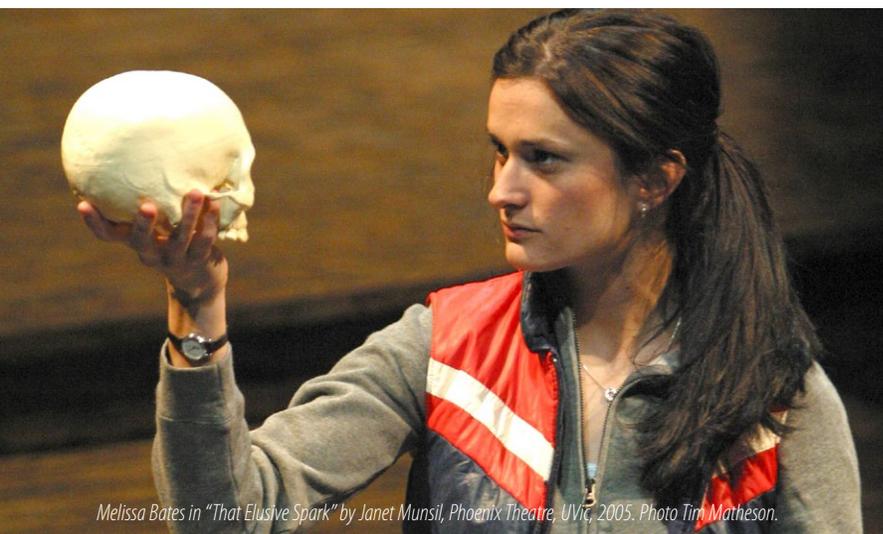
## Act of Faith: A New Play about Disability and Belief

Janet Munsil

CSRS Artist in Residence

Matters of belief or conviction pose some of the most interesting and fundamental questions about our shared human experience. Wherever our personal or faith-based belief systems are strengthened, or shaken, or come into question, there may lie a critical dramatic moment in which lives, perceptions, and relationships to others are changed: in short, the essential stuff of drama.

As a playwright, I am very happy to be joining the CSRS in 2016/17 as an Artist in Residence, during which time I will be writing a new-full length play, *Act of Faith*. The work will be developed for production in a future season by Realwheels Theatre in Vancouver, a company dedicated to presenting theatrical works that shed light on the disability experience.



Melissa Bates in "That Elusive Spark" by Janet Munsil, Phoenix Theatre, UVic, 2005. Photo Tim Matheson.

*Act of Faith* is inspired by the personal experience of a young woman familiar to Realwheels as a participant in their programs, and is based in part on interviews conducted with her in 2014. The subject became paraplegic in adolescence, following surgery for a tumor on her spine. Adapting to life with a wheelchair, she came to be more deeply involved in her faith, and actively involved in the disability community. Here she found the support of new friends, developed new interests, and began, with her family, to settle in to what she called her "me-in-a-chair" identity—which involved changes that impacted them all.

Thirteen years later, God told her in a dream that she could get out of her chair and walk away—so she did.

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## From Cell to Prayer: Dwelling in a Cosmic Community

Réal Roy

Faculty Fellow

Community is important in several religious traditions. Ekklesia, ummah and sangha: three words that can be translated by the word community and that come to mind as foundational concepts in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism.

It has been long understood that in these traditions individuals come to fully realized their religious lives through participation in a community of believers. Searching for more authentic communities has been an important motivation for the establishment of religious communities (e.g., Benedictines, Franciscans, and Jesuits), but even in *Laudato Si* (2015), Pope Francis articulates a vision of life that includes life beyond the human species.

Works by biologists and molecular biologists like Lynn Margulis and Carl Woese have provided a new understanding of the evolution of life on earth and the origin of cells in human beings. Is there a different image of human being, and perhaps of the divine, arising from this new knowledge? These are some of the questions that I plan to explore while on a sabbatical at the CSRS.

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## Message from the Director

Paul Bramadat

As you read this newsletter you will see why I am looking forward to meeting and introducing you to the new fellows who will join the community in the coming year.

Our speakers and scholars will explore contemporary and historical religious texts, cultures, ideas, practices, buildings, and experiences from all over the world, and they will use almost every imaginable academic method to do so. I am especially pleased that this newsletter features an essay from our inaugural Emeritus Fellow, Harold Coward, who set the course for the centre over two decades ago and who remains one of our best ambassadors. You will also see that we have begun to work toward a research project on religion and spirituality in the “Cascadia bio-region,” (western B.C., Washington, and Oregon) about which you will hear more over the next few years.

Normally, this column is entirely cheerful. However, these days it is not difficult to feel discouraged about the world. In recent months, the news has been full of stories of bombings, shootings, overdoses, addiction, homelessness, the dissolution of political communities, coups, social and political gridlock, racism, corruption, and alienation of so many kinds. The list is long, few remain untouched, and religion is often involved – positively and negatively – in many of these events.



Photo: Chorong Kim

What does this have to do with the CSRS or the work of its fellows and friends? After all, for some, research is an escape from suffering and tumult. However, the more researchers I meet from around the world and from across the disciplines, the more I have become convinced that most of us are seeking answers not just to particular intellectual dilemmas, but also to broader related questions about ambiguous social forces involved in so much of the strife in the world today or in the past.

The centre provides people with the time and space to work on very specific intellectual problems within a supportive community in which the common themes among our respective projects can come to light. In the last two weeks alone, for example, our morning “coffee talks” have featured discussions on the role of religion in political torture in Iran, the counter-intuitive approach of Indians to the indentured labour experience in South Africa, the statistical relationship between levels of religiosity and informal care-giving in Canada, and the potential relevance for current inter-religious interactions of advice given to Franciscans in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. While this sample is indicative of the ethos of the centre, in fact, many more interactions occur among fellows and between fellows and others in the kitchen, in our offices, and at our public lectures.

In the last eight years, I have been humbled to see our students, faculty, visitors, and members of the public address together the small and the big questions that have animated individuals and societies for millennia. I look forward to continuing those conversations with all of you in the coming year through our digital platform, publications, and public events.



Photo: David Seljak

## Music Composition based on the Philosophical Text *Ethica* of Baruch Spinoza

Dániel Péter Biró *CSRS Artist in Residence*

During the CSRS Artist in Residence Fellowship period, I will write a large-scale musical composition based on Baruch Spinoza's philosophical work *Ethica* (*Ethics*). Exploring concepts of "space and place," the proposed composition will deal with questions of an individual's religious place in the global world and how music informs and influences the perception of this place. My proposed new composition, entitled *Ethica*, will be scored for five voices and five instruments and employ text from Spinoza's philosophical work of the same name.

In the fall of 2011, I was Visiting Professor at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. Living in The Hague, I found an apartment close to the burial site of Benedict Spinoza. Spinoza, while one of the greatest philosophers in the seventeenth century, was banned from the Portuguese Synagogue in Amsterdam because of his views, which proved to be too radical for his time. In his *Ethics* Spinoza attempted to present a new type of theology, one that was autonomous from organized religion, such as that of his own Portuguese Jewish community. I will write a music composition that explores this historical dichotomy from the perspective of our modern-day, globalized existence. This work will present a new challenge for me, as I plan to write a historicized, philosophical composition for voices and ensemble. I will thereby integrate phonetic aspects of Spinoza's text with melodic material derived from plainchant, Torah trope, and Qur'an recitation, repertoires studied during my stay in the Netherlands.

*meccanico, quasi Sprechstimme*  
Turkish: "birbirlerini anlamasınlar" ("einander verstehen")

bir-bir - le - ri - ni an - la - m - a - s e:

Excerpt from composition *Al Ken Kara (That Is Why It Was Called)* by Dániel Péter Biró (2014/2016).

In integrating these chant traditions from immigrant communities of the past and present into the composition, I intend to investigate the continuing relevancy and complexity of Spinoza's Enlightenment project and critique of sectarian religion. While Spinoza dealt with problems of assimilation and tradition in his own time, these very issues become creatively engaged in his *Ethics*, as the philosophical work transgresses the boundaries of contemporary religious doctrine. In this piece, the text will be presented in the original Latin as well as in Hebrew, Arabic and other language translations. The citations of and derivations from various chant traditions will exist as representations of contemporary and past, living and lost religious spaces. Texts dealing with ethics, taken from the Talmud, Qur'an and contemporary sources, sung by the vocal soloists and imitated by the instruments of the ensemble, will be integrated into the musical texture.

This composition has been commissioned by the Schola Heidelberg of Heidelberg, Germany and will be premiered there in October 2017.

## 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 15, 2016 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 15, 2016; proposals submitted outside of this regular application deadline schedule may also be considered at the discretion of the director.

### Graduate Student Fellowships

The CSRS offers up to four fellowships to UVic graduate students valued at \$5,000 each. The deadline for applications for the 2017/2018 academic year is November 15, 2016.

### 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: April 17, 2017.

### 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.uvic.ca/research/centres/csrs/fellowships-awards/apply/index.php](http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/csrs/fellowships-awards/apply/index.php)

## Passages

May 7, 1936 - September 29, 2015 – John W.K. Sandys-Wunch, ordained minister with the Anglican Church, scholar, former CSRS Associate Fellow, and long-term friend. John is very much missed.

## Traces of Humanity: The Materiality of Experience

Robbyn Lanning *CSRS Administrative Officer*

A journal, carried through mud-caked trenches and pressed against the body for safety is inscribed with the daily thoughts and experiences of a WWI soldier. A prisoner of war number, made from graphite etched into a slim panel of wood is strung with rope and twine, its braiding now rubbed smooth from friction. These are physical objects that speak to intangible ideas. They can evoke emotions of fear and grief, and can speak to the mixed triumph of survival. These materials, so closely intertwined with intense human experiences, now reside in the University of Victoria Libraries, both in their original material forms and as digitally reproduced surrogates.

For the past two summers I have been an instructor for the group-taught *Understanding the Pre-Digital Book* course at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute. During the development of the course content I joined forces with UVic University Librarian Jonathan Bengtson to investigate the relationships between primary source materials and their digital surrogates. In particular, we explored the types of information objects are able to communicate through their materiality or lack thereof, and how physical and digital resources possess the ability to reflect our social and cultural experiences—and indeed our humanity—back to us.



Prisoner of War number worn by Nicholas Abkhazi, University of Victoria Libraries, Abkhazi Fonds, 1990.068.2.12.

Photo: University of Victoria Libraries Digitization Centre

This collaboration has resulted in the production of the article, *Traces of Humanity: Echoes of Social and Cultural Experience in Physical Objects and Digital Surrogates in the University of Victoria Libraries*, featured in the April 2016 digital humanities special edition of *Cogent Arts and Humanities*. The article includes a discussion of the Saint John's Bible Heritage Edition. Recently acquired by the CSRS, it is a unique blend of both an original resource and a cutting-edge high-quality digitally produced surrogate: a rich example of the ways in which texts, objects, and images are hybridized between the physical and digital.

To read the full *Traces of Humanity* article, visit <http://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2016.1163042>.



## Act of Faith ...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Janet Munsil *CSRS Artist in Residence*

For me, this is not where the story ends, but where it begins. I'm interested in what happens to the lives, perceptions, and convictions of those around the presumptive protagonist who has experienced a life-altering moment.

Reactions to the healing were polarized: a miracle within her religious community; a mystery, largely dismissed, by the medical establishment; and a massive about-face for her family, and especially her friends with disabilities. There were feelings of betrayal, abandonment, and incredulity. Why should God heal her, and not them? Had she been faking it? People with serious

spinal cord injuries don't just suddenly recover and walk away – they are encouraged by doctors, physiotherapists and support networks to have the best quality of life possible under the circumstances of permanent, reduced physical mobility.

While I'm new to the realities and politics of the disability experience, what I find most interesting, and what I hope to capture in the play, is not some revelation of "the truth", but the conflicted, baffled, slightly irritated feeling I have about this story - inviting the audience to confront their own presumptions and convictions about healing and disability.

Trevor Hinton and Melissa Bates in "That Elusive Spark" by Janet Munsil, Phoenix Theatre, UVic, 2005. Photo Tim Matheson.

## Islam and Financial Crisis

Daromir Rudnyckyj *UVic Faculty Fellow*

Following financial crisis of 2008 there has been a widespread sense that finance is important, but little understanding of how finance works and what alternatives might exist to dominant financial practices and models. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork on Islamic finance in Malaysia, I have been seeking to document how Islamic finance experts are developing a response to the global financial predicament that differs from that offered by both Wall Street and the Occupy movement. In the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, major financial institutions requested loans and other financial guarantees from government to maintain the solvency of the financial system. The Occupy movement called for forgiveness for those mired in debt and those adversely afflicted by the sharp decline in the value of real estate. However, both of these interventions continue to take debt for granted as the central tool of finance. In contrast, I have found that some Islamic finance experts challenge the epistemology of finance by posing investment, rather than debt, as the central mechanism for the mobilization of capital. The primary rationale is that investment and equity-based financial contracts put limits on leverage that are exacerbated by debt-fuelled financial forms.

Although it is sometimes thought of as peripheral to the Muslim world, the Malaysian state has aggressively sought to position Kuala Lumpur as the central hub of a transnational Islamic financial system by creating a “Muslim Wall Street.” In contrast to other countries that have experimented with Islamic banking, the Malaysian Central Bank has been the world’s most aggressive in fostering an Islamic financial industry. Today the country has both one of the densest concentrations of Islamic finance experts and the most developed infrastructure for Islamic finance in the world.

While modern Islamic banks were first established in the 1970s, these were relatively small-scale enterprises that operated on the far fringe of the global financial system. However, by the 2000s financial institutions, nation-states, and international organizations began to aggressively develop Islamic finance, seeking to create a viable alternative to conventional finance. Today Islamic finance is expanding rapidly as states and financial institutions compete to attract the massive volume of surplus capital that has been generated by oil-rich Muslim nations in the Middle East. The Malaysian government has sought to make the country’s capital the central node in this emerging global network—what one participant in my research called “the New York of the Muslim world.”



Detail, A Bank Islam ATM in central Kuala Lumpur, December 2015. Photo illustration by Robbyn Lanning; original photo by Daromir Rudnyckyj.

However, the meteoric expansion of the industry has simultaneously kindled heated debates among experts and professionals in the field who recurrently question each other and themselves about whether Islamic finance offers a real alternative to conventional finance and, as noted above, whether it in fact fulfills Islamic moral prescriptions.

### NEW AT THE CSRS FRONT DESK:

The CSRS is pleased to welcome Administrative Assistant Jeremy Riishede to the centre. Jeremy joins the CSRS from the CIHR-funded public health research project, *Equity Lens in Public Health*, at the Centre for Addictions Research of BC.

Congratulations to Bonnie Sawyer who has left the CSRS to pursue a post-degree professional certificate with UVic’s Faculty of Education.



## Medieval Medicine: Reflections on Medical Mediations

Hélène Cazes

Director, Medieval Studies Program and  
CSRS Program Committee member

In 1543, a twenty-eight year old anatomist, Andreas Vesalius published a treatise that would be held as the “first chapter of modern medicine”<sup>1</sup> by posterity, up until our own historians of medicine: the *Fabric of the Human Body*. In this work on human dissection and anatomy, the doctor claims to “have awakened the science of medicine, which had been asleep for the last fourteen centuries,” since the famous Greek physician Galen (129-216). Vesalius has himself represented on the title-page, dissecting a human body in front of a large audience, a scene symbolizing the new science he is founding: knowledge by direct observation, transmitted through direct observation – hence, the requirement of performing dissection on human bodies for all students of medicine in our times. Everyone is immediately taken by this new model for medicine. Historiographers and scientists alike, in the following centuries adopt the narrative sketched by the young and rebellious anatomist and they declare that nothing notable had happened for medical science—or even, simply, science—during the Middle Ages.

The starred year of 1543<sup>2</sup> was a great dramatic device for the history of progress: a point marking the boundary separating the new science (experimental, based on scientific observation) from the nebulous fields of pre-science, superstition, and magic. As if, suddenly, thanks to the genius of a heroic and independent mind, the veil of centuries spent in ignorance were lifted to let the truth be known: the scene depicted by the title-page of the *Fabric*, where Vesalius cuts open the skin of a corpse in order to inquire on the mysteries of the human body.

Now, apart from the great epic of scientific discoveries leading to our own present categories, the claim of Vesalius refers to a construction, *a posteriori*, of the Middle Ages: the term medieval, coined by Petrarch in the Quattrocento, was meant as a disparaging qualification of the period “in between” the two peaks of human knowledge, Antiquity and Petrarch’s times (now known as the Renaissance). Retrieving texts, arts, and skills that the Middle Ages would supposedly have lost through ignorance and obscurantism, the humanists first and then the new scientists would have restored the splendor of the human mind and of its infinite promises. Medieval medicine, though, had not been an empty fallow field. Even if most of its principles were inherited from Galen—who himself had developed a theory inherited from Hippocrates—it was a vibrant field, illustrated in all centuries and all places comprised



Detail of 'The Persian doctor Al-Razi as represented in Gerardus Cremonensis' Medical Collection (1250-1260).  
A surgeon examines the colour of urine, collected in the matula.

in the phrase “Middle Ages” by works of research, vulgarization, polemics, translations, and theorization. Interdisciplinary and innovative, the complex field of knowledge called “medicine” encompassed learned culture (in Latin, Arabic, and Greek) transmitted in universities and treatises but also popular cures and healing practices (mostly known through vernacular texts and material culture). Aside from the usual distinction between the learned world of clerks (most often men, very often priests, sometimes doctors of the University) and the lay spheres of the village, the town or of the women’s domains, medical knowledge united through translations and documentations of foreign texts different cultures and geographical zones. Most prominently, as a transmitted set of precepts and principles—from medical receipts, uses of herbs and incantations to operative concepts and theories of the body—medicine was at the meeting point of ancient authorities and more recent actualizations, whereas its epistemology adjoined astronomy, alchemy, psychology, botany, pharmacy, music and all disciplines that could, in any way, pertain to the definition of the body or of the world. What could nowadays seem a vague mix of words and a pretentious claim to universal knowledge was neither commented nor perceived as such, for medicine was the “mediation” linking humans to the universe, the knowledge of its status in the world and the recognition of the elements of this world in the human body. Emile Benveniste,<sup>3</sup> studying the Indo-European vocabulary showed that the root *\*med* means the knowledge of connections and the capacity of acting on connections. Aptly, this root is also in the “middle” of “Middle Ages” and “medieval.” Traditionally divided in three branches—knife, herbs, charms—medicine situates humans within the universe and encompasses the “physics” of the

<sup>1</sup> J. M. Ball, *Andreas Vesalius, the Reformer Of Anatomy* (St. Louis: Medical Science Press, 1910)

<sup>2</sup> Georges Canguilhem, "L'Homme de Vesale dans le monde de Copernic: 1543," in *Etudes d'histoire et de philosophie des sciences* (Paris: Vrin, 1970)

<sup>3</sup> Benveniste, Emile. "La doctrine médicale des Indo-Européens." *Revue de l'histoire des religions* (1945): 5-12.

physicians (an expertise on natural laws and elements) as well as the practice of healing through the restoration of the natural balance. In the medieval world representation, the universe is a cosmos, a word ordered, consistent, and meaningful: the microcosm of the human body reflects the macrocosm that surrounds and creates it. Made of the four elements that form everything that is, the human body is connected by its parts but also by its situation to the world. Air, fire, water and earth, as well as stars, birthplaces, seasons, stones, colours, determine the constitution and the development of every individual. Medicine, then, recognizes the inclusion of the individual within a common universe and the singularity of every specific set of qualities: all men and women are made from the same material and present unique combinations of the elements. Medicine also recognizes the possible causes of disharmony: one is doing well when one is following the course of one's nature, as determined by their astral theme, temperament, age, the place where one was born, the place where one lives, etc. In this perspective, the knowledge of medicine is a wisdom.

The four humours are an excellent illustration of this medical galaxy of knowledge and practices. The principle of the humoral medicine is balance: good health is the state of optimal balance in an individual according to her temperament. Bad health is caused by a lack of this inner balance, which must be recognized by the physician through the diagnostic, and restored through diet, surgery, or healing interventions. The four humours—blood, phlegm, black bile, yellow bile—are connected to four qualities—hot, cold, dry, wet—which correspond in turn to combinations of the four elements—fire, earth, air, water—and of the four Cardinal points, the four seasons of the year, and the four ages of life. All represented in everyone, the four humours make the complexion of an individual by their unique combination, which depends on the astral position at the time of birth, on the diet, on the age, on the geographical location etc. A new-born, hot and wet, will end up as a cold and dry corpse: in between, the infant male will dry up at the age of reason, when the adult teeth come and the capacity to reason analytically is made possible. Too much dryness will cause melancholia, the disease of geniuses, who think well and digest badly. The teenager, full of blood and anger, will calm down with more phlegm, bringing moderation and temperance. The female youngster, though, remains wet and, therefore, is impressionable, repeats everything, is prompt to tears. The physician will support the nature of each patient by recognizing his or her temperament, the influence of the stars, the effects of the moon, the role of age: the pulse, the urine, the colour of the face are examined and put in relation to the celestial movements with the aid of elaborate “volvelles”, sets of wheels allowing to identify the ideal balance of the person beyond the distress of the disharmony. Then diets and herbs can supply the elements missing for the balance or attenuate the excesses of this or that humour: for instance, a sanguine

man, prompt to anger, will stop red wine and switch to white. Purgation of all sorts will also eliminate the excess of blood (bloodletting), black bile (laxative treatment), or yellow bile (expectorations). Baths, music, travel may also be prescribed.

The conception of a natural personal balance, the temperament, allows a discourse both on the patient and his condition. Galenic medicine provided words and narratives that suited everyone with common elements and unique personalization. One could compare this plasticity of the humoral theory to the fascination for astrology: a set of generalities, with no scientific standing but with a discursive efficacy, where anyone can recognize his particular situation within a universal scheme.

Not a science anymore, after being stabbed by Vesalius, the Galenic theory insisted on the connections between the person and the world and, hence, between the persons themselves. The distinction of sexes was unsure up until the first moments of life after birth, the idea being that the difference between males and females was a question of temperature – boys being hotter than girls. The differences in skin colours, head shapes, heights, and eyes colours were attributed not to genetics but to climate and places: temperatures, precipitations, vapours, sunlight were advanced as causes for the blackness of Africans, the red hair of Irish. Ridiculous? Certainly, in regards to our modern experimental science. There is a wisdom, though, in the recognition and celebration of the connections with the universe and with the other types of human beings than one's self: the medical theorists of climates could not conceive of racism, as all men and women were essentially variations on a theme. They could easily conceive of gender, and transgender, as male and female were on the same scale of humanness. They could also readily accept the diversity of individuals as the notion of a prescriptive norm did not enter their descriptions: every individual was considered as its own microcosm.

Medieval medicine, as a topic, opens windows to understanding not only the ways people used to comprehend the universe and the place of humankind in it but also the ways we, self-defined modern and enlightened societies, consider pre-modern and pre-industrial types of knowledge. Busy with the justification of our own faith in experimental science and technology, we have created a narrative leading to the so-called discoveries of our own conceptions of the universe. Conceptions of the status of humankind in this universe, of the role of culture, tradition, and intercultural exchange about health and disease, were to follow. Indeed, they are still in the making.

The 30<sup>th</sup> annual Medieval Workshop (UVic, February 4, 2017, <http://www.uvic.ca/humanities/medieval>) will explore the connections of medieval medicine with cosmology, ecology, gender, and cultural diversity. Join us for this day of talks and music around a hot topic in medieval studies!

# HOW THE CENTRE HAS INFLUENCED MY RESEARCH & ACADEMIC LIFE



Photo: Robbyn Lamm

Harold Coward is a scholar of bioethics and religious studies, a member of the Royal Society of Canada, and founding director of the CSRS. Coward has been elected as the inaugural Fellow Emeritus, a designation which honours outstanding contributions made to the centre. He is this issue's CSRS featured scholar.

Working at the centre for the past 24 years has reinforced scholarly directions present in my life from early on. Inspired by a line from T. S. Eliot, "At the still point of the turning world" (Burnt Norton), I saw academic life as a place for quiet, focused reflection on the major questions of life. Today, with the pressures of students, committees, computer, smart phone communications, it is sometimes hard to find such a "still point." The centre has provided me and many scholars with a quiet place, unbroken time, and the collegiality of others – so important for the successful completion and writing of one's research. With its interdisciplinary mandate, the centre also encourages graduate students and faculty fellows to transcend traditional boundaries by engaging in interdisciplinary research.

The interdisciplinary approach characterized my academic life from the beginning – starting as a psychology undergrad with minors in literature and philosophy, masters degrees in cognitive psychology and Christian theology, and a Ph.D. in religious studies with a thesis on the psychology, philosophy and theology of scriptural revelation in Hinduism. In my experience, while one must begin from a rigorous disciplinary base, today's problems demand a willingness to be open to both interdisciplinary and global perspectives. Thus for me and for the centre, the mandate has been to foster the scholarly study of religion in relation to any and all aspects of society and culture, both contemporary and historical.

In addition to fellowships for individual scholars, the centre puts together research teams to bring the knowledge of science, social science, the humanities, and the religious traditions to bear on major problems facing society. This model for team interdisciplinary research is one I began at the Calgary Institute for the

Humanities and continued to develop at the CSRS. Once the research question has been identified and a world team of top scholars on the problem recruited, a grant application is written and submitted to a granting agency such as SSHRC, CHIR, or NSERC. Much of my work at the centre, especially during my time as Director (1992-2002) involved obtaining funding and then leading the team research including publishing the resulting book. Book projects I led included: *A Cross-Cultural Approach to Health Care Ethics* (a SSHRC funded Canada-Thailand project, WLU Press, 1999); *Visions of a New Earth* (a Ford Foundation funded project that challenged each religion to mine the resources for new responses to the global issues of population and over-consumption, SUNY Press, 2000); *Religion and Peacebuilding* (SUNY Press, 2004 with funding from the Carnegie Corporation) examining the spiritual resources and obstructions to peacebuilding within the major traditions; and, most recently, *Religious Understandings of a "Good Death" in Hospice Palliative Care* (SUNY Press, 2012 funding by CIHR) to understand the requirements for a "good death" in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese Religion, and Aboriginal Traditions – which received a "Book of the Year" award from the *American Journal of Nursing* and is being used in nursing and medical schools as well as chaplaincy training. Along with these book projects which I led or co-led were several others in which I played a more secondary role such as *Just Fish: Ethics and the Canadian Marine Fisheries* (ISER Books, 2000) co-led by Rosemary Ommert and Tony Pitcher with SSHRC funding, and *Acceptable Genes? Religion, Culture, and Genetically Modified Food* (SUNY Press, 2008) co-led by Conrad Brunk



*theRaid: redemption (detail)*, by Inna dee, 2012. Used under CC BY 2.0 license.



*Manganiars*, by BOMBMAN, 2014. Used under CC BY 2.0 license.

which examines how GMOs impact the cultural practices and spiritual traditions as well as secular vegetarians. These last two books have proved to have significant public policy applications in Canada and the US.

How has my role at the centre influenced my academic life? It is very clear to me that I would not likely have become involved in many of the above areas of research (e.g. medical ethics, environmental ethics, ethics and genetics, fisheries, and hospice/palliative care) had I not been active in the CSRS over the past 24 years. Prior to becoming centre director, Indian philosophy, Hinduism and Buddhism were my areas of teaching and research expertise. Before coming to the centre in 1992, my major publications were single authored books such as: *Bhartrhari* (Twayne World Authors Series: India, 1976); *Sphota Theory of Language* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1980); *The Philosophy of the Grammarians* (Princeton, 1990); and *Mantra: Hearing the Divine in India* (Columbia, 1995). These titles from my own area of academic specialization demonstrate a marked difference from the book projects I have been involved with at the centre. The centre book project titles, and their great variety, are a clear indication of the centre's influence on me.

How did I become interested in doing research in these very different issues? First, by understanding that to be successful centre director, the centre's research has to become your research. Thus, I had to put my specialized India/Hindu interests on the "back burner" and give my time to issues for which the centre could generate strong research teams, win funding competitions, and produce books that made significant scholarly contributions. It is through a consistent record of such publications, along with the articles and books published by its annual fellows, that the CSRS has established and maintains its national and international scholarly reputation. The excellence we established in this

regard during my tenure as director, has been maintained and broadened successfully by the directors who followed me – Conrad Brunk (2002-2008), and Paul Bramadat (2008-present). Their success, like mine, has depended on a willingness to make the centre's research their main focus, and to put their individual research to one side.

For me, and perhaps for them too, this widening of research into new and at times unlikely areas has been an invigorating scholarly experience. My foray into environmental, medical, and fishery (salmon and cod) ethics was both timely in terms of winning funding (SSHRC and Ford Foundation) and in addressing issues of the day in a rigorous scholarly fashion so that significant publications resulted (contributions to knowledge for its own sake, to the teaching of students, and sometimes also to public policy). All of this meant success for the centre in its five year reviews and in its growing scholarly reputation. Ideas for these areas of research and problems to study did not come to me de novo but often arose in our morning coffee sessions or in talks with colleagues who one came to know as a result of centre activities – I'm sure Conrad and Paul have had similar experiences. The result is that my own research is no longer narrowly focused in Indian philosophy and religion, as it was in the first ten years of my career.

Now, 15 years into retirement, I am still involved in the centre and active in my own research. The book I had been wanting to write as my magnum opus (but had to put aside when I became centre director in 1992) I finally got back to in 2005, and completed it as *The Perfectibility of Human Nature in Eastern and Western Thought* (SUNY, 2008). The book I am now writing "Word, Chant, and Song: Spiritual Transformation in the Major Religions" came to me at least partly as a result of Centre coffee sessions with such visiting fellows as Leonard Enns of Waterloo University (Annual Fellow 1995-96) and his research on "Expressing Religious Experience Through Music." There was also our 2001 Distinguished Speakers Series on "Religion and Music" which, with the help of my colleague Guy Beck, a Hindu music specialist from Tulane University, New Orleans, became a centre book, *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religion* (WLU Press, 2006) – a book that has filled a major gap in understanding of the importance of music in devotees lives. These centre activities reawakened in me awareness of the key role music and chanting play in the life and in the spiritual transformation of lay people in virtually every religion. My excitement to research and write such a book comes not only from the gap in knowledge in this area, but also because it requires me to bring together my early interest in the philosophy of revelation language (the "word") with the power of chanting and singing the word in spiritual practice. I have completed chapters on how this is practiced and understood in Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, and Islam. This fall I will write the Judaism chapter and next year the Christianity chapter. There is no doubt in my mind that the scholarly joy in my current research is due, in a major way, to the influence and continuing presence of the CSRS in my academic life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For a more complete description of my role at the centre, see "The UVic Centre for Studies in Religion and Society: My Story of its Birth & Development" on the CSRS page of the UVicSpace repository: [dspace.library.uvic.ca/handle/1828/6799](https://dspace.library.uvic.ca/handle/1828/6799)

# RESEARCH IN ACTION

## Food as an Expression of Religious, Cultural and (Trans)National Identities

Rachel Brown

*CSRS Teaching Fellow & Visiting Graduate Student Research Fellow*

In my time at the centre and in the writing of my dissertation, I have attempted to address the questions: How do “French/Quebecois Maghrebine Muslim immigrants” create and maintain multiple identities in contexts that are seemingly hostile toward them because of those societies’ complex histories of colonialism, immigration, secularism, and nationalism? How do Muslims in France and Quebec claim “French/Quebecois” national identity with all of these things considered? Throughout my dissertation I argue that my research participants do so through mundane choices and actions, such as what and how they eat in their host countries. By choosing which religious and cultural food practices to continue and which ones to alter, by choosing to label these practices in particular ways, by relegating these practices to specific places and times, my participants show the vast and varied ways that Muslims negotiate their identities in transnational contexts.

In this, I show the importance of lived, everyday religious practice as a means of reimagining, recreating, reaffirming, and expressing, sometimes complicated and contested identities for minority immigrant communities. I show how food is potentially a more “politically/culturally correct” avenue for religious expression than other religious practices. In secular contexts, where public signs of religiosity are often seen as problematic, subtler/more private expressions of religious identity may help the minority religious immigrant to engage with and express their identities in meaningful ways. Additionally, in contexts like France and Québec, which have strong and distinct food cultures, by taking up some of the “foodways” of the host context, and/or leaving some of the home food practices that are seen as especially in conflict with the host context behind (i.e., the restriction on alcohol and pork), my participants claim and demonstrate their Québécois/French side of their transnational identity.



*At the celebration of the Eid al-fitr in one of my research participant's homes in Montreal, by Rachel Brown.*

Being inspired by the work that I have engaged in at the CSRS and moving forward from my study of food, identity and immigration, I would like to explore how these dynamics get worked out in other secular contexts. In comparison to locations such as France and Québec which both have complex histories with religion, including drastic secularization processes, what sorts of pressures might be imposed on an immigrant from a religious minority in a different kind of secular context, such as British Columbia? How might members of religious minorities, in secular contexts characterized more by religious illiteracy than direct antagonism toward religion, negotiate these identities? What role might food play in these negotiations? Would religious immigrants begin to relabel their religious practices as cultural in order to fit in with their “none” neighbours? This kind of project could reveal the real implications of various types of secularism on the lived experiences of religious minorities.



*Couscous made with one of my participants in Paris for the celebration of the Eid al-adha (the feast of sacrifice). This continues to be the recipe that I use to make my own couscous, by Rachel Brown.*



*Sweets for the Eid al-fitr (the Eid at the end of Ramadan) at the Grande Mosquée in Paris, by Rachel Brown.*

## The Religious Nones of British Columbia

Sarah Wilkins Laflamme

*Visiting Research Fellow*

Studying attitude and behaviour trends among people who say they have “no religion” has been an interest of mine for a number of years now. Since I began analyzing data on the topic, I had noticed the much higher rates of these religious nones found in Western Canada, especially in BC. Yet, it was really only on my first visit to the CSRS back in March 2015 that the province’s “irreligious exceptionalism”, and all the complexities of what that expression entails, struck me in full. After having some great coffee talks with the Centre’s members, I wanted to find out more about the BC nones and their potentially distinct character. I delved into my favourite type of empirical data, survey statistics, to have a closer look. Returning to the CSRS this summer, I presented some of my findings.

Representing 44% of the provincial population in 2011, BC has the highest rate of religious nones not only in Canada, but across all of North America. This reality is usually linked to BC’s settlement history and regional culture in which the large Christian Churches never got as strong a foothold in the area, compared with regions more to the east of the country. This being said, like nones elsewhere some of the religiously unaffiliated in BC do have contact with religion and spirituality: 17% attend a religious service at least once a year for example, and 34% feel that their religious and spiritual beliefs are important in the way they lead their lives. What is peculiar in the BC case is how broad a phenomenon being a none is across social groups. For example, I could find no measurable educational or marital status differences between the religiously affiliated and unaffiliated in the province, unlike elsewhere in Canada and the US (where nones are on average more highly educated and less married).

Although now I know more about the BC nones, and have had the opportunity to share this knowledge with CSRS members, in discussing my findings at the Centre this year I am also struck by how much we still have to learn on the topic. There are some exciting new research avenues on the nones that are open to us. To what extent have those with little religious upbringing also not developed the language to express some of their experiences as religious or spiritual? Can we still define these experiences as such in these cases? Religious nones should not just be understood as individuals without something (religion), but potentially as individuals with something substantively different: with a more secular sense of connectedness, of mystery for example. If this is the case, how do these substantive alternative ways of seeing and interpreting the world vary regionally? Is the strong bond with nature that we find among many British Columbians specific to the region, and has it come to play a similar role that religion plays for others elsewhere?

As always, discussions at the CSRS provided me with lots of insight from many different disciplinary and personal perspectives, and some really interesting food for thought in pushing my research agenda forward in the coming years. Thanks to all who were here and looking forward to the next visit!



# 2016/17 FELLOWS

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

### VANDEKERKHOVE FAMILY TRUST GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWS



**Brian Pollick** (PhD Cand., UVic Art History & Visual Studies)  
*Money, Merchants and the Visualization of Morality in Late-Medieval Italy*



**Lauren Thompson** (MA Cand., UVic Germanic & Slavic Studies)  
*The City That Stumbles: Obstacles in Munich's Memorialization Processes and Gunter Demnig's Stolpersteine Project*

### IAN H. STEWART GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWS



**Bassam Chiblak** (PhD Cand., UVic English)  
*Agnostic Masculinity and the Victorian Bible in the Fiction of Eliza Lynn Linton*



**Atri Hatef Naiemi** (PhD Cand., UVic Art History & Visual Studies)  
*The Ilkhanid 'Little Cities of God'*



**Brandon Taylor** (MA Cand., UVic English)  
*Milton's God: Deism, Puritanism, and the Religiopolitical Landscape of Early Modern England*

### RELIGIOUS STUDIES TA GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOW



**Justine Semmens** (PhD Cand., UVic History)  
*Marriage, Moral Delinquency, and the Criminal Courts in Counter Reformation France, 1550-1650*

### WINNIFRED LONSDALE GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOW



**John Trafford** (MA Cand., UVic History)  
*"The Old Gods and the New": The Politics of Ethnic and Religious Identity in Restoration Ireland*

### UVIC FACULTY FELLOWS



**Réal Roy** (Biology)  
*From Cells to Prayer: Dwelling in a Cosmic Community*



**Daromir Rudnycky** (Anthropology)  
*Anti-Debt: Islam and the Critique of Finance Capitalism*

### VISITING RESEARCH FELLOWS



**Chandima Gangodawila** (University of Sri Jayewardenepura)  
*Neutralizing Bad Karma within the Ethics of Theravāda Buddhism*



**Tamsin Jones** (Trinity College, Hartford CT)  
*The Allure of Trauma*



**Shokoufeh Sakhi** (York University)  
*Tortured Bodies, Victimization and the (Un)Making of Human Subjects: A Study of the Religio-Ideological Prison System in Iran (1980s)*



**David Seljak** (St. Jerome's University)  
*Social Dislocation, Addiction and Spirituality*



**Heather Shipley** (University of Ottawa)  
*Conflict or Cohabitation? Religion, Sexuality and Identity Assumptions*



**Paul Shore** (University of Regina)  
*A Contribution to the Oxford Handbook of the History of the Jesuits*



**Renée Soulodre-La France** (King's University College)  
*Fighting for Freedom: Black Auxiliaries in the Spanish and British Empires*

### CSRS ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE



**Dániel Péter Biró** (Musician)  
*Music Composition Based on the Philosophical Text Ethica of Baruch Spinoza*



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



**Janet Munsil** (Playwright)  
*Act of Faith: A New Play about Belief and Disability*

## VISITING GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW



**Gry Hvass Pedersen** (PhD Cand., U of Southern Denmark)  
*Modernity, Islamic Tradition & Higher Education: Visions of Modern Islamic Universities and Students' Muslim Selfhoods in Asia*



**Mona Goode**  
*The Evolution of the Muslim Zakat Tax as an Obligatory Act*

## UVIC GRADUATE RESEARCH FELLOW



**Paige Thombs** (MA Cand., UVic History)  
*Social Change in Canada and its Effect on Freedom of Religion and the Legal Duty to Accommodate*



**Nicola Hayward**  
*The Use of Funerary Art for Commemorating Social Identity: The Case of the Via Latina's Samaritan Woman*

## COMMUNITY SABBATICAL FELLOWS



**Terry Ann Carter** (Haiku Canada)  
*The Influence of Buddhism on North American English Language Haiku Poets*



**Victor Hori**  
*The Modernization of Buddhism in Global Perspective*



**Helen Ngatho** (Diocese of Maseno North, Kenya)  
*Women in Leadership in Religion*



**Lesley Jessop**  
*Students or Tailors? A Re-evaluation of the Sculptures on the South Transept of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris*



**Louis Sutker** (Or Shalom Synagogue, Victoria, BC)  
*A Personality Assessment Scale based on the Sefirot*



**Francis Landy**  
*The Book of Isaiah*

## ASSOCIATE FELLOWS



**Angela Andersen**  
*Cemevleri: An Examination of the Historical Roots and Contemporary Meanings of Alevi Architecture and Iconography*



**Graham McDonough**  
*How Catholic Schools Can be Thought of as Sites of Inter-Religious and Ecumenical Dialogue*



**Harold Coward**  
*Word, Chant, and Song in the Major Religions: Spiritual Transformation*



**Jordan Paper**  
*Theology Throughout Most of the Human Past: The Spiritual Life and Understanding of Gathering-Hunting Peoples*



**Erica Cruikshank Dodd**  
*Treasures of the Early Church*



**Jarrad Reddekop**  
*Relating to the Forest in Amazonian Quichua Philosophy; Relational Ontology, Selfhood, Ethics, and Aesthetics*



**Scott Dolf**  
*Merciful Love and the End of Ethics*



**Carolyn Whitney-Brown**  
*The Meaning of Founding Stories: Jean Vanier and L'Arche Communities Around the World*



**Robert Florida**  
*Ethical Issues in Modern Buddhism*



**Adam Yaghi**  
*A Nation of Narrations: Religion, Hegemony, and Self-identification in Arab American Literary and Popular Culture Productions*



**Katherine Young**  
*The Divyaprabandham, Canonization, and Śrīvaiṣṇava Formation: Musical Tropes and Identity Negotiations*

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

Marcus Milwright

*MEICON UVic*

The UVic branch of the Middle East and Islamic Studies Consortium of British Columbia (MEICON) enjoyed a highly successful academic year in 2015-16. In January MEICON co-hosted with the Pacific Institute of Mathematical Studies a lecture by Peter Lu, an affiliate of Harvard University. Lu has been researching the mathematical principles behind the types of complex two-dimensional geometric ornament that flourished across the Islamic world from the eleventh century. His lively and engaging lecture brought together diverse scholars and students from across campus, from physics and mathematics to business studies and art history. The largest event of the year was, however, the annual MEICON student conference, held on 19 March in the Fine Arts building. The event was organized by a committee of graduate students, led by Atri Hatef and Hamed Yeganehfazand, with the assistance of faculty representatives, Marcus Milwright and Martin Bunton. Many of other students and faculty also volunteered their time and expertise to the event, which included presentations by students from the institutions in British Columbia and further afield. The keynote address, sponsored by UVic's History Department, was given by Khaled Fahmy of the Department of History, American University in Cairo.

This year the MEICON Student Conference will be held at Simon Fraser University. UVic has maintained a strong representation at these conferences, highlighting the diverse research being undertaken at the advanced undergraduate and graduate levels. We have also set aside funds for a MEICON coordinator for the coming academic year. The coordinator will keep track of the activities undertaken by MEICON as well as work on the web presence of the UVic branch of the consortium. The goal is to use the online presence as a means to highlight research and events, and to bring Middle East and Islamic studies to the attention of the wider community. We are very pleased to report that this post will be taken in September 2016 by CSRS Ian Stewart Graduate Student Fellow, Atri Hatef Naiemi.

## The City that Stumbles: Obstacles in Munich's Memorialization Processes

Lauren Thompson

*Vandekerkhove Family Trust Graduate Fellow*

On the sidewalk in front of the former Rosenthaler Strasse 56 which is now a small park in Berlin's *Mitte* district, I had the opportunity to see the installation of two *Stolpersteine* (Stumbling Stones). This event saw two engraved, brass-topped cobblestones placed into the ground. The details written on the stones were the names Erzsebet and Jakob Honig, information about their life and particularly the fact that they had a *Schicksal unbekannt*, a "fate unknown". Also in attendance were family members of the Honigs, a couple of passers-by, a cantor from Berlin, UVic students from the *IWitness Field School*, and a number of those involved in the organization laying the stones. These two *Stolpersteine* joined over 55 000 others in Europe, one of the most expansive memorial projects in existence.

Remembering Germany's involvement in the Holocaust and mourning the loss of life is often left in the hands of larger institutions and centralized monuments to large groups of victims – a good example of which being the Berlin Jewish Museum and the *Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe* (also in Berlin). But one of Germany's "largest" memorials to Holocaust victims is actually very small and is an artist and community grounded project.

The *Stolpersteine* project is one which remembers individuals at the places where they lived and various parties contribute to their organization and installation. The stones, engraved with the names, birth dates, and fates of Holocaust victims, are laid in the sidewalk outside of their last voluntary residence before deportation, resettlement, or flight. Although the concept of *Stolpersteine* was created by a single artist, Gunter Demnig, initiatives for their placement have since become a public concern with the majority now being requested by outside individuals and communities.

*Stolpersteine* are meant to be encountered in everyday life, they are placed on the streets of European cities marking places where people were persecuted by the National Socialists. Jews make up a vast majority of those remembered, though other persecuted groups are also represented. Today, most large German cities have *Stolpersteine* but Munich is an exception. Since 2004, when Demnig placed two *Stolpersteine* without permission, the city council has upheld a ban on the stones in the city's sidewalks. This decision comes through much debate and although it appears that the city is struggling to remember its Holocaust victims, the reasons for the ban are complex.

My master's thesis and the research I do at the CSRS will explore the unique place that *Stolpersteine* hold in remembering the Holocaust. During my time at the Centre I will focus on the various interactions that are part of how *Stolpersteine* function as memorials. I will also delve into how Jewish and non-Jewish voices in and outside of Munich defend and question the concept of *Stolpersteine* and particularly look at the reasons why so many citizens in Munich continue to strive for this project in spite of the decade long debate and dismissal of the proposition.

## THURSDAY PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES

CSRS public lectures are held 4:30 - 5:30 Thursday afternoons in the David Strong Building Room C118. All lectures are free and open to the public. For lecture details visit the UVic online events calendar at [www.events.uvic.ca](http://www.events.uvic.ca)

Sept. 15, 2016	Daromir Rudnyckyj	<i>Anti-Debt: Islam and the Critique of Finance Capitalism</i>
Sept. 22, 2016	Chandima Gangodawila	<i>Neutralizing Bad Karma within the Ethics of Theravāda Buddhism</i>
Sept. 29, 2016	Harold Coward	<i>Word, Chant, and Song on the Islamic Spiritual Path</i>
Oct. 6, 2016	Guest Panel Presentation	Conversation with Alan Batten, Margaret Cameron, Christopher Douglas, and Joachim Ostermann: <i>Deities and Destruction: Religious and Non-religious Perspectives on Natural Evil</i>
Oct. 13, 2016	Carolyn Whitney-Brown	<i>Jean Vanier, L'Arche and the Evolution of a Founding Story</i>
Oct. 20, 2016	Shokoufeh Sakhi	<i>Coercion, Conversions and Resistances: Political Imprisonment in the Islamic State of Iran</i>
Oct. 27, 2016	Lauren Thompson	<i>On the Street Where you Live(d): Remembering Individual Victims of the Holocaust through Stolpersteine</i>
Nov. 3, 2016	Erica Dodd	<i>Documenting Treasures in the Early Christian Church</i>
Nov. 17, 2016	Brian Pollick	<i>Open Arms: The Moral and Social Functions of Merchant Family Shields in Late-Medieval Italy</i>
Nov. 24, 2016	Bassam Chiblak	<i>Victorian Agnostic Networks</i>
Dec. 8, 2016 <sup>H</sup>	Bill Morrow	<i>The Islamic State: A Case Study of Religion and Violence</i>
Jan. 12, 2017	Brandon Taylor	<i>The Deistic Divine Subject in John Milton's Paradise Lost (1674)</i>
Jan. 19, 2017	Dániel Péter Biró	<i>Sounding the Religion of Exile: Composing Music Based on Baruch Spinoza's Philosophical Text Ethica</i>
Jan. 26, 2017 <sup>H</sup>	Katharine Jefferts-Schori	<i>Religion, Science, and Colonialism in the Anglican Communion Today</i>
Feb. 2, 2017	Atri Hatef Naiemi	<i>"Little Cities of God": Examining the Shrine Complexes of Sufi Shaykhs in Medieval Iran</i>
Feb. 9, 2017	Réal Roy	<i>From Cell to Prayer: Dwelling in a Cosmic Community</i>
Feb. 23, 2017	Renée Soulodre-La France	<i>Faithful Ties Make Good Colonists: Africans in Colonial America</i>
Mar. 2, 2017	David Seljak	<i>The Crisis of the Spirit and the Globalization of Addiction</i>
Mar. 16, 2017	John Trafford	<i>"The Old Gods and the New": The Politics of Ethnic and Religious Identity in Restoration Ireland</i>
Mar. 23, 2017	Susannah Heschel	Lansdowne Lecture: <i>History of Jewish Scholarship on Islam: The Story of a Fascination</i>
Mar. 30, 2017	Janet Munsil	<i>Act of Faith: A New Play about Belief and Disability</i>

<sup>H</sup> indicates lectures generously supported by the Anglican Diocese of BC through the John Albert Hall Endowment.

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*Hindu Temple*, by Catriona Ward, 2011. Used under CC BY-SA 2.0 licence.

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Centre for Studies in Religion and Society  
University of Victoria  
PO Box 1700, STN CSC  
Victoria, BC Canada V8W 2Y2

Phone: 250-721-6325 Email: [csrs@uvic.ca](mailto:csrs@uvic.ca)

Web: [www.uvic.ca/research/centres/csrs](http://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/csrs)

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