

ABSTRACT  
**BOOK**

HYBRID EVENT

**ISA RC-22  
MID TERM  
CONFERENCE**

Religion, Politics and  
Uncertainty: Shifting  
Boundaries

NOVEMBER 11-13, 2021  
VILNIUS, LITHUANIA

# TABLE OF CONTENT

Organizers	03
Organizing and scientific committee	03
Conference partner	03
Program overview	04
Program	05
Keynote presentations	11
Oral presentations	14

## ORGANIZERS

- ISA RC22
- Vytautas Magnus University
- Vilnius University
- Lithuanian Society for the Study of Religions



VYTAUTAS  
MAGNUS  
UNIVERSITY  
MCMXXII



Vilnius  
University



## ORGANIZING AND SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

- Prof. Dr. Milda Ališauskienė, Vytautas Magnus University (Chairwoman)
- Dr. Eglė Aleknaitė, Vytautas Magnus University
- Dr. Rasa Pranskevčiūtė-Amoson, Vilniaus University
- Dr. Aušra Pažeraitė, Vilniaus University
- Doc. Dr. Rūta Žiliukaitė, Vilniaus University
- Prof. Dr. Mar Grier, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

CONFERENCE  
PARTNER

Go Vilnius



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## DAY 1

NOVEMBER 11, 2021

18:00 - 19:00 Registration  
19:00 - 21:00 Welcome Drinks

## DAY 2

NOVEMBER 12, 2021

08:30 - 09:00 Registration

### HALL 1

CASTLE YARD

09:00 - 09:30 **CONFERENCE OPENING**  
09:30 - 10:30 **KEYNOTE: Jeffrey Haynes**  
10:30 - 10:50 Coffee break  
10:50 - 12:45 **SESSION 1:** Religions and Diversity of Politics  
12:45 - 13:30 Lunch  
13:30 - 15:25 **SESSION 3:** Religion and Gender Equality in the Baltics  
15:25 - 15:45 Coffee break  
15:45 - 17:40 **SESSION 5:** Religion, Gender and Politics

### HALL 2

PROMENADE YARD

10:50 - 12:45 **SESSION 2:** Religion and Politics in the Times of Pandemics  
12:45 - 13:30 Lunch  
13:30 - 15:25 **SESSION 4:** Religion and Politics in China and Taiwan  
15:25 - 15:45 Coffee break  
15:45 - 17:40 **SESSION 6:** Religion in Public Policy Discourse

## DAY 3

NOVEMBER 13, 2021

08:30 - 09:00 Registration

### HALL 1

CASTLE YARD

09:00 - 10:00 **KEYNOTE: Anna Halafoff**  
10:00 - 11:55 **SESSION 7:** Gender, Science and Religious Activism  
11:55 - 12:15 Coffee break  
12:15 - 14:10 **SESSION 9:** Long-Term Religious Change  
14:10 - 14:50 Lunch  
14:50 - 16:45 **SESSION 10:** Nationalism, Populism and Religion  
16:45 - 17:05 Coffee break  
17:05 - 18:20 **ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION:** Religion, Politics and Uncertainty around the Baltic Sea  
18:20 - 18:30 **CONFERENCE CLOSING**

### HALL 2

PROMENADE YARD

10:00 - 11:55 **SESSION 8:** Approaching Religion and Politics  
11:55 - 12:15 Coffee break  
14:50 - 16:45 **SESSION 12:** Constructing Religion, the Religious and the Secular

# PROGRAM

## DAY 1

NOVEMBER 11, 2021

- 18:00 - 19:00 Registration  
Venue: Hotel Conference Center lobby
- 19:00 - 21:00 Welcome Drinks  
Venue: Lobby of Courtyard Vilnius City Center Hotel

## DAY 2

NOVEMBER 12, 2021

- 08:30 - 09:00 Registration  
Venue: Hotel Conference Center lobby

## HALL 1

CASTLE YARD

- 09:00 - 09:30 Conference Opening:**  
Afe Adogame, ISA RC22 president, Princeton University, US  
Juozas Augutis, Rector of Vytautas Magnus University  
Rimvydas Petrauskas, Rector of Vilnius University  
Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson, President of Lithuanian Society for the Study of Religions
- 09:30 - 10:30 KEYNOTE: Jeffrey Haynes**  
Religion and Politics: What is Certain and What is Uncertain and Why Does It Matter?  
*Chair: Milda Ališauskienė*
- 10:30 - 10:50 COFFEE BREAK**
- 10:50 - 12:45 SESSION 1: Religions and Diversity of Politics**  
*Chair: Eglė Aleknaite*
- 10:50 - 11:10 Rūta Žiliukaitė "Traditional Christian Family Values" and Politics in Lithuania"
- 11:10 - 11:30 Anita Stasulane "The Social Role of Religion in Latvia: Case of Commemoration of the Deceased"
- 11:30 - 11:50 Vladislav Serikov "Drawing the Boundaries between Religion and Non-Religion in Contemporary Russia"
- 11:50 - 12:10 Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson "The Process of State Recognition of the Old Baltic Faith Romuva Movement"
- 12:10 - 12:30 Rosita Garškaitė "What do Catholics Talk About when They Talk About European integration? Between Euroscepticism and EU Support"
- 12:30 - 12:45 Discussion
- 12:45 - 13:30 LUNCH**

**13:30 - 15:25      SESSION 3: Religion and Gender Equality in the Baltics**

*Chair: Rūta Žiliukaitė*

- 13:30 - 13:50      Milda Ališauskienė "Does Gender Equality Exist Among Pagans? Diversity of Notions of Gender Equality Among Lithuanian Pagan Women"
- 13:50 - 14:10      Eglė Aleknaitė "The Binary Between the Religious and the Secular in Lithuanian Catholic Women's Discourses on Gender Relations"
- 14:10 - 14:30      Dace Balode "Between Two Worlds: Women on Gender in Latvian Churches"
- 14:30 - 14:50      Anne Kull "National and International Activism Against the Istanbul Convention: the Myths and Consequences"
- 14:50 - 15:10      Aivita Putnina "Fading Visibility of Women: Understanding of Gender in the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church"
- 15:10 - 15:25      Discussion

**15:25 - 15:45      COFFEE BREAK**

**15:45 - 17:40      SESSION 5: Religion, Gender and Politics**

*Chair: Anne Kull*

- 15:45 - 16:05      Ilva Skulte & Sofija Kozlova "Polarization of Discourse About Gender Roles, Family and Violence in Discussions About Istanbul Convention in Latvian Internet Media"
- 16:05 - 16:25      Girts Rozners "Fundamentalism and Women: Report on the Understanding of Gender Roles in Latvian Evangelical Churches"
- 16:25 - 16:45      Adelaide Madera "Religious Law, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: Moving Forward With the Search of a Common Ground?"
- 16:45 - 17:05      Cecilia Delgado-Molina "Between Global and Local Debates on Gender, Sexual Diversity and Religious Pluralism"
- 17:05 - 17:25      Paulina Rinne "On Skin and Substance: Borders and Bodies in Muslim Female Art"
- 17:25 - 17:40      Discussion

**10:50 - 12:45      SESSION 2: Religion and Politics in the Times of Pandemics**
*Chair: Milda Ališauskienė*

- 10:50 - 11:10      Laurentiu Tanase "Adapt and Update? The Challenge of Religiosity During the Pandemic in Romania"
- 11:10 - 11:30      Smita Chakraborty "Prayers, Paupers and the Pandemic: A Study Based on Temple Beggars and Alms System in Central Kolkata"
- 11:30 - 11:50      Brian Conway "Pandemic-related Discourses Regarding Religion: The Case of Irish Catholicism"
- 11:50 - 12:10      Crisanto Q. Regadio Jr. "Administration, Ministry and Religious Observance in Evangelical Churches during the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Philippines"
- 12:10 - 12:30      Roberto Cipriani "Uncertain Faith in Italy"
- 12:30 - 12:45      Discussion

**12:45 - 13:30      LUNCH**
**13:30 - 15:25      SESSION 4: Religion and Politics in China and Taiwan**
*Chair: Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson*

- 13:30 - 13:50      Massimo Introvigne "The Xie Jiao Tradition, Taiwanese Governments and Minority Religions, 1949–2021"
- 13:50 - 14:10      Yi-Jing Chen "Tai Ji Men and the Tai Ji Men Case: Politics versus Spiritual Minorities"
- 14:10 - 14:30      Rosita Šorytė "The United Nations, Transitional Justice, and Religious Liberty"
- 14:30 - 14:50      Cheng-An Tsai "Transitional Justice and Religious Liberty in Taiwan"
- 14:50 - 15:10      Tadas Snuiškis "On the Religious and Political Reasons of the Rise and Fall of Consciousness-Only School in China"
- 15:10 - 15:25      Discussion

**15:25 - 15:45      COFFEE BREAK**
**15:45 - 17:40      SESSION 6: Religion in Public Policy Discourse**
*Chair: Indrek Pekko*

- 15:45 - 16:05      Francis Benyah "'You Can't Legislate the Holy Spirit': Religious Freedom and the Contemporary Face of Christianity in Ghana"
- 16:05 - 16:25      M. Isabel Garrido Gómez "Religion Standards in the Rules of Law through Media"
- 16:25 - 16:45      Anna Vancsó "Christianity as a Contested Concept/Christian Churches as Clearly Defined Actors in the Hungarian Parliamentary Speeches since 2010"
- 16:45 - 17:05      Chrysa K. Almpani "Religion & IR: How Members of the European Institutions Understand the Religion-Politics Nexus"
- 17:05 - 17:25      Tuomas Äystö & Titus Hjelm "Religion in the Parliament of Finland from 2010 to 2020: The Patterns Among Parties and the Topics of Discussion"
- 17:25 - 17:40      Discussion

## DAY 3

NOVEMBER 13, 2021

08:30 - 09:00 Registration  
Venue: Hotel Conference Center lobby

### HALL 1 CASTLE YARD

**09:00 - 10:00 KEYNOTE: Anna Halafoff**

Selling (Con)spirituality and COVID-19  
*Chair: Milda Ališauskienė*

**10:00 - 11:55 SESSION 7: Gender, Science and Religious Activism**

*Chair: Rūta Žiliukaite*

10:00 - 10:20 Susan Carland "'Please Don't Hurt Me Because of the Way I Look': Muslim Women's Public Engagement, Islamophobia, and Social Cohesion"

10:20 - 10:40 Haimo Schulz Meinen "Glorious Babes"

10:40 - 11:00 Rafael Cazarin "Exploring the Intersections Between Religion, Science and Gender in Spain"

11:00 - 11:20 Mar Griera "Spirituality, Biomedical Technologies and "Healthy" Lifestyles: a Sociological Approach"

11:20 - 11:40 Halyna Herasym & Justin Tse "The Transformative Power of Human Rights Rhetoric: Progressive Talk in Catholic Spaces"

11:40 - 11:55 Discussion

**11:55 - 12:15 COFFEE BREAK**

**12:15 - 14:10 SESSION 9: Long-Term Religious Change**

*Chair: Aušra Pažėraitė*

12:15 - 12:35 Indrek Pekko & Christo Lombaard "Returns to Denominations in the Baltics, Post-Communism? Observations and Demographic Trends in Discussion, with Lutheran Churches as Case Study"

12:35 - 12:55 Övgü Ülgen "The Complex Relation Between Language and Religion: Talking About a Two-pronged Moroccan Jewish Generation in Québec"

12:55 - 13:15 Nabeel CKM "Genealogy of Kerala Muslim Engagements in Environmentalism: A Case Study of Chaliyar Struggle"

13:15 - 13:35 Armando Garcia Chiang "Pluralization as the New Paradigm in Mexican Religious Context: The Sacred Places as a Tool to Apprehend Religious Plurality"

13:35 - 14:10 Discussion

**14:10 - 14:50 LUNCH**

**14:50 - 16:45      SESSION 10: Nationalism, Populism and Religion**

*Chair: Eglė Aleknaite*

- 14:50 - 15:10      Burak Kesgin "Demonizing Santa: A Fresh Look at the Anti-New Year's Eve Movement in Turkey"
- 15:10 - 15:30      Jacek Skup "What's in a Name? Religious Nationalism and the Renaming of Cities in Uttar Pradesh"
- 15:30 - 15:50      Julio Cesar de Lima Bizarria "Get Born Again: the Auratic Baptism and the Bodily Depths in the Messianic Project of Brazil's Jair Messias Bolsonaro"
- 15:50 - 16:10      Giuseppe Maiello "Between Deep Ecology and Nationalism: The Origin of Russian Neojazychestvo"
- 16:10 - 16:30      Insa Bechert "ONBound – a Database for Answering Research Questions Concerning National Identities and Religion"
- 16:30 - 16:45      Discussion

**16:45 - 17:05      COFFEE BREAK**

**17:05 - 18:20      ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION: Religion, Politics and Uncertainty Around the Baltic Sea**

*Chair: Mar Griera*

Participants: Agita Misane, Milda Ališauskienė, Anne Kull, Titus Hjelm

- 18:20 - 18:30      Conference closing

**HALL 2**

**PROMENADE YARD**

**10:00 - 11:55      SESSION 8: Approaching Religion and Politics**

*Chair: Anne Kull*

- 10:00 - 10:20      Geoffrey Pleyers "Religion, Social Movements and Politics in Brazil. From Liberation Theology to Bolsonaro"
- 10:20 - 10:40      Maciej Krzywosz "How to Analyse Private Religious Revelations in a Sociological Context? Biographical Sociology Approach"
- 10:40 - 11:00      Dennis Erasga "Demonstrative Body: Spectacle of the Ritual Body in Healing Narratives Among Popular Religious Devotees in the Philippines"
- 11:00 - 11:20      Miguel Fernando Oliva "Religions and Social Networks: the God Node"
- 11:20 - 11:40      Patria Gwen M.L. Borcena "Sociological Snapshots of Laudato Si' and Green Filipino Bishops"
- 11:40 - 11:55      Discussion

**11:55 - 12:15      COFFEE BREAK**

<b>14:50 - 16:45</b>	<b>SESSION 11: Constructing Religion, the Religious and the Secular</b> <i>Chair: Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson</i>
14:50 - 15:10	<u>Jualynne E. Dodson</u> "Church Building in the African Diaspora: Mt. Sinai Holy Church of Banes, Cuba"
15:10 - 15:30	<u>Aušra Pažėraitė</u> "Confusing Conceptions and Boundaries of Jewish Religious Communities today in Lithuania"
15:30 - 15:50	<u>Vaishnavi Sreenivas</u> "The Christian Baggage of Secularism: A Study of French and Indian contexts"
15:50 - 16:10	<u>Armando Garcia Chiang</u> "The Liberation Christendom in Mexico. Just a Memory or Still Valid?"
16:10 - 16:30	<u>Susan Carland</u> "Public & Private Ramadans: Exploring the Loci of Lived Religion"
16:30 - 16:45	Discussion

# KEYNOTE PRESENTATIONS

# **Selling (Con)spirituality and COVID-19**

Anna Halafoff

Dr., Deakin University, Australia

The spread of misinformation about COVID-19 has occurred at a rapid pace, in parallel to the virus, in a hyper-mediatised and marketised world. This has led to heated debates over the origins of the pandemic, the need for lockdowns, and vaccination programs. Adherents of 'conspirituality' are among the many engaged in the spread of problematic misinformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Charlotte Ward and David Voas first used the term in a scholarly article in 2011, to describe the merger of conspiracy theories and New Age spirituality at the turn of the 21st Century. This paper presents the findings of an International Research Network for Science and Belief in Society Small Grant Project on (Con)spirituality in Australia. This research builds on the two core conspiritual convictions first proposed by Ward and Voas, and an Australian case study, to identify an additional ten key convictions central to (con)spirituality. It also illuminates the internal diversities and complexities within spiritual communities regarding attitudes to COVID-19 and vaccination. The 'con' in (con)spirituality is therefore bracketed to problematise the term, and to include a focus on those who are selling misinformation, and those who are attempting to counter it.

# **Religion and Politics: What is Certain and What is Uncertain and Why Does it Matter?**

Jeffrey Haynes

Emeritus Professor of Politics, London Metropolitan University, UK

Today is a time of increasing political, economic, social and cultural polarisation. Consensus and compromise are hard to find in our divided world. Across the liberal democracies of the West, which once saw themselves as global role models and champions of democratic processes and freedoms, political systems are in disarray, old certainties disappear, and the spectre of authoritarianism looms.

In this climate, religion and politics have an uncertain relationship. Some say that religion should 'stay out of politics'. Others respond that 'politics should stay out of religion'. What is certain is that religion and politics interact in various, often unpredictable, ways. Religion can aid democracy, or it can help undermine it. Religion can encourage civil society, or it can restrict it. Religion can expand human rights, or it can work to limit them. In the context of the global upheavals of the last two decades: 9/11, the 2008-9 global economic crash, eruptions of right-wing populism, and the rise and fall of Donald Trump - religion is an increasingly unpredictable influence on politics. The aim of this talk is to highlight certainties and uncertainties linked to the interaction of religion and politics, and locate them within current global upheavals.

# ORAL PRESENTATIONS

# **The Binary Between the Religious and the Secular in Lithuanian Catholic Women's Discourses on Gender Relations (ReliGen)**

Eglė Aleknaite

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

In recent research on religion, gender equality and feminism, the binary between the religious and the secular constructed in secular feminist thought has been questioned. At the same time, in research on religious women and their gender conceptualization, they are usually represented as a rather homogeneous group that understands gender on the basis of their religious tradition, whether seen as supporting patriarchal gender relations or certain gender equality, as opposed to non-religious conceptualizations of secular women. However, taking into account diversity within religion in Europe in terms of believers' beliefs, commitments and practices, we may suppose that (1) religious women differentiate aspects of gender relations falling within confines of the religious and of the secular and (2) mostly gender relations related to the private are understood as regulated by religion. Indeed, data collected using semi-structured interviews with Lithuanian Catholic women show that many of them, including Catholics practicing and participating in various church related activities, understand religion as institutional religion and consider many aspects of gender relations as secular and being beyond the scope of religious regulations and reasoning. Mostly aspects related to reproduction and priestly vocation are seen as defined by religion. The findings remind of diversity of religious people and point to the need to avoid generalizations on religious women when analyzing relationship of gender and religion, as well as caution needed when applying lived religion approaches to various groups of religious women.

Keywords: gender, religion, diversity of religion

# **Does Gender Equality Exist Among Pagans? Diversity of Notions of Gender Equality Among Lithuanian Pagan Women**

Milda Ališauskienė

Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania

This paper will discuss the findings of the fieldwork among women representing Ancient Baltic Faith community Romuva in Lithuania in 2021. Twelve women of different age groups participated in the research and their narratives contribute to the understanding of diversity of gender equality notions among them. Various social, political and religious factors influence the notion of gender equality that informants discussed. Empirical data showed that Communist experience created resistance towards gender equality ideals, while the informants who experienced sociopolitical transformations from communist to the neoliberal socioeconomic regime had more relaxed and tolerant view toward gender equality, while the youngest informants born and raised in independent Lithuania tended to embrace gender equality ideals and searched for their justification in the Pagan beliefs.

The fieldwork conducted in the international research project „Religion and Gender Equality: Baltic and Nordic Developments“. The project benefits from a 734375 € grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants. The aim of the project is to investigate the role of religion on the implementation of gender equality and to disclose the intra-religious and interreligious developments for sustaining or resisting gender equality in the Baltic and Nordic countries. Project contract with the Research Council of Lithuania No is S-BMT-21-4 (LT08-2LMT-K-01-036)."

Keywords: religion, gender, gender equality, paganism

# **Religion & IR: How Members of the European Institutions Understand the Religion-Politics Nexus**

Chrysa K. Almpani

PhD Candidate, Religion & IR

Social Research Center for Religion & Culture (SRCRC)

Dept. of Ethics & Sociology, Faculty of Theology, AUTH, Greece

Living in a world-risk society (Ulrich Beck), where the social experience is linked with the awareness of the “hard-to-evaluate risks and inescapable uncertainties” that have become irrevocably apparent and generate reflexivity or ‘self-confrontation’ at societal and individual level, the role of the religious reference is being renegotiated. Beck’s social theory recentered the research interest in the political impact of religion, in the context of Second Modernity. Viewed from a European politics perspective, Nelsen, Guth and Highsmith (2011, 1) outline that “religion and politics may not mix well at dinner parties, but they undoubtedly interact in the real world of European governance”. “Religionization” of world politics indicates this reciprocal interaction and the simultaneous dependence of current social challenges both on the realms of politics and religion, and it is depicted in the presence and influence that religion has in politics both as a subject and object. The present doctoral study focuses on the intersection between religion and global politics, in an attempt to explore the way, the members of European institutions approach the debate about the “resurgence” of religion in the international affairs, and how they conceive the dynamics of the religious factor (as a soft power agent) in the fields of foreign policy-making, diplomacy and conflict resolution at the international level. The analysis is based on qualitative research, carried out through in-depth interviews, addressed to political representatives at the EU level (MEPs, EU officials, foreign-policy practitioners, policy advisors in the fields of human rights, external affairs, security and defense).

Keywords: religion, politics, international relations, EU policy-making, second modernity

# **The Process of State Recognition of the Old Baltic Faith *Romuva* Movement**

Rasa Pranskevičiūtė-Amoson

Assoc. Prof., Vilnius University, Institute of Asian and Transcultural Studies, Lithuania

The paper presents a research into the process of state recognition of the Old Baltic Faith *Romuva* movement focusing on the perspectives of this process among diverse social groups. In order to reveal the dynamics of the relationship between Lithuanian religious minorities and the state and society, the narratives and the (political) strategies of the interpretations of the role of the Old Baltic Faith *Romuva* community in Lithuanian society are analyzed.

The paper reveals the peculiarities of formed by *Romuvans* and other groups' perceptions on religion and state, actuality of the status of recognized by the state religious organization, the strategies of *Romuvans* for an achievement such a status, and counteracting activities of other groups.

The paper addresses the dynamics of diverse alternative religiosities starting from the communist regime period up to today. It also studies the past and current socioreligious processes, discussing diverse manifestations, changes and disruptions of religious phenomena concerning individual religiosities in (trans)national levels.

Keywords: religion and state, contemporary paganism, Old Baltic Faith, *Romuva*

# **Religion in the Parliament of Finland from 2010 to 2020: The Patterns Among Parties and the Topics of Discussion**

Tuomas Äystö<sup>1</sup>, Titus Hjelm<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1,2</sup>University of Helsinki, Finland

We investigate the references to religion in the parliamentary speeches in the Finnish parliament from 2010 to 2020. Our methodology is a combination of automated natural language processing, descriptive statistics, and qualitative content analysis. These enable us to assess how the Finnish political parties differ in terms of references to religion, and whether there are patterns in what kind of parties are especially prominent or restrained. We also evaluate if the party position in either in the Government or in the Opposition affects the party language use in this respect. Finally, we qualitatively categorize the religion references in order to gauge the religion related topics of discussion and inspect whether or not there are patterns among the topics, or among the parties participating in particular kind of topics. Our assumptions are, that Christian-identifying parties and populist parties reference religion more than others, but that there is not a marked difference between the left-wing and right-wing parties. However, we hypothesize that a location within the Government restricts the religion references within all parties, because that position is associated with responsibility and collected society management, whereas religious language is associated with emotionality. In terms of prominent topics, we expect the discussions on the church law and various freedom of religion related topics to dominate, but also to encounter many debates on questions such as same-sex marriage and religious radicalism.

Keywords: Finland, parliament, visibility of religion

# **Between Two Worlds: Women on Gender in Latvian Churches**

Dace Balode

Prof., University of Latvia, Latvia

The report is based on interviews conducted with Lutheran and Catholic women in Latvia, asking about their understanding of gender. Women discover different understandings of gender, distinguishing between their roles in religion and in domestic and social life. Research shows that people in religion sometimes accept roles that would not be accepted in other areas of life. The aim of the paper is to reveal this balance between two worlds, between religious and non-religious in the lives of women interviewed.

Keywords: gender and religion, religion in Latvia, women in catholicism

# **ONBound – a Database for Answering Research Questions Concerning National Identities and Religion**

Insa Bechert,<sup>1</sup> Antonia May,<sup>2</sup> Markus Quandt<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1,2,3</sup>GESIS - Leibniz-Institute for the Social Sciences, Germany

In times of pronounced globalization as well as numerous international conflicts, national and religious identities constitute an increasingly relevant research field. But do national and religious identities play the same role across countries around the globe? How do they overlap and interact? In what way feel people religion and ethnicity to be prerequisites for citizenship? What about the relationship between religion and politics in regional, national and international communities? How do different denominations relate to different political ideologies? And, in what way might all these interactions have changed during the last five decades?

Questions like these have been on researcher's minds for quite some time and therefore are also reflected in the list of topics for this conference. Yet, measurements to examine these research questions are spread across half a century of international survey data. The DFG funded "ONBound" project has collected, harmonized and cumulated these data, and linked to country-level information. Thereby, ONBound offers researchers the opportunity to create customized datasets from a database containing approximately 1500 variables taken from 280 survey waves of international survey programs, as well as approx. 4500 variables of country-level data.

This presentation will introduce the database, demonstrate data access and give an application example by showing the ONBound created set of harmonized indicators for an analysis of atheism and national pride.

Keywords: ONBound, national identity, religion

# **"You can't legislate the Holy Spirit": Religious Freedom and the Contemporary Face of Christianity in Ghana**

Francis Benyah

Abo Akademi University, Finland

In the last three decades, Ghana has witnessed the emergence and growth of many churches especially from Pentecostal/charismatic spectrum. Whereas some of these churches are under regulatory bodies such as the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC) and the National Association of Charismatic and Christian churches (NACCC), others are not and only operate as autonomous (popularly referred to as one-man churches) churches without any regulation or supervision. The gap in the oversight of the activities of some of these churches has made many including politicians, journalists, and pastors to call on the government to legislate laws to regulate the operation and activities of churches in Ghana. Whereas some are of the view that such regulations will help enforce laws against the abuse and nefarious activities of some pastors, others are of the concern that enacting laws to regulate the activities of churches is against the constitutional or legal rights of the people and, at same time, undermine the spontaneity of God's Spirit in the church. In this paper, an attempt is made to examine how religious freedom as guaranteed by Ghana's 4th republication constitution create space for religious worship and at the same time foment religious indiscipline, power, and abuse of religious freedom in the country.

Keywords: Ghana, constitution, politics, pentecostalism, Holy Spirit

## **Get Born Again: the Auratic Baptism and the Bodily Depths in the Messianic Project of Brazil's Jair Messias Bolsonaro**

Julio Bizarria,<sup>1</sup> Edlaine Gomes,<sup>2</sup> Juliana Baptista<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, <sup>2</sup> Idem, <sup>3</sup> Ibidem

This study offers a perspective on the construction of the public persona and the messianic power project of Brazil's Jair Messias Bolsonaro. The former artillery captain, having emerged into public debate in the aftermath of several controversial episodes, relating to the grotesque and the material bodily lower stratum, presented the articulation of his platform with the formidable challenge of divesting the aspiring leader of the more inglorious aspects of his career and memory. Their response was to be found on the banks of the Jordan River, in Israel, still in the middle of the coup d'état that ousted President Dilma Rousseff, in 2016. It took the form of a widely publicised ritual, an interdenominational baptism of Bolsonaro. Through this 'auratic baptism', the platform intended to construe their leader as a messianic elect, claiming an 'incorruptibility' and a 'divine mandate' that would stand in contrast to the 'sins' of the Brazilian Labour Party (PT). Our analysis of the public trajectory of Bolsonaro confirms that his every move has since related to the symbolic (in)efficacy of this ritual, depending on the political allegiance of discrete social actors, 'secular' or 'religious', opponents or supporters of his project. In addition, our study sheds light on a most candent aspect of early 21st century far-right populism (and of popular resistance against it), one in which religion has so central a place that theodicy and propaganda have become indelibly intertwined.

Keywords: memory, ritual, far-right populism, theodicy, grotesque

# Sociological Snapshots of Laudato Si' and Green Filipino Bishops

Patria Gwen M.L. Borcena, M.A.

Greenresearch Environmental Research Group, Inc., Philippines

The papal encyclical, Laudato Si' On the Care for Our Common Home was published in 2015. This trailblazing papal document from Pope Francis cited the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines' (CBCP) Pastoral Letter on Ecology entitled, *"What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?"* (1988). CBCP surmised that since this first letter, they have "sustained this concern about ecology that runs through our subsequent pastoral teachings."

Despite these strides from the CBCP and other environment related initiatives by some religious groups, a few Philippines based social scientists who are members of religious organizations and who have been actively engaged in work for the environment and indigenous peoples criticized the church for being slow in recognizing the urgency of the ecological crisis.

On the *6th Year Anniversary and Special Year Anniversary of Laudato Si'*, this sociological paper identifies the ways in which Pope Francis' environmental and social justice encyclical has been relevant to the CBCP and has influenced them. In addition, this paper highlights selected green Filipino bishops who have been inspired by the encyclical in promoting *"ecological citizenship"* by integrating care for creation with their pastoral duties and/or supporting environmental social movements. This sociography summarizes empirical evidence of Laudato Si's concrete effects in the CBCP and selected bishops, whether through frame realignment/paradigm shifts, resource mobilization, emerging cultural shifts, or otherwise unanticipated consequences.

Data for this paper were culled from *Laudato Si' Multi-Society Comparative Engagement Assessment*, a collaborative study involving the Philippines and four countries led by Jesuit Dr. Michael Agliardo.

Keywords: Laudato Si', environment, religion, social movements

# **Genealogy of Kerala Muslim Engagements in Environmentalism: a Case Study of Chaliyar Struggle**

Nabeel C K M<sup>1</sup>, Subeno Kithan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Tata Institute of Social Sciences- Guwahati Campus, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Center for Sociology and Social Anthropology,  
Tata Institute of Social Sciences- Guwahati Campus, India

India has a Muslim population of 200 million which is higher than that of most Muslim countries. However, the Muslim environmental engagements have remained unattended and rarely visited from a social movement perspective and Islamic point of view. This paper attempts to explore how certain Muslim institutions, organizations and community leaders apply the Islamic teachings on environment, justice and ethics to form environmental engagements in the Indian context specifically in the backdrop of Kerala Muslims and the Chaliyar struggle (1972), the first environmental struggle in Kerala. In Kerala, the civil society and state alike allege that Islamic environmentalism is ontologically suspicious. Besides, it has been stereotyped with the tag that environment is a marginal concern in such activism and environmentalism is used as a farce mask or a survival tactic. This paper contends both the allegation and stereotyping and argues that Islamic environmentalism must be considered as a response to the contemporary ecological crisis enabled by the conditions of faith. Thus a kind of religious sociability goes beyond the public-private dichotomy. An over-emphasis on the civil society framework in the approach to environmentalism limits the view of the subtleties associated with Islamic environmentalism. Therefore, considering post-secularism as a framework, especially the theorization of Talal Asad, this paper proposes a theoretical reorientation to understand Islamic environmentalism within the discipline of sociology and anthropology in the era of climate change. The study has been carried out using semi-structured interviews to bring forth the philosophical discussions and gathered evidence through collecting material artifacts.

Keywords: environmentalism, Islamic environmentalism, religiosity, social movement

# **“Please Don’t Hurt Me Because of the Way I Look”: Muslim Women’s Public Engagement, Islamophobia, and Social Cohesion**

Susan Carland

Monash University, Australia

Negative attitudes towards Muslims in Australia remain a significant challenge to social cohesion, with between 40-50% of the population self-reporting negative attitudes towards Muslims. Beyond Australia, Islamophobia (the unfounded hostility towards and fear of Islam and Muslims) is a global phenomenon, with a rise in Islamophobia documented across Europe and the United States. Gender is a central factor in how Islamophobia is expressed and directed, with research showing Muslim women are much more likely (72%) to be the target of Islamophobic attacks than men. While research has focused on Muslim women’s experience as the more frequent recipients of Islamophobia, it has not considered whether a public-facing, gendered approach may also be an effective agent of countering Islamophobia.

Common narratives often paint Muslims as threatening social cohesion or Muslim women merely as victims of Islamophobia. This paper takes a new approach and considers how Muslim women may *create* social cohesion and counter Islamophobia.

This paper will highlight the work by Australian Muslim women to counter Islamophobia and build social cohesion with non-Muslims through public roles of engagement, and the function they believe gender and religion play in their work. This research presents findings from a Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA) grant on the methods and impact of Australian Muslim women countering Islamophobia and building social cohesion, and draws on in-depth interviews with thirty Sunni, Shia, and Ahmadiyya women across Australia.

Keywords: Islam, Muslim, Islamophobia, women, social cohesion

# **Public & Private Ramadans: Exploring the Loci of Lived Religion**

Susan Carland<sup>1</sup> Anisa Buckley<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1, 2</sup> Monash University, Australia

Much has been made of the appropriate locus of Lived/Everyday Religion, particularly the role of institutions and clergy. An early swing away from the role of institutions or “official” religion by scholars of Lived Religion to an over-emphasis on domestic religion practiced by everyday people has created an artificial line between the two that may be restrictive, myopic, and unrealistic.

But what do religiously connected people feel about these different loci of religious practice, the domestic and the institutional, the public and the private? How much do they matter to them and their practices, their sense of connection to faith and others, if at all? It can be difficult to meaningfully assess this.

The contrasting experiences of two Ramadans (2020 and 2021) in Melbourne due to COVID, however, were ideal and unique theatres in which to evaluate the roles of place in Lived Religion. One Ramadan allowed institutional, clergy-led practice, the other enforced a private, domestic locked-down Ramadan.

This paper will explore the role place and the boundaries between public and private played in the experiences of two very different Ramadans for Melbourne Muslims. This research was part of a study of more than 60 culturally diverse Melbourne Muslims who kept diaries throughout Ramadan.

Keywords: Lived religion, Islam, Muslims, Ramadan

# Exploring the Intersections Between Religion, Science and Gender in Spain

Rafael Cazarin<sup>1</sup> Cecilia Delgado-Molina<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

In Spain, the fluctuations of ruling parties over the past 16 years triggered legislative responses to the rise of feminist movements and the notion of gender and sexual diversity, often hand in hand with public policies around health and reproductive rights. In particular, the various laws drafted around the country about abortion, same-sex marriage, and LGBTIQ rights are some of the key elements in dispute. Religious leaders and representatives of right-wing parties and social movements, describe these elements as part of the 'gender ideology' agenda and 'cultural war' currently promoted by left-wing parties worldwide. The main argument in this context contrasts the notion of biological sex and gender, claiming that gender as a social construction is an ideology that goes against the laws of nature. These examples show how political parties, religious and social movements, are increasingly promoting biological and scientifically inspired deterministic positions on many social issues. Over the past twenty years few social scientists have explored this complex scenario but in previous decades a number of studies in the fields of religion, history and philosophy explored similar issues. In light of these events, we decided to carry on an exploratory literature review to identify general trends and arguments in the scientific literature available concerning the intersections of religion, science and gender in Spain.

Keywords: gender, science and religion, far-right, ideology, determinism

# Prayers, Paupers and the Pandemic: A Study Based on Temple Beggars and Alms System in Central Kolkata

Smita Chakraborty.

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Jhargram Raj College (Girls' Wing), India

Despite India's expeditious economic growth in the past few years, people below the poverty line and impecuniosity are still one of the voluminous challenges to surmount. According to a recent report by the Union Ministry of Social Justice, India is estimated to have approximately 4 lakhs beggars, out of which West Bengal tops the list with approximately 81,224 beggars. The Covid-19 pandemic declared a nationwide lockdown since March 24th, 2020. Social life came to a halt when the Government stringently banned any sort of congregations. Religious mendicants are one of the sections that suffered from this. The current study tries to focus on the lives of the religious mendicants (in front of the temples) once the pandemic hit the workings of society. The alms system is considered one of the ethical virtues in Hinduism to help and receive blessings in reciprocation. Hindu spirituality deems *Bhiksha* (seeking food through begging) as a way to procure liberation or *moksha* from the cycle of life and death. There are a plethora of temples in the vicinity of Central Kolkata (within the state of West Bengal, India) where the beggars' congregation is a common sight. Using the qualitative approach-observation, in-depth interview, and documentation were used to amass data from 50 religious mendicants. The objectives of the study are to understand their reasons for begging; their daily struggle for existence before and during the pandemic; and finally, the means by which they are coping with the Covid-19 crisis with no governmental policies.

Keywords: economy, poverty, beggary, religion, pandemic

# **Tai Ji Men and the Tai Ji Men Case: Politics versus Spiritual Minorities**

Yi-Jing Chen

National Taiwan University, Taiwan

The paper presents Tai Ji Men, a Taiwan-based spiritual movement rooted in esoteric Taoism, and its global expansion and activity through the Movement for an Era of Conscience. In its second part, the paper explores the Tai Ji Men case, which started with the 1996 crackdown on religious and spiritual movements perceived as hostile to the ruling KMT party (although in fact Tai Ji Men had not taken any political position). Eventually, Tai Ji Men won all its court cases but as a by-product of these Taiwan's National Taxation Office continued to consider gifts by devotees as taxable tuition income, generating the "Tai Ji Men case" that has continued for 25 years and determined massive street protests in 2020.

Keywords: Tai Ji Men, Hong Tao-Tze, religious liberty in Taiwan, new religious movements in Taiwan, Tai Ji Men Tax Case

## **The Liberation Christendom in Mexico. Just a Memory or Still Valid?**

Armando García Chiang

Department of Sociology, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana,  
Iztapalapa Unit, México

Latin American liberation Christendom is an anticapitalistic social and religious movement (which, over the years, has also assumed other liberation struggles, such as those of women, Blacks, indigenous, ecological struggles) who was born before the theology of liberation and the majority of its activists are not theologians (Löwy, 1996).

In Mexico the development of liberation Christendom can be located in the sixties in the city of Cuernavaca where appears an intellectual movement related to the Catholic Church under the auspices of the bishop Sergio Mendez Arceo, that was reinforced by the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. This movement was adapted to the Latin-American reality in the General Conference of the Episcopate in Medellin and had a considerable influence in the outbreak of the Zapatista rebellion, social movement which played an important role in the social and political changes that have taken place in Mexico during the last 20 years.

In this context, this paper's has as research question: Are there still elements that allow us to say that liberation Christendom is still alive in Mexico? The methodology to be followed is a bibliographical and hemerographic revision, as well as a series of interviews to actors of the Christianity of the liberation.

Keywords: Liberation Christendom, liberation Theology, Mexico, social movement, Latin America

# **Pluralization as the New Paradigm in Mexican Religious Context: the Sacred Places as a Tool to Apprehend Religious Plurality**

Armando García Chiang

Department of Sociology, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana,  
Iztapalapa Unit, México

The political situation of the world and the complicated relation of the West with Islamic countries have provided evidence that the most significant mistake in the theories of secularization is the conviction that modernization inevitably leads to the loss of the importance of religion.

In Mexico secularization exists in the sense that it is a no confessional society differentiated in the structures concerning the religious institution and demonstrating an internalized acceptance of laicism. On the other hand, a syncretic and racially mixed religiousness persists among the population.

In this context, pluralism has been taking place gradually, conversions to new religious movements have augmented, and it is possible to maintain that diversification is becoming the new paradigm in the study of religion.

This work aims to approach the pluralization of religion through an analysis of the proliferation of sacred places in the area of Mexico City, based on the thought that the process of sacralization of the space provides a new meaning to ordinary elements in the urban landscape and that that meaning depends on the religious belief to which it is ascribed.

Keywords: secularization, pluralization, Mexico, sacred places, paradigm

# Uncertain Faith in Italy

Roberto Cipriani

Roma Tre University, Italy

Research on religiosity in Italy has been carried out in 2017, covering 164 subjects appropriately selected, without the pretension of representativeness. The approach was no longer only quantitative, by administering a questionnaire to a statistically representative sample of the entire Italian population, but also concerned a group of subjects suitably selected on the national territory, following criteria not far from the overall demographic picture, even if there is no claim to a generalization of the results. The subjects to be interviewed were selected through a stratification of three categories related to the degree of study obtained (level of obligation, upper-middle school diploma, degree), the distinction of gender (man, woman), residence (small towns, medium municipalities, large cities), geographical distribution (north, centre, south and islands) and age (young, adults, elderly). The solution of a completely open interview was tested in 78 cases. For the rest of the 86 subjects, the first part was entirely free and the second part was on some concepts-stimuli: daily and festive life, happiness and pain, life and death, God, prayer, religious institutions and Pope Francis. The results were corroborated with T2K (Text-to-Knowledge), Lexical Correspondences Analysis and VoSpec procedure (Vocabulaire Spécifique des Groupes d'individus). An analysis sheet similar to a semi-structured questionnaire was then prepared.

Keywords: faith, uncertainty, Italy, qualitative analysis, mixed methods

# **Pandemic-Related Discourses Regarding Religion: The Case of Irish Catholicism**

Brian Conway

Maynooth University, Ireland

This paper considers the role of the ongoing pandemic in eroding or bolstering religious identity and culture. Across the world, this hugely disruptive pandemic upended taken-for-granted assumptions about virtually all human behaviours, including religious ones. Based on an analysis of the public discourses of Catholic authorities found in public statements, homilies and media reportage, I argue that the relative marginalisation by state elites of Catholic leaders during the pandemic reflected the wider secularisation of the society, whereby devotees practice less frequently and church elites are viewed as less influential than before. At the same time, I argue that the church's critique of the state's pandemic-related policies functioned as a kind of wedge issue for highlighting broader concerns about the proper place of religion in public institutions, and the church's continuing relevance in the society. The explanation advanced for this prophetic ministry rests on pressures from "below" to defend Catholic identity against growing secular pressures. More broadly, this paper suggests that in evaluating the impact of pandemics on religiosity, students of religion would do well to consider different levels of analysis as well as unexpected crises and opportunities for religious groups brought on by sudden external shocks and that are largely unrelated to long-term processes of modernisation.

Keywords: pandemics, secularisation, church, elites, Ireland

# **Church Building in the African Diaspora: Mt. Sinai Holy Church of Banes, Cuba**

Jualynne E. Dodson  
Michigan State University, USA

This proposal is to present theoretical, methodological perspectives and findings discerned from historical sociology and field research of “church building in the African Diaspora.” The proposition is that contemporary emphasis on ‘quantitative data’ by sociology and other disciplines fails to fulfill Emil Durkheim and Max Weber’s originating disciplinary mission of religion as conceptual and consequential reality for appreciating human social life. This is critically true when we study religious ideas, practices, and groups not fully within Western civilization’s conceptualizations of normative. The exemplary presentation is of the 20th century Mt. Sinai Holy Church of Banes, Cuba as it directly evolved through social structures, processes, and circumstances of the global African Diaspora.

The presentation will discuss how the *longue durée* approach of historical sociology and field research methods qualitatively improve inductive understandings of acquired data. Examination of research findings will be correlated to sociologist Ruth Sims Hamilton’s paradigmatic categories of the African Diaspora and to research findings’ ability to clarify the role of the African Diaspora in Afro - Cubans’ building a Protestant congregation in the majority Spanish Catholic colony. The paradigm is grounded in historical research of Joseph Harris, Hamilton’s theoretical articulations, and aligned with J. L. Matory’s contestation of European conceptual derivatives as “universal” constructs that envision Black and Brown humans’ behavioral patterns as pre-civilized artifacts. The research and analysis of Mt. Sinai Holy Church of Banes, Cuba will be discussed within these understandings.

Keywords: Long Durée, Americas’ African diaspora, Protestant Church building, Cuba

# **Demonstrative Body: Spectacle of the Ritual Body in Healing Narratives Among Popular Religious Devotees in the Philippines**

Dennis S. Erasga<sup>1</sup> Rito V. Baring<sup>2</sup>  
<sup>1,2</sup>De La Salle University, Philippines

While the spate of literature investigates the mediation of shamans and their intercessional performances, unique accounts of healing through bodily mediation reveals a new modality in the body hermeneutics of religious experiences of Filipino devotees. Using local anecdotal and published report, the article silhouettes the modality by syncing the 'dead' and 'living' body traditions in religious healing ritual performances in the Philippines from the theological and sociological frames. Emerging from such context, it highlights the notion of productive body and doubles down by focuses on the 'automediatrix narratives' of healing rituals quite peculiar to Philippine setting via the analysis of a Filipino's popular religious vow - the *panata*. But in instead of using the performative body as optics, the article introduces the concept of a 'demonstrative body.' As an interpretive lens, demonstrative body reinforces the agentic affordances than the performative aspect of the ritual body in healing narratives. Such agentic focus leads to a novel appreciation of rituals in general as embodied narratives and healing rituals as emotional episodes that are ripe for narratives. The paper juxtaposes such insights with the spectacle of embodiment that veers away from the objectifying discourse of popular devotion to that of a 'digibodiment' via the increasing pixelization of social experience, religious experience included.

Keywords: religious ritual, healing narrative, performative rituals, popular devotion, ritual body

# **What do Catholics Talk About When They Talk About European Integration? Between Euroscepticism and EU Support**

Rosita Garškaitė

Vilnius University, Lithuania

The popular support for European integration consists of many dimensions, including the cultural-religious one. Scholars have repeatedly shown that Catholics are among the “warmest” toward the EU compared to believers affiliating with other Christian denominations, especially in countries where Catholicism is dominant (Scherer 2020, 2015, Nelson and Guth 2016, 2015, 2010, Spohn et al. 2015, Boomgaarden et al. 2001). It does not seem strange, keeping in mind Vatican’s pro-EU position (Kratochvíl and Doležal 2015) and the Catholic backgrounds of the so-called founding fathers of the EU (Loughlin 2015). Yet contradictions arise between the religious worldview and the values of „secular and secularizing“ (Foret 2015) polity regarding sexual morality, gender roles etc. Moreover, there exists a Catholic discourse identifying the EU as a threat (Konieczna-Sałamatin and Sawicka 2020; Szumigalska 2015; Ramet 2006). Thus, question arises: how Catholic tradition, as understood and used by ordinary people, can work in favor of EU support or against it? Drawing on in-depth conversational interview material this paper explores the narratives Lithuanian Catholics employ when talking about European integration. The interpretive analysis reveals how people weave quite varied combinations of views – critical as well as appreciative – into intelligible perspectives. It is argued that the memory about the religious roots of the EU is an underestimated element of the commitment to the EU mitigating the scepticism or indifference to it. The paper advances our understanding of both the everyday politics and everyday religion.

Keywords: European Union, European integration, EU support, catholic tradition, Lithuania

# Religion Standards in the Rules of Law Through Media

M. Isabel Garrido Gómez  
University of Alcalá, Spain

Nowadays, the matter of legal pluralism is a subject of great relevance through media. We live in a world which moves towards a heterogeneous pluralism that must be harmonized as an expression of globalization and, more specifically of phenomena such as the creation of the European Union, Mercosur or the Free Trade Agreement. The European Union, for instance, is the result of a historical process of space articulation and it represents a special expression within the category of international organizations, whose aim is to satisfy different States' common interests. The migratory movements and the resurgence of nationalisms make the situation become more complex as an actual media coverage with certain consequences in sovereignty's traditional concept, in Law's production sources and in the creation of new jurisdictional bodies.

Thus, legal norms should recognise and approve both the differentiation and the religions standards variety, assuming and appreciating them in a positive way, with the limit of respect to their inherent human dignity and inviolable rights. To sum up, the most correct thing is that the social integration of the difference is to be carried out by means of its recognition and acceptance as legal-political principle. The open society implies a constant opening to the change and media, allowing the comparison with other ways of acting or thinking, that can enrich and improve ours. The content depends on the State's principles, the institutional structures, the economic-social situation, the cultural tradition and the freedom of information.

Keywords: religion, Rules of Law, media, cultural tradition, freedom of information

# **Spirituality, Biomedical Technologies and “Healthy” Lifestyles: a Sociological Approach**

Mar Giera

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

This paper explores the emergence, transmission and circulation of discourses and practices of reluctance and rejection of two types of biomedical technologies: vaccines and chemotherapy by particularly focusing on the role of spiritual beliefs when such rejection occurs. The contemporary relevance of new religious subjectivities crystallizes in an especially visible way at the intersection of science, spirituality and biomedical technologies. This intersection condenses and articulates moral visions, ethical norms, political-ideological constellations, and particular conceptions of the body, and of the healed body. Methodologically, the paper is based on an analysis of the circulation, and configuration, of such discourses in social networks (twitter), and on the analysis of biographical narratives.

Keywords: spirituality, biomedical technologies, vaccination, religion

# **The Transformative Power of Human Rights Rhetoric: Progressive Talk in Catholic Spaces**

Halyna Herasym<sup>1</sup>, Justin Tse<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University College Dublin, Ireland

<sup>2</sup>Singapore Management University, Singapore

The Catholic Church is typically seen as a reactionary and inert institution. While this common wisdom is not completely out of place, the Church has actually shown the will to change due to major socio-political shifts challenging imperial powers in the contemporary world. In our presentation, we focus on two particular cases of rhetorical changes of local Catholic churches in post-colonial contexts: the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church in Ukraine and the Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong. We argue that in circumstances of major social turbulence -- in our cases, the Euromaidan and the Umbrella Movement, respectively - those local Catholic churches not only found an unlikely ally among progressive civil rights groups, but also adopted some of the discourses used by secular (or even anti-religious) activists. Using preliminary qualitative research data drawn from our collaborative project "Catholic talk, social dreaming" on the interconnections between those local churches, activists and the Vatican, we show that discursive terms such as 'democracy,' 'rule of law,' and 'human rights' move from the language of secular civil society into the talk of the church. This appropriation of civil rights discourse might on the one hand serve reactionary arguments regarding abortion and same-sex marriage, but we suggest through our interviews that they are having a potentially progressive transformative effect on conceptions of ecclesial space. This paper contributes to ongoing conversations about the place of religion in contemporary social geographies and critical geopolitics.

Keywords: Catholic, human rights, social imaginaries, social movements, secular

# **The *Xie Jiao* Tradition, Taiwanese Governments and Minority Religions, 1949–2021**

Massimo Introvigne

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), Italy

From early Middle Ages, Imperial China has used the expression *xie jiao* ("heterodox teachings," translated only recently as "evil cults") to designate groups perceived as hostile to the state power and as such prohibited. This legal and political tradition passed to Republican China, and Communist China. It passed also to Taiwan, where several groups were considered *xie jiao* and had their activities limited during the Martial Law Period, including Soka Gakkai and Yiguandao. The end of the Martial Law Period saw a broader religious liberty. However, groups perceived as hostile to the ruling party were still labeled *xie jiao*, and a crackdown on several religious movements occurred in 1996, including Fo Guang Shan, Chung Tai Shan, the Taiwan Zen Buddhist Association, Sung Chi-Li Miracle Association, and Tai Ji Men. Scholars discuss when exactly the "post-authoritarian" period ended and a transition to a full-blown democracy started. However, there are still relics in Taiwan of discrimination against groups labeled as *xie jiao*, particularly in the tax system.

Keywords: Xie Jiao, cults, new religious movements in China, new religious movements in Taiwan, religious liberty in Taiwan

# **Demonizing Santa: A Fresh Look at the Anti-New Year's Eve Movement in Turkey**

Burak Kesgin

Beykent University, Department of Sociology, Turkey

New Year's Eve in Turkey is a holiday that, as in the "West" broadly construed, began independently of religious identity in the Republican era. New Year's Eve was included in public holidays by the state in the 1930s within the scope of the burgeoning modernization project. These celebrations were quickly adopted by the society, and a New Year's celebration culture developed. Expansion across Turkey was rapid, and special preparations for the night of January 31 became a common practice in different ways for different classes. However, this new public holiday, like other Westernizing and secularizing steps of the state, inspired considerable backlash. Conservatives were disturbed by the widespread adoption of this new holiday, and viewed New Year's Eve as a novelty that had to be eliminated by Muslim reactionary movements. This holiday was framed as a threat to religious and national values, incompatible with Turkish and Muslim identity, and as a tool to alienate people from their faith. In the 1980s, when New Year's Eve celebrations began to adopt Christmas imagery, reactionary movements carried out more organized anti-New Year's campaigns and alternative New Year's events. They successfully made New Year's Eve another front of their culture war against secularism. Although Muslim reactionaries have, with the support of the Turkish state, made progress in this ongoing culture war by reducing public visibility and participation in New Year's celebrations in recent years, they have not achieved a total victory. Recently, this campaign has been made more intense and systematic, with increased religious warnings, hate speech, and acts of violence that demonize Christmas symbols, especially Santa Claus. In this paper, I analyze and discuss those campaigns regarding the changing narrative and actions of the movement and its place in the context of the contemporary struggle for cultural hegemony in Turkey.

Keywords: Turkey, New Year's Eve, Christmas, reactionary movements, religious nationalism

# **How to Analyse Private Religious Revelations in a Sociological Context? Biographical Sociology Approach**

Maciej Krzywosz

Institute of Sociology, University of Białystok, Poland

The paper presents the concept of research on religious revelations as personal documents in the framework of biographical sociology. Contemporary revelations are treated mainly as an expression of various social unrests or concerns related to secularisation. As a result, their research potential, including the biographical information of a particular visionary and their references to social processes, is usually passed over. This speech briefly presents the arguments for treating some religious messages as personal documents. Potential benefits from the examination of such materials are shown by the analysis of revelation to the Polish folk visionary - Katarzyna Szymon (1907-1983) by using tools created as part of the biographical method: life history, life story and biographical process structures. In the speech, some data obtained during the research in 2019 funded by the National Science Centre Poland will be presented.

Keywords: personal documents, biographical method, religious revelations, visionaries, biographical sociology

# **National and International Activism Against the Istanbul Convention: the Myths and Consequences**

Anne Kull

School of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Tartu, Estonia

Resistance to the Istanbul Convention is monotonous all over the Europe: actually men are the most endangered group, it is financed by Soros, it will result in the same-sex marriages and legitimization of perversions, etc. The role of patriarchy, privilege blindness, and the ideology of „family values“ should concern both the secular and religious segments of our societies. Combination of nationalism, religion and toxic masculinity is complex. It marks also the collapse of many „old“ divides and the expanding new ecumenism of reactionary gender policies with the effect of normalizing violence against women.

I will use examples from Estonia and elsewhere. It is not a matter of „women’s issues“, but the question of human rights, survival of democracy and humanist/religious humanist values.

Keywords: the Istanbul convention and its national and international despisers, conservative family ideology, patriarchy, violence

# **Religious Law, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation: Moving Forward With the Search of a Common Ground?**

Adelaide Madera

University of Messina, Italy

In Western secular countries the tension between claims of LGBT rights and the exercise of religious freedom is at the center of an increasing debate and the legalization of same-sex unions emphasized the collision between state policies and religious narratives, giving rise to fiercely litigated “culture wars”.

First, the present paper will analyze possible future scenarios about the interaction between religious freedom and LGBT rights, taking into account political-social-legal insights. Recently certain academics underlined the “sad irony” of the current tension, as religious freedom and nondiscrimination policies could move forward the search of a common ground.

Second, the present paper aims to analyze new challenges for religious law, which are pressed to reconcile their set of values with a more sensitive approach towards gender identity and sexual orientation. Religious groups have not an uniform perception about sexuality and progressive trends are developing within them. Recent theological-juridical arguments re-interpreted sacred texts through the lens of a new commitment, emphasizing their genuine message of equality. Religious narratives are provided with internal doctrines and mechanisms aimed at facilitating not only their internal dynamics but also their interaction and dialogue with the secular external reality. Finally, from this point of view, the paper will examine the contribution religious laws can give to face the new challenges of secular/multicultural societies, so as to enrich the public debate about all forms of diversity and to promote pluralism.

Keywords: religious freedom, LGBT claims, antidiscrimination policies, pluralism, religious narratives

# **Between Deep Ecology and Nationalism: The Origin of Russian *Neojazychestvo***

Giuseppe Maiello

University of Finance and Administration, Czech Republic

Russian paganism is understood as both a Kievan religious system, but above all as beliefs of the Slavic-speaking inhabitants of Eastern European villages. It had a secular persistence that can be traced back at least to the late nineteenth century. Some persistent and resilient traces of paganism and animism were still found by Soviet ethnographers. Starting from Lithuania already at the end of the Soviet period, we can see the germs of a rebirth of a form of pagan spirituality that we define, with all the necessary reserves, *neojazychestvo*.

The paper will focus on the roots of Russian *neojazychestvo*, on its charismatic personalities, and on the first years of its development. In particular, we will mark those attitudes tending to the deep ecology and on the other side, the forms, even extreme ones, of neopagan nationalism.

Keywords: *neojazychestvo*, Russia, religion, politics, media

# **Glorious Babes**

Haimo Schulz Meinen

Dr., University of Hannover, Germany

Lots of human cultures in history have used infanticide, sex strike (Lysistrata), prolonged breastfeeding and many other forms of control to their numbers. Both modern-day so called world religions and atheist world views, remarkably, neither practice one of these methods nor even discuss something like it. Activists like antinatalists or the British singer Blythe Pepino with her birth strike initiative thus, are among the most weird for many people. This is even more remarkable as humanity crosses the eight billion level these months, having doubled the number within the lifetime of the presenting author. Scientists of religion should find out the background of this phenomena. Some have argued that a common trait of individualist philosophies and so called world religions is their pronatalist basic assumption that every extra human is a gift. Others have stressed the win-win-situation of heavily populated modern nation states, consumer market sizes and outnumbering religions. The attempt of this paper or session is to elaborate a research setting how to measure, define and categorize pronatalist religious and philosophical backgrounds.

Keywords: individualism, pronatalism, birth strike, control of numbers, cultural anthropology

# **Between Global and Local Debates on Gender, Sexual Diversity, and Religious Pluralism**

Cecilia Delgado-Molina<sup>1</sup>, Rafael Cazarín,<sup>2</sup> Rosa Martínez Cuádro,<sup>3</sup> Víctor Albert Blanco<sup>4</sup>  
<sup>1, 2, 3, 4</sup> Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

The governance of religious pluralism and religious freedom in contemporary Western societies occurs in parallel to the crystallization of new democratic values of social justice based on historical advances of the feminist and LGBTIQ+ movements over the past century. This intersection of religion, gender, and sexual diversity has become a central marker of public debates about religion and secularization processes, yet the emergence and visibility of religious has been encapsulated by the question of whether religions are "good" or "bad" for women and LGBTIQ+ rights.

Within the framework of a broader research project focusing on the intersections of gender, sexual diversity, and religious pluralism in civil society organizations in Catalunya, the aim of this paper is twofold: identify the key international debates around the place of gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights in the governance of religious freedom and religious diversity; and in relation to that, identify differences and similarities with the Catalan context.

Keywords: religion, gender, sexual diversity, religious pluralism, religious freedom

# **Religions and Social Networks: the God Nodes**

Miguel Fernando Oliva

CIEA (Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios Avanzados)

Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, Argentina

The analysis of religions from the point of view of the social sciences is not new. Foundational authors of sociology such as Simmel, Durkheim, Weber, among others, considered the issue of religion as central in sociological analysis.

In this paper the emergence of religions is understood as a part of a more general process of social structuring. Relevant characteristics of religious phenomena are addressed and possible applications of the concepts, metrics and modeling of the Social Network Analysis (SNA) to religions. This essay links the theory of social structuring and SNA with religions.

Sociological theories about religion and various conceptualizations of structuring, random networks, real and potential connections are reviewed.

The nature of religious ties and normative networks is specified. Finally, issues of social structuring in states, politics and religion, secularization, interreligious conflict, and the nature of the social ties in religious phenomena are addressed.

SNA models are applied to the characterization of religions. Isomorphism of social structuring in politics and religion, and inter-religious conflict, are addressed.

The nature of religious ties is specified. Finally, issues of social structuring in politics and religion, secularization and interreligious conflict are addressed.

Keywords: religions, religious conflict, social network analysis, social structuring, God node

# **Confusing Conceptions and Boundaries of Jewish Religious Communities Today in Lithuania**

Aušra Pažėraitė

Vilnius University, Lithuania

After Lithuania regained its independence at the end of the 20th century, the religious life of the Jews was given the opportunity to revive. The Law on Religious Communities of Lithuania re-established for Judaism the privileged status of traditional religion held since the times of tsarist Russia. Today, however, there are Jewish communities that want to acquire legal status but are faced with the fact that the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice is not always convinced that they are continuing traditional Judaism in Lithuania. Here we face the following problems: a) what can be considered traditional Judaism in Lithuania? b) what is considered and what is to be considered a religious Jewish community?

In my presentation - on account of the theoretical approaches developed in the anthropology of religion, such as a) "religious change" (see Eller: 2014), b) Talal Asad's theory of the construction of religion as discursive practice by discourses of the authorising powers (Asad: 1993), c) the concept developed by philosopher and religious researcher Leora Batnitzky (2011) concerning construction of Judaism as a religion in modern times (by modern Jewish intellectuals), and opposition to this transformation in Lithuanian and Hassidic rabbinic authorities, resulting in today's Jewish ultra-orthodox communities, and d) my own anthropological researches of participating observation during the last 5 years - I will seek to show how the concepts of traditional Judaism and of Jewish religious community used today in Lithuania distorts the image of actual religious situation of Jews in Lithuania.

Keywords: Judaism in Lithuania, mithnaggedim, hassidim, construction of Judaism, Jewish community

# **Returns to Denominations in the Baltics, Post-Communism? Observations and Demographic Trends in Discussion, with Lutheran Churches as Case Study**

Indrek Pekko,<sup>1</sup> Christo Lombaard<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Theology, Tartu University, Estonia, <sup>2</sup>Faculty of Theology, University of Pretoria, South Africa

In this contribution, the authors do four things. In the first part, the second author summarises observations on developments in Christianity post-Communism from across the Baltics. In the second part, the authors give a research overview of extant pertinent literature on demographic and related studies on this period and region. In part three, the main part of this contribution, the first author analyses, from these more general overviews, changes in recent Lutheran ecclesiology in these regions. In the closing section, the impressions gained in the first two sections are critically weighed by the authors in the light of the main part of this paper.

Keywords: religious affiliation, ecclesial orientation, Baltics

# **Religion, Social Movements and Politics in Brazil. From Liberation Theology to Bolsonaro**

Geoffrey Pleyers

FNRS – UCLouvain, Belgium & FMSH Paris

The move from a progressive Brazil to a country led by a far-right President in just a few years is also the outcome of another, two-fold major shift which occurred in the 1980s: the conservative turn in the Catholic Church and its attacks on liberation theology and practices, and the concomitant rise of conservative neo-Pentecostal churches. The impact of this shift was little visible in the Brazilian political arena in the following decades, as activists trained in the BECs kept their progressive commitments in lay organizations, parties and movements. On the long run however, its impact has been devastating. Liberation Christianity, and in particular its base ecclesial communities, have acted as popular and political education groups from which a new militant culture and thousands of activists have emerged, contributing to the deep transformation political, social and cultural of Brazil between 1980 and 2016. Simultaneously, it left a vacuum, soon filled by the conservative Neo-Pentecostal churches, whom have acted as major incubator of militants and voters for Jair Bolsonaro.

Keywords: Brazil, Liberation theology, religious movements, reactionary movements, democracy

# **Fading Visibility of Women: Understanding of Gender in the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church**

Aivita Putnina

Assoc. Prof., University of Latvia, Latvia

The fact of the abolition of women's ordination in the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church attracted the attention in research and society. The report is based upon an empirical study - interviews with Latvian Lutheran women in leading church positions, which reveal their perspective and current situation. The task of the report is to reveal the understanding of gender in the discourse of the Lutheran church in Latvia and look at its contribution to excluding women from Church leadership.

Keywords: gender, Latvian Lutheran Church, marginalization of women, spiritual vocation

# **Navigating Through the Government's Imposed Restrictions During COVID 19 Pandemic: Administration, Ministry and Religious Observance Among Evangelical Churches in the Philippines**

Crisanto Regadio Jr. Q.<sup>1</sup>, Wilaine Dy<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Behavioral Sciences Department, College of Liberal Arts,  
De La Salle University Manila, Philippines

<sup>2</sup>M.A. in Sociology Student, Behavioral Sciences Department, College of Liberal Arts,  
De La Salle University Manila, Philippines

The Philippine government's stay at home policy and restriction of mass gathering to address the COVID 19 pandemic exact heavy toll to religious observance in a country where the church has been a powerful symbol and radial point of the sacred. This study investigated the administration and religious observance among selected Evangelical Churches during the health pandemic. The online interviews with administrators, heads of the ministries and members of Evangelical churches revolves around their personal relationship with God, apostleship and discipleship, service and congregation and the overall management in an online modality. The situation promotes the paradoxical nature of worship in Evangelicals which core tenet is to establish personal relationship with God yet they desire to attend in person activities in their respective churches. An identity crisis and role confusion emerge when they attend online a they have been constantly drawn away from a "real" communion with God and the other faithful due to internet connectivity, internet fatigue and other distractions. They long for the overall sensory experience and full expression of their faith offered by in person activities. The administrators struggle to navigate with the financial and technical costs, poor attendance, and the challenges on how to improve the quality of online religious experience of their members.

Keywords: Evangelical church, online worship, government restriction, COVID 19

# **On Skin and Substance: Borders and Bodies in Muslim Female Art**

Paulina Rinne

Philipps University Marburg, Germany

Colonial powers of the 19th century legitimized the so-called liberation of the oppressed Muslim women from a backward and patriarchal Islamic society by equating secularism with emancipation. Half a century later, bans on burkinis and Muslim headscarfs, meant to suppress the 'misogyny' of an Islamic parallel society that threatens the West, draw quite a familiar picture. The polarization of Western and Muslim norms is the driver for various far right but self-declared feminist movements, which demand the protection of their bodies and borders. Their tendencies are increasingly observable in western media and politics as of late; however, they ignore both countering positions in Islamic cultures as well as the various pressures of neoliberal and secular societies. In the Western mind, the undressed female body stands as a sign of European cultural achievement and freedom that needs to be protected from outside influences.

Beyond the stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman, the art works presented and discussed in this talk share a feminist variant of Islamic femininity that also grounds in Islamic traditions. Muslim women artists are concerned with transcending boundaries; the female body as sacred space. Their modern Islamic art thus participates in the international discourse. Their futuristic approach overcomes seemingly persistent boundaries and thus offers a progressive perspective that fuses Islamic and western traditions to create a new vision of modern womanhood.

Keywords: postcolonialism, borders, Islam, modern Islamic art, female body

# **Fundamentalism and Women: Report on the Understanding of Gender Roles in Latvian Evangelical Churches**

Girts Rozners

University of Latvia, Latvia

Most Christian denominations in Latvia still do not recognize the ordination of women as pastors. The report will look at the historical and theological reasons for this unequal treatment. The main historical causes of the problem are the doctrine of the 17th century Lutheran Orthodoxy of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, as well as Christian fundamentalism born as a result of the theological crisis of the 19th century. The report will focus on how these phenomena have become entrenched in 20th century theology and the faith of Latvia's Christian denominations. To analyze the situation today report will include empirical research data from interviews of male pastors in the churches and also women in evangelical Lutheran church. The report will come to conclusion that in Latvian Christianity the high view of the verbally inspired Bible still strongly influences the interpretation of the text. Apparently, it seems safer to follow these ancient arguments of Protestant Orthodoxy and 19th-century fundamentalists than to accept the emerging changes in gender roles in the 21st century.

Keywords: ordination of women, verbal inspiration, Christian fundamentalism, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, gender roles

# **Drawing the Boundaries Between Religion and Non-Religion in Contemporary Russia**

Vladislav Serikov

Goethe-University, Germany

One of the major questions posed by the organizers of the ISA RC-22 conference is how scholars and various other actors redefine religion in the context of increasingly conspicuous fluidity of boundaries between religion and politics on the transregional, transnational and global levels? In the proposed paper I would like to address a more precise question of how politics, in particular the state politics and the politics of religious institutions can influence the scholars of the Study of Religions of a particular country to redefine boundaries between religion and non-religion in such a way that it comes to drawing of significant boundaries within the scholar community itself.

I take the case of such internal boundaries drawing within the Russian scholar community of the Study of Religions, this community itself being the object of my case study. Using the discursive analysis of open internet sources and anonymized insider interviews with Russian scholars and Russian representatives of some religious institutions I am questioning the interactions of the Russian state and these religious institutions in Russia with scholars of the Study of Religions. These interactions resulted not only in official derecognition of these institutions as religions in Russia, classifying them either as social (e.g. Scientology) or destructive (e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses) extremist organisations but also in dividing the scholarly community in "pro- and anti-cultists" (the one emic scholar perspective) or "pro- and anti-etatists" (the other emic scholar perspective). Taking the etic perspective of the Study of Religions I will try to show how the self-proclaimed neutrality of the Russian scholars of the Study of Religions is effectively used as a justifying reason for taking the stance in the two opposite emic perspectives.

Keywords: Russia, boundaries, religion and non-religion, scholars

# **Polarization of Discourse About Gender Roles, Family and Violence in Discussions About Istanbul Convention in Latvian Internet Media (ReliGen)**

Ilva Skulte<sup>1</sup>, Sofija Kozlova<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Riga Stradins University, Latvia, <sup>2</sup>University of Latvia, Latvia

The issue of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, or the Istanbul Convention has created a contradictory reaction in Latvian society and politics. Concepts of gender, family and violence connected to this topic are widely discussed both in mass media and in public forums. In our paper we will use critical discourse analysis to analyse and compare the discourse connected to Istanbul connection in the corpuses of texts from Latvian news portals (delfi.lv, tvnet.lv and apollo.lv) and aggressive comments in their forums (gathered and processed by help of the Barometer of Internet Aggressiveness (<http://barometrs.korpuss.lv/>)). We will discuss main arguments and topics used in connection with the Convention to understand how the diversity of standpoints and opinions was discursively driven to the polarization in society. to be used by conservative politicians to gain public attention and acknowledgement.

Keywords: Istanbul Convention, discourse, news portals, polarisation

## **What's in a Name?**

### **Religious Nationalism and the Renaming of Cities in Uttar Pradesh**

Jacek Skup

Jagiellonian University (Institute for the Study of Religions Studies), Poland

Since coming into power after 2017 regional elections, the government of Indian state Uttar Pradesh, headed by Yogi Adityanath of the Bharatiya Janata Party, has made significant changes on the map of the state by renaming cities. Thus, Allahabad became Prayagraj, Faizabad District became Ayodhya District and Mughalsarai's name was changed to Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Nagar.

The changes, both enacted and proposed, while often mocked as insignificant are nevertheless seen as a form of erasing the part of India's history associated with the Muslim rule and rewriting it in the spirit of religious nationalism represented by the BJP.

The presentation, using the framework provided by E. Hobsbawm's idea of 'invented traditions' and M. Azaryahu's reflections concerning the significance of naming and renaming spaces as a part of political discourse aims to analyze the renaming of the cities in the light of BJP's ideology of religious nationalism and the idea of reviving the ancient 'Golden Age' present in the thought of Indian nationalists since the XIX century. According to the preliminary hypothesis, the process of renaming the cities constitutes a part of a wider process of transformation of the Indian national identity in an attempt to reshape it by moving away from the largely secular nationalism of the first years of the independent state towards BJP's vision of religious nationalism.

Keywords: India, religious nationalism, Hindu nationalism, religion and politics

# **On the Religious and Political Reasons of the Rise and Fall of Consciousness-Only School in China**

Tadas Snuviškis

Vilnius University, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, Lithuania

Consciousness-Only School, established by Xuánzàng in the middle of the seventh century, was one of the most academic and sophisticated schools of Buddhism in China. However, its continuation was one of the briefest among Buddhist schools in the country. Based on recent scholarship, the presentation aims to classify the religious and political reasons for the rise and fall of Consciousness-Only School in China. This historical case invites a reflection on the interaction of religious and political factors that unexpectedly combined and contributed to its outcome.

Keywords: Buddhism, Táng Dynasty (唐朝), Xuánzàng (玄奘), Consciousness-Only school (唯識宗).

# **The Christian Baggage of Secularism: A Study of French and Indian Contexts**

Vaishnavi Sreenivas

University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom

This essay aims to look at the concept of 'the secular' and secularism through its genealogy and further investigate its global congruity by comparing two different global contexts that attempt to politically manifest secularism into their state structures. Through this analysis the essay demonstrates that the expectation of secularism is derived from a 'post-Christian' context and thus faces epistemological issues when confronted with different contexts. This reveals that when political instatement of secularity ignores this contextual nature and genealogy of 'the secular' it leads to a political error which feeds into narratives of violence and misunderstanding. In the case of France, this secularism itself tends to create this violence and in India the promise of tolerance by secularism is unable to undo the violence and ends up fostering it. The essay will firstly look at different theories which explain the 'secular' and its beneficiary concepts and briefly trace the genealogy of its origins to establish its Christian underpinnings. It will then go on to examine how secularism developed in France and how it led to the contemporary discrimination of the Muslim minority. The third section will move to the Indian context and examine the vastly different understanding of secularism there while also drawing out the instability caused by the inconsistencies of Indian secularism. The analysis of how secularism fails the minorities in these two different contexts leads to the establishment of the inherent flaw in the migration of liberal western ideologies of secularism into non-Christian contexts.

Keywords: secularism, Christianity, France, India, politics

# **The Social Role of Religion in Latvia: Case of Commemoration of the Deceased**

Anita Stasulane

Daugavpils University, Latvia

The paper addresses the commemoration of the deceased by examining a peculiar Latvian religious tradition – the cemetery festival. Latvian society is moving down the path to secularization. Participation in religious ritual practices could be expected to decrease in a predominately secular society. Nevertheless, the tradition of the cemetery festival practised in Latvia shows that the relationship between the religious and the secular is much more complex than simply being in opposition to each other. The analysis is based on data obtained by undertaking fieldwork at cemeteries in the eastern part of Latvia, Latgale. Participant observation and qualitative in-depth interviews were the main research tools used in the fieldwork. Through an analysis of the fieldwork data, this paper explains, firstly, how honouring of the deceased currently takes place in Latvia; secondly, the factors which have determined the preservation of the cemetery festival tradition, despite the forced secularization of the Soviet period and the general secularization encountered today; thirdly, the relationship between religious and secular activities at the cemetery festival.

Keywords: transformations in religious practices, cemetery festival, religious, secular, commemoration of the deceased.

# **The United Nations, Transitional Justice and Religious Liberty**

Rosita Šorytė

FOB (European Federation for Freedom of Belief)

Based on her experience as a former Lithuanian diplomat who has represented her country at the United Nations, and current work in the religious liberty field, the author reviews the U.N. documents on “transitional justice,” i.e., on how countries that move from an authoritarian to a democratic rule should deal with past injustices. The question was hotly discussed with respect to post-Communist Eastern Europe but also concerns post-authoritarian Taiwan. The paper argues that past violations of religious liberty should also be addressed by transitional justice, through revisions of the court cases and compensations to the victims.

Keywords: transitional justice, United Nations and transitional justice, transitional justice and religious liberty, transitional justice in Taiwan, transitional justice in Lithuania

## **Adapt and Update?**

### **The Challenge of Religiosity During the Pandemic in Romania**

Laurențiu D. Tanase

Dr., University of Bucharest, Romania - Faculty of Orthodox Theology  
Quality of Life Research Institute (ICCV) - Romanian Academy

The critical reading of the Covid-19 Pandemic period means, for the Romanian Orthodox Church and other religious denominations, not only a period of temporary interruption of activity and fear of illness but also an opportunity for social adaptation and pastoral updating. The State's decisions to restrict some of the fundamental freedoms, such as the right of association, movement, etc., but in a secondary position compared to the right to life, continued to deepen the social tensions already inherent Pandemic threat. The right to life is a right of priority; it conditions other rights, including the right to religious freedom. Gradually, due to the complexity of the measures adopted against the Pandemic, which also affected spiritual life, especially during the Easter holiday of 2020 and other religious events, there were fissures in the relationship between the State and the Church.

To understand this evolution as clearly as possible, we will use the press study, surveys or other numerical approaches, and we will favour a multidisciplinary approach. We will analyse the information from the area of religious sciences, political and legal sciences. To understand the relationship between religion and contemporary society's evolution during the Pandemic, a constructive scientific approach would be the comparative study of other European countries' realities, mostly Christian Orthodox.

Keywords: Romania, Covid-19, Pandemic, religion, secularisation, religious tensions, modernity

# **Transitional Justice and Religious Liberty in Taiwan**

Cheng-An Tsai

Shih Chien University, Taiwan

The paper presents attempts by different democratic, post-authoritarian governments in Taiwan to implement transitional justice, and the relationship of these attempts with the question of religious liberty. The paper argues that the question remained long unresolved due to Taiwan's peculiar political circumstances. The two Tsai administrations somewhat improved the situation but mostly with respect to violations of human rights perpetrated before 1992. Addressing religious liberty issues would involve also confronting the violations of human rights that happened after 1992, including during the 1996 crackdown on religious minorities.

Keywords: Taiwan, human right, freedom of religion or beliefs, transitional justice

# **The Complex Relation Between Language and Religion: Talking About a Two-pronged Moroccan Jewish Generation in Québec**

Övgü Ülgen

University of Montreal, Canada

The wave of North African Jewish immigration to Canada, especially Moroccan, which started in the second half of the twentieth century, changed the demographic composition of Canadian Jewry. The majority of works on Canada's Moroccan Jews are limited to historical and linguistic integration of the community in Québec. Researching generational experiences of Moroccan Jews through the relationship between language and religion is what separates my scholarship from previous studies. Language and religion are identity categories which are intertwined with ethnicity and nationhood. Yet little, if any, literature on multiculturalism has focused on the comparison of the dynamics of linguistic and religious pluralism in any sustained way rather than merely presenting a juxtaposition. Drawing on life-story interviews with seventeen respondents, I argue that while narratives on linguistic commonality remain salient by allowing a rapprochement to the Quebecois majority among first-generation interviewees, narratives regarding the religious difference of the participants, which is also linked to certain historical events, limits Moroccan Jewish belonging among the second-generation interviewees. By highlighting the linguistic commonality between them and Quebecois majority, respondents form an ethnic boundary blurring where domestication of what was regarded as alien differences occurs. On the other hand, in a situation where ethnic boundary shifting takes place, the second-generation Moroccan Jewish immigrants reconstruct their identity in the direction of exclusion. I conclude that this generational difference in the stories delineates the failure of intercultural inclusion through French as a common language and forms a much lower sense of belonging among younger generations in Québec.

Keywords: language, religion, belonging, Québec, generational difference

# **Christianity as a Contested Concept / Christian Churches as Clearly Defined Actors in the Hungarian Parliamentary Speeches Since 2010**

Anna Vancsó

Corvinus University, Eötvös Lóránd Research Network, Hungary

In the last decade a clear and visible political turn can be seen toward Christianity and the Christian Churches. Several interpretations came to light about the strengthening relationship between the Christian churches and the state, endangering the ideal of a secular state, or interpretations presenting Christianity as a tool for political purposes. Meanwhile the religious landscape and religiosity of the country is hardly changing; based on the statistics individualization of religion can be proven, and there are no signs that religious organizations are expected to have growing 'religious' role in the public sphere. In my dissertation I have analyzed with text, content, and discourse analysis methods the political interpretation of Christianity – as a dogma, as an organization, as culture, etc. – by focusing on the parliamentary speeches since 1990 until 2017. The primer aim was to describe the changing relation of religion and politics in the last almost 30 years through those interpretations. In this paper I present my key results focusing on the after 2010 period and to show the confusing and even more contested concept of Christianity in the political public sphere evidently detached from the political expectations toward the churches. These results can be seen as an evidence that Hungary is still a secular country, but also show new forms of religion/and the role of Christianity in the public sphere.

Keywords: Christianity, political communication, culture, church, morality

# **Traditional Christian Family Values and Politics in Lithuania**

Rūta Žiliukaitė

Assoc. Prof., Department of Sociology, Vilnius University, Lithuania

During the last year we could witness development of new political cleavage in Lithuania. It is defined by its carriers, united by newly established organization „Union of Lithuanian Families“, as collision between „traditional Christian family values“ and „liberal genderistic values“. The movement is associated with rise and strengthening of right-wing populism in the country, which could have an effect on forthcoming President and Parliament elections.

The aim of this presentation would be to define the value context of Lithuanian society and discuss prospects for political mobilization on the bases of this cleavage during forthcoming elections. Using available data on values and political preferences of Lithuanian population (European value study 2017, Europeans Social Survey 2018 and more recent national surveys) I will analyze what is the potential electorate and the possible role of Catholic Church in such mobilization. In the presentation I will also present preliminary results of qualitative media analysis about the perception of the rising movement by Catholic Church and Lithuanian politicians.

Keywords: religious values, right-wing populism, Catholic Church, elections