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Please send comments, questions, letters, and newsletter submissions to  
Justin K.H. Tse,  
GORABS Secretary,  
jkhtse@interchange.ubc.ca

**David E. Sopher Award  
February 3, 2012**

GORABS invites papers from new scholars in the geographies of religion at the AAG meeting in New York in 2012. We encourage all papers from graduate students and non-tenured faculty to submit their papers to GORABS for a prize of \$500. More details are included in this newsletter on p. 13. Please take note of the early FEBRUARY meeting of the AAG 2012.

**GORABS ONLINE JOURNAL**

We welcome papers about all religions and non-religious belief systems from all theoretical and methodological approaches. More details in this issue of the newsletter on p. 17.



A new mailing list has also been set up for GORABS with jiscmail. If you were on the previous mailing list with West Virginia University, you have been automatically transferred into this new list.  
<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=GEOGREL>

### THIRD ANNUAL LECTURE (2011)

Dr. Claire Dwyer (University College London)

#### **Encountering the Divine in W7 and off Highway 99: Stories of the Suburban Sacred**

*"This lecture reflects on my on-going collaborative research on suburban faith spaces in London and Vancouver to explore the significance of everyday geographies of religion. Recent research on suburban faith spaces offers both a reinterpretation of the assumed secularism of suburban space and an analysis of the transnational and postcolonial connections shaping suburban geographies. Through this analysis of suburban faith spaces I develop two broader arguments about the geographies of religions and belief systems. First, I ask what geographies of religion have to offer to wider theoretical discussions within the discipline. Second, I reflect on the possibilities and challenges of accessing the suburban sacred as part of a wider reflection on geographies of encounter and enchantment." - Claire Dwyer*

Dwyer began by noting a sea-change in social and cultural geographies. When she was an undergraduate, any arguments referring to religious identity would have been "heretical," and this held true as late as the 1990s. But in the Antipode lecture she heard at the AAG, in her words, "God was there." This new interest has not yet engaged social geography. For example, the new work in postcolonial geography is "rarely cited in recent overviews of the geography of religion," she said. Dr. Dwyer credits Lily Kong, Paul Cloke and Peter Hopkins for helping to bridge these interests. Her talk, she said, will be that of a social geographer recognizing the importance of the study of religion.

She then asked, "Do we want to mainstream the geography of religion?" She noted that we must be careful not to reduce religion to a function. We must "allow religion to speak back." This means, she said, that we may bring theology to bear. One geographer worth reading, she said, is Julian Holloway, who studies performativity. The rituals people perform respond to a sense of the divine. "Why limit religion to the social dimension? We should recognize the enactment of spirituality." When we accept the significance of ritual space-time, then we will need to bring in theology. "The miraculous may even undermine our analysis." So she asks, "What are the approaches that would favor theological depth?" They would require ethnographic immersion, since "we want to read these religious experiences within broader social identities."

Thanking Justin Tse, David Ley, and David Gilbert for working with her, she then described the results of their empirical studies of suburban geographies in the W7 area of London and a stretch of Hwy 99 Richmond (Vancouver Metro area), British Columbia. Both are rich in religious diversity. She showed a number of interesting slides she and her colleagues had taken in these areas.

In London's W7 area, she and her colleagues are looking at new, shared and converted buildings, but also domestic sites. The district is home to a mosque, a Buddhist temple, a synagogue, a Jain temple, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches. They are looking at historical continuities. They want to "critique the homology of suburbia with secular materialism," said Dwyer. They find that it is a complex geography, which is hard to map.

In the Richmond suburb of Vancouver, there is a cluster on an agricultural road with a similarly high religious diversity. She is studying this in particular with Justin Tse and David Ley. This landscape was created by "the intersection of transnationalism and land zoning practices." The local zoning laws allow religious buildings to be built on agricultural land as a particular exception, and this has made a space for the juxtaposition of many different faiths in close proximity - even within hearing distance of music and bells.

But how to make sense of this -in the context of what most see as secularized suburbia? Dwyer noted that scholars have theorized at least three responses to secularization: edge city faith, ethnoburb, and semidetached faith. "Edge city faith" assumes that mobility has eroded religion, but, says Dwyer, "we need to rework this model." The "ethnoburb" model says that religion provides support for new arrivals, but, said Dwyer, "the reality is much more complex." The "semidetached faith" model focuses on privatization of religious identity, and sees it as a barrier to more public forms, "but there is more there."

What we see in such "suburban enchantment" is "suburban hybridity," which must include individualism but must go beyond that. There is a real challenge in apprehending the sacred. "We must spend time on the everyday and mundane practices," she said. "We should think about the enchantment of suburbia. There IS room for creativity." "We may want to draw on Thomas Moore's book, *The Re-enchantment of Everyday Life*.... What we are looking for are the uncanny moments that people experience."

One angle to consider is the architectural component. "Religious buildings are engineered for effect - to provoke encounters with the sublime." We note the stark "contrast between austere and grandiose" approaches to this goal. In the case of the Hwy 99 study area, this is made more complex (stronger?) by the close proximity of numerous different religious buildings. There are prayer walks, sacred fires, incense, all with the power to enchant, to inspire joy and fear (some evangelicals feel threatened by the buildings of "other" faiths so close at hand). Dwyer pointed out that some people felt that there were "confused spiritual airwaves along this highway."

Dwyer said "we might be alert to momentary encounters with the divine... we can see the disruptive power of the miraculous in the ordinary." She quoted Peter Jackson, who said, "Enchantment also happens in non-religious spaces." Dwyer recommended the work of Jane

Bennett on this topic. We must be careful, however, as we analyze such landscapes. "There is something artificial in the visitor's experiences of these buildings."

Dwyer said we may build on the notion of "soft cosmopolitanism" - the postmodern experience includes national ideologies but also multiethnic encounters. There are also tensions - defensive actions by members of some Richmond congregations. Some buildings might be oriented, in fact, to stand "against" others. Conflict is not absent from these spiritual expressions. But she sees some positive potential on Hwy 99: "Hopeful things can come out of the conflicts between people. Conflictive spaces are often linked to more constructive spaces."

Dwyer concluded that while geographers of religion have been quick to jump to the need to include theology everywhere in the geography of religion, she would remain an "unrepentant social geographer" because of her long-standing conviction that religion is at least always social and "more than social."

*Many thanks to Ed Davis (Emory and Henry University) for taking notes on this lecture.*

**GORABS also sponsored 7 paper sessions at AAG 2011 in Seattle, WA:**

- Gender and sexuality in lived religion (2 sessions)
- Landscapes and spaces of renewal: retreat, recreation, pilgrimage (2 sessions)
- Making space in critical geography for the humanities
- Religion and the environment
- Religion and transnationalism/traveling faith

## **GORABS SPONSORED SESSIONS - PRESENTERS AND ABSTRACTS**

### **Gender and Sexuality in Lived Religion**

Within geographies of religion and belief, gender is frequently at the center of analysis, from geopolitics to citizenship and from national identity to personal formation. Though less developed, geographers have also begun to explore the intersections between religion and sexuality. The purpose of these two paired sessions is to encourage the further development of geographies of religion, gender and sexuality with a focus on the consequences for lived religion, or the embodied perspectives, biographies, emotions, and sensations of faith. Papers might address religious spaces of alternative masculinities and femininities; the gendered/sexualized experiences of religious spaces or institutions; the politics or poetics of gendered and sexualized faith; intersecting forms of marginality in religion, gender and sexuality; gender, sexuality and the sacred; social justice, religion and sexuality/gender; love in and through faith; postcolonial religious projects in gender and sexuality; ethical and methodological issues in researching gendered and sexualised religious spaces, contexts and issues.

#### *Organizer(s):*

Elizabeth A. Olson - University of Edinburgh

Peter E Hopkins - Newcastle University, UK

#### *Chair(s):*

Elizabeth A. Olson - University of Edinburgh

### **Session One**

*Discussant:* Peter E Hopkins - Newcastle University, UK

#### *Papers:*

Chad Emmett - Brigham Young University

*Taking Control: How women in the Islamic World are working to improve their status and bring about change from within their own religious traditions.*

Shankari Patel - University of California Riverside

*Moving Through Subaltern Spaces: Religious Practice and Gender Ideologies in Postclassic Yucatan*

**Session 2**

*Discussant:* Gill Valentine - University of Leeds

Elizabeth A. Olson - University of Edinburgh

Giselle Vincett - University of Edinburgh

Peter Hopkins - Newcastle University

Rachel Pain - Durham University

*when god disappoints: young women and faith in deprived communities*

Kate Power - Lancaster University, UK

*Talking Religion - Talking Sex*

Kristin M. Sziarto - University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

*Sex Education at Church: Space(s) for justice, faith and affect in the Our Whole Lives curriculum*

Tyler Adams - Dept. of Geography, The Ohio State University

*Appropriating Homophobia: Fundamentalist Politics and Nation-Building in Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill*

**3458 Landscapes and spaces of renewal: retreat, recreation, pilgrimage.**

In recent years, the sacred has witnessed a resurgence of interest in human geography and in the wider social sciences. Increasing attention has been paid to the tension between sacred and secular, and indeed to the appropriateness of these two categories and their 'blur' when it comes to defining the boundaries between phenomena such as tourism and pilgrimage (see for example Eade and Sallnow 1991, Coleman 2002) new spaces of retreat and meditation consumed by non-religious customers and the therapeutic properties of natural landscapes (e.g. Conradson 2005, Smyth 2005).

This session connects work on sacred/secular space with research on emotion and affect. Papers address spaces and landscapes of renewal, sacred / secular engagement with practices and performances of renewal and remembrance; formal faith-based pilgrimage and informal recreation. Theoretical engagements include pilgrimage discourses, therapeutic and transformative spaces, re-creation, landscape aesthetics, mobilities, embodied performance, gender and belief, post-secular society, the material and more-than-representational, renewal and emotion/ affect.

*Organizer(s):*

Avril Maddrell

Veronica Della Dora - University of Bristol

**Session 1**

Avril Maddrell - University of the West of England, UK

*Tapping the spiritual landscape: performing pilgrimage walks to the keeills on the Isle of Man*

Veronica Della Dora - University of Bristol

*Meeting half way: landscape and the pilgrimage-heritage-tourism nexus in Meteora, Greece*

Alessandro Scafi - The Warburg Institute, University of London

*Defining Subiaco: Tourists, Humanists and Pilgrims in Search of Benedict's Cave*

Ruben-Camilo Lois-Gonzalez - IDEGA-USC

Jose Somoza Medina - University of León (Spain)

María José Piñeira Mantiñán - IDEGA

Xosé Manuel Santos Solla - IDEGA

*The Camino de Santiago today: Tourists and Business, pilgrims and human emotions*

David Conradson - University of Canterbury

*Inhabiting the Spaces of Post-Institutional Spirituality: Places of Retreat in Contemporary Britain*

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**Session 2**

Ceri Price, graduate student - University of Bristol

*Tokens of place: landscapes, postcards, and secular pilgrims*

Brad Huff - Florida State University

*A Mixed Methods Exploration of the Role of Monuments In the Demarcation of Sacred Landscapes and the Reproduction of Sacred Space*

Amanda J. Todd - UNCG

*Spiritual Landscapes in the Twenty First Century: The Geography of Power Mountains and Healing Waters of the Southern Appalachian Region*

Allison M. Williams, PhD - McMaster University

*Healing Landscapes in the Alps: Heidi by Johanna Spyri*

Paul Groth - University of California, Berkeley

*Ideas along the Road: Official and Vernacular as Lenses of Cultural Landscape Analysis*

### **Making Space in Critical Geography for the Humanities**

**Session Description:** This session addresses the benefits of including artistic, literary, and theological perspectives and genres of communication in *Critical Geography*. We ask participants to share experiences of incorporating humanities into their research methodologies and teaching pedagogies—not just as data to be analyzed, but as sources and means of analytical thought.

Often the humanities are feminized and delegitimized, so we frame the respectful acknowledgement of the intellectual and emancipatory power of the arts and theology as a distinctly feminist project. Postcolonial theorists have noted the inherent exclusivity of purely text-based genres that claim to be comprehensive mediums for "producing knowledge" or expertise about a subject, space, or region. This is a particularly pressing issue for those of us who expressly aim to dismantle social and ecological exploitation and inequity.

So, how are you making space in *Geography* for a more inclusive and empowering means of learning about the world and communicating ideas to others? What role does creativity play in this endeavor?

#### *Organizer(s):*

Liana Vasseur - University of Kentucky

Garrett Graddy - University of Kentucky

#### *Papers*

Jeff Birkenstein - Saint Martin's University

*Beloved Signposts of History in Lexington, Kentucky*

Hugh Deaner - University of Kentucky

*Painting Town Branch: Full scale earth mapping in downtown Lexington, Kentucky*

Donna Houston - Macquarie University

*Earthly Performativity: Memory, Materiality and Method*

Liana T. Vasseur - University of Kentucky

*Poetics of the secret map*

Garrett Graddy - Carleton College

*Rhythm, memory, narrative: spatial epistemologies of seed-saving*

### **Religion and the Environment**

**Session Description:** Presentations in this session explore the ways in which religion interacts with natural resource management, sustainability and environmental degradation. Primarily, the presenters are concerned with the question 'what role does religion play in shaping our attitudes toward the natural world, and vice versa?' The relationships between the environment

and sacred space, lived religion and the sustainability (social, economic and environmental), religious texts and praxis etc would also be interrogated. Apart from the diversity in perspectives and scales, presentations also come from a variety of places such as Asia and the Americas - providing insight into the rich textures of the religion-environment nexus.

*Organizer(s):*

Michael P. Ferber - The King's University College

Deborah Lee - National University of Singapore

*Papers:*

Deborah Lee - National University of Singapore

*Transnational Environmental Faith-based Organisations: Opportunities and Obstacles in Singapore*

Michael P. Ferber, PhD - The King's University College

Leanne Wilson, PhD - The King's University College

*'I'll Fly Away' or 'Christ's Great Kingdom Shall Come to Earth'? Christian Eschatology and the Environment*

Garrett C. Smith, Ph.D. - Kennesaw State University

*Flexibility & Divine Stewardship of the Land: The Story of a Cistercian Monastery*

David J. Butler, Ph.D. - University College Cork (UCC), Ireland

*Sacred spaces and funerary practices in nineteenth-century Ireland*

**Discussant:** Edward H. Davis - Emory & Henry College

**Religion and Transnationalism/Travelling Faith**

This paper session provide an opportunity to explore the diverse intersections between religion and migration, and the geographies that are produced from this intersection. The papers examine the ways in which religious practices and faith identities, practices, and organizations travel with migrants and shape their experiences of transnational lives, and how new religious engagements may be produced through the migration experience. They also engage with the ways that faith travels and the ways in which religious organisations and institutions are incorporated into or shape migration trajectories and flows.

*Organizer(s):*

Elizabeth A. Olson - University of Edinburgh

Claire Dwyer - UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

*Chair(s):*

Justin Tse - University of British Columbia, Department of Geography

*Papers:*

Claire Dwyer - UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

Justin Tse - University of British Columbia

David Ley, Professor - University of British Columbia

*'Highway to Heaven': the making of a transnational suburban religious landscape*

Murat Es - University of North Carolina

*'Mosques are not only for praying!': 'Europeanization' of Turkish Islam*

Abby Day, Dr - University of Sussex

Ben Rogaly, Dr - University of Sussex

*The role of transnational life geographies in embodied practices of faith and community in England*

Sharon Suh - Seattle University

*"Sacred Seattle...: Mapping Religious Identities in the Pacific Northwest"*

Patricia Ehrkamp - University of Kentucky

*Opening mosques: Islam, transparency, and democracy in German cities*



## Activities of the RGS-IBG Speciality Group



The Geographies of Religion, Spirituality and Faith Working Group of the RGS are organising a panel on Postsecular Politics and the Terrain of the Unofficially Sacred at the forthcoming Annual Conference of the IBG (RGS, London, 2nd September). The abstract for the panel is as follows:

As research in the geography of religion has expanded its scope, new avenues of enquiry have opened up that trace out apparently divergent trajectories, but whose interrelation, sufficiently specified, could enhance our present understanding of the spatiality of religion and spirituality. Two areas of research are particularly significant in this regard. On the one hand, notions of the 'unofficially sacred' have been applied to the 'everydayness' and micro-spatiality of religious experiences that stand apart from the more static geographies of religion configured around the designated, 'official' sites and spheres of religious practice. On the other hand, under the rubric of 'postsecularism', increasing attention has been paid to broad political shifts at the city and institutional scales, as religion has become more prominent within broad-based urban movements, voluntary sector engagement and a variety of governmental arrangements for citizen participation and consultation. This session will explore a number of questions to clarify the conceptual scope of recent departures within the geography of religion. In terms of approach, to what extent might the micro- and macro- scales at which these research interests find expression be brought into touch? More substantively, if in part the 'postsecular turn' inheres in the increasing 'official' acknowledgement of the religious within different public spaces and arenas, how might this reciprocally redefine the limits and terrain of the 'unofficially sacred'? Conversely, what previously unexplored spatialities of religious experience play out within and between the new types of engagement that the 'postsecular turn' appears to signal?

The Working Group are also organising a one-day symposium on the theme of Religion, Normativity and the Spirit of Critical Geography, with support from the RGS and Cardiff University, which will take place at the RGS on Monday 5th September. The aim of the proposed symposium is to generate a more robust debate over the role of normative commitment (political, ethical and theological) in framing geographical research, taking 'religion' and its rising prominence within human geography as the event's organising principle. Questions the symposium will seek to address will include: to what extent does geographical engagement with religion entail taking up particular value positions, both necessarily and in practice, in relation to

religious subject matter?; related to this, to what extent can religion be approached as a category of identity or demography without invoking the theological precepts and value orientations that religious commitment entails?; is there a contradiction, as some suggest, between a researcher's 'sympathetic' treatment of religious subject matter and their assuming a position as a 'critical geographer'?; to what degree do geographers of religion also identifying themselves as critical geographers confront the regressive as well as progressive potentialities of religious resurgence that constitute what some scholars refer to as the 'post-secular turn'?; more generally, what might be the specific points of convergence and divergence in how critical geographers both sympathetic and unsympathetic to religious claims and world-views configure fact-value distinctions in their research, and in how they evaluate the normative claims of their respective research participants?

## AAG 2012: Call for Papers

### "Apocalypse in 2012! Multiple views of a Maya and New Age concept"

Description: Ever since prominent archeologists claimed that the ancient Mayan calendar predicts December 21, 2012 to be the beginning of a new era, this concept has attracted considerable attention in popular culture. Not only did a 2009 film about it make millions at the box office, but many ordinary people express a sincere belief in this prophecy. The focus of this session is what this cultural and spiritual phenomenon means specifically for the geography of religions and belief systems. We are open to discussing the final (!) direction of the session. If you have any interest in joining, please contact me by July 15<sup>th</sup>. My email is [edavis@ehc.edu](mailto:edavis@ehc.edu).  
Dr. Edward H. Davis, Professor of Geography, Emory & Henry College, Emory, VA 24327

### Resilience and Social Exclusion: an interdisciplinary enquiry into the role and contribution of religion and spirituality to community and individual resilience within urban spaces of embedded exclusion

(Justin Beaumont and Chris Baker)

Description TBA

## DAVID SOPHER AWARD

### Description:

The purpose of the David E. Sopher New Scholar Award is to promote intellectual enquiry from new scholars into geographies of religions and belief systems through the presentation of papers at the AAG meeting. Papers will be judged on potential contribution to the field of Geography of Religions and Belief Systems, organization, and written composition.

### Eligibility:

Both graduate students and untenured faculty who are not serving on the GORABS board can apply for the award. Award: The amount for the 2012 award is a travel grant of \$250. The recipient will also be given an official certificate at the AAG awards luncheon.

### Disbursement:

A check will be disbursed to the winner at the 2010 Geography of Religions and Belief Systems annual business meeting at the AAG event.

### Requirements

The paper and application form (see <http://gorabs.org>) must be emailed to the GORABS chair in rich text or Microsoft Word format by **Feb. 3, 2012**. The paper must subsequently be presented at the national AAG meeting, though it does not have to be in a GORABS sponsored session. A panel of previous GORABS chairs will judge the papers and determine a recipient. The winner will be announced in time to attend the awards luncheon with a GORABS representative. GORABS reserves the right to not make an award in a given year.

## Member News

Publications will also be added to our GORABS bibliography online at: <http://www.gorabs.org/geographyofreligionbibliography.pdf>

See also Reinhard Henkel's bibliography: <http://www.religionsgeographie.de/literatur.htm>

Baker, Chris, and Watson, J. Miles. (2010). Response to Montemaggi's Dream of Spiritual Capital. *Implicit Religion*, 14 (1).

Emmett, Chad F. "The Siting of Churches and Mosques as an Indicator of Christian-Muslim Relations." *Journal of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*. Vol. 20, No. 4 (Fall 2009) 451-476.

Foster, Georgana and Robert Robert H. Stoddard. 2009. Vaishno Devi, The Most Famous Goddess Shrine in the Siwalks" in Sacred Geography of Goddesses in South Asia: Essays in Memory of David Kinsley, ed. by Rana P. B. Singth, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, pp.109-24.

Howe, Nicolas. 2009. "Secular iconoclasm: purifying, privatizing, and profaning public faith." *Social & Cultural Geography* 10, no. 6: 639-656.

Howe, Nicolas. 2008. "Thou Shalt Not Misinterpret: Landscape as Legal Performance." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 98, no. 2: 435-460.

Montemaggi, Francesca. 2010. The Enchanting Dream of "Spiritual Capital." *Implicit Religion*, 14(1).

Scott, Jamie S. 2011. "Pilgrimage and Literature." In Rana P.B. Singh, ed. *Sacredscapes and Pilgrimage Systems*. Gurgaon: Shubhi Publications. Pp. 31-78.

Stoddard, Robert H. 2009. "Pilgrimage Places and Sacred Geometries" in *Pilgrimage: Sacred Landscapes and Self-Organized Complexity*, ed. J. McKim Malville and B. Saraswati, D. K. Printworld, New Delhi, pp.163-77.

Stoddard, Robert H. 2011. "Great Plains Region" in *Encyclopedia of Religion in America*, ed. Charles H. Lippy and Peter W. Willias, CQ Press, Vol.2, pp.929-30.

Stoddard, Robert H. 2010. "The Geography of Buddhist Pilgrimage in Asia" in Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art, ed. Adriana Proser, Asia Society Museum with Yale University Press, pp.2-4.

Tse, J.K.H. (2010). Making a Cantonese-Christian family: quotidian habits of language and background in a transnational Hongkonger church. *Population, Space, Place: A Journal of*

*Population Geography. Special Issue: Migration and Everyday Matters: Materiality and Sociality*, Ho, E. and Dobson, M. (eds.). DOI: 10.1002 / psp640.

### **Stan Brunn**

I am working on a number of projects; one to edit a book entitled THE CHANGING WORLD RELIGION MAP. Last fall I submitted a prospectus to Springer and have subsequently been issued a contract. The book, as I envision it, will contain about 30 original chapters that are writing by geographers and others. I want the volume to be international in topics and authors, interdisciplinary and interfaith. What I am doing now is identifying potential authors who might be interested in contributing. Each chapter will need to be grounded in some conceptual or theoretical context in geography or a related discipline where place, landscape, and region are paramount in one's analysis.

Among the topics I am seeking authors now are: major religious organizations and groups, such as YMCA, YWCA, World Gospel Mission, IVCF (InterVarsity Christian Fellowship), and FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes); perhaps these could be combined in one chapter which was written by several authors. This chapter might also include mission trips.

Religion, Science and Education: I think the book would be strengthened by a chapter that looked at the role a State Board of Education (such as Texas or Kansas or others) that approves, texts and instructional materials, etc. and where there are clashes between pro and anti creationist groups; another collaborative chapter.

The "worldviews" of religious seminaries as measured by their library holdings; here the focus would be on what are the major topics in their libraries? Whether they have books on other faiths? And whether they have books about religious leaders in other faiths? Virtual religion, including virtual religious degrees, electronic networks of missionaries, etc. Retired missionary communities, both inside and outside the U.S.

I would much appreciate your sharing this email with others. For those interested, I would like some introductory email about the topic they plan to address. I am not looking for extremely narrow topics, but ones that cover wide latitude, such as globalization, regional and cross-cultural comparisons, and interfaith landscapes. Nor do I want or plan the book to be US dominated. The deadline for chapters would be January 2012. NOTE: I would strongly encourage multi-authored contributions.

## 6th Geography of Religion Colloquium on the Changing Religious Landscape of Europe

The Zentrum Religionsforschung of the University of Lucerne/Switzerland hosted the 6th Geography of Religion Colloquium on the Changing Religious Landscape of Europe from 16 to 18 June 2011. In the colloquium under the theme "Representation and Future Trends", more than 30 participants from 13 countries listened to and discussed the 13 presentations. The opening panel on "Islam and Europe" was followed by a keynote lecture by the anthropologist Lionel Obadia (University of Lyon, France) on "Spatial turn, Beyond geography: A new agenda for the science of religion?". Two thematic panels on "Statistical Methodology" and "Sacred space and society" were held as well as two workshops on "Mapping religions" and "Mapping and representation". The colloquium was the sixth in a series which was initiated in 2003 by an informal group of geographers from different European countries. For the first time, it was organised not by geographers but by religious scientists. Apart from geography and religious science, presenters and participants came from anthropology, political science and sociology.

The colloquium tried to unravel the interconnections between the «realities», the representations point to and the impact they have on societal issues in general. In addition, it was attempted to analyse future trends by using grand theories which may provide ideas about coming changes and developments.

Further information: Martin Baumann ([martin.baumann@unilu.ch](mailto:martin.baumann@unilu.ch)), Andreas Tunger-Zanetti ([andreas.tunger@unilu.ch](mailto:andreas.tunger@unilu.ch)) and Reinhard Henkel ([reinhard.henkel@geog.uni-heidelberg.de](mailto:reinhard.henkel@geog.uni-heidelberg.de))

## NEW BOOKS

### *Postsecular Cities: Space, Theory and Practice*

edited by Justin Beaumont edited by Christopher Baker

*Exploration of postsecularism in theory and practice of urban life, evaluating the secular-to-postsecular shift in terms of public space, building use, governance and civil society.*

*Imprint:* Continuum

*Series:* Continuum Resources in Religion and Political Culture

*Pub. date:* 18 Aug 2011

*ISBN:* 9781441144256

296 Pages, paperback

World rights Translation Rights Available Cost \$39.95

This book reflects the wide-spread belief that the twenty-first century is evolving in a significantly different way to the twentieth, which witnessed the advance of human rationality and technological progress, including urbanisation, and called into question the public and

cultural significance of religion. In this century, by contrast, religion, faith communities and spiritual values have returned to the centre of public life, especially public policy, governance, and social identity. Rapidly diversifying urban locations are the best places to witness the emergence of new spaces in which religions and spiritual traditions are creating both new alliances but also bifurcations with secular sectors. *Postsecular Cities* examines how the built environment reflects these trends. Recognizing that the 'turn to the postsecular' is a contested and multifaceted trend, the authors offer a vigorous, open but structured dialogue between theory and practice, but even more excitingly, between the disciplines of human geography and theology. Both disciplines reflect on this powerful but enigmatic force shaping our urban humanity. This unique volume offers the first insight into these interdisciplinary and challenging debates.

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***Exploring the Postsecular: The Religious, the Political and the Urban***

Justin Beaumont

The re-emergence of the religious in secular domains has led prominent scholars such as Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor to speculate about a new 'postsecular' age. The alleged shift from the secular to the postsecular is most visible in the spheres of urban public space, governance and civil society. This volume addresses contemporary relations between religion, politics and urban societies primarily from a theoretical perspective, while also paying attention to empirical manifestations of the central conceptual ideas. The primary focus is the relations between public religion, deprivatization of religion and theorizations of modernity and modernities, with the secondary and closely related focus on theorizing postsecular urbanism including the role of faith based organizations (FBOs) in cities.

**GORABS online journal**

The *Geography of Religions and Belief Systems Specialty Group* of the Association of American Geographers invites submissions for its on-line journal, *Geographies of Religions and Belief Systems*. The journal, published once a year, features substantive articles, commentary, book reviews, and debate. Editorial Board members represent a wide range of geography of religion and religious studies approaches and include John Corrigan, Julian Holloway, Lily Kong, David Ley, David Livingstone, Carolyn Prorok, James Shortridge, and Roger Stump. All papers will be double-blind reviewed.

Please visit the specialty group's website for information (<http://gorabs.org>) regarding length, format, and other particulars.

Questions may be directed to Elizabeth J. Leppman, editor, at [ejleppman@windstream.net](mailto:ejleppman@windstream.net)  
Please consider submitting a paper based on recent research, collaborations, debates, or presentations at appropriate academic conferences.

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**Minutes of GORABS Annual Business Meeting for 2011**

The annual business meeting of the *Geography of Religions and Belief Systems (GORABS)* specialty group of the *Association of American Geographers (AAG)* was held in Union Tower, Fourth Floor, at The Sheraton Hotel, Seattle, Washington.

on Friday 15th April, 2010, commencing at 11.50a.m.

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**Present:** Elizabeth Olson (EO) and Peter Hopkins (PH), joint-chairs; David J. Butler (DJB), secretary; David Rutherford (DR), treasurer; Ed Davis (ED) immediate past chair; Elizabeth J. Leppman (EJL), journal editor; Michael P. Ferber (MPF), Daniel H. Olsen (DHO), Justin Tse (JT), Brad Huff (BH), Justin Tse (JT), Garreth Smith, David Hatter.

**Apologies:** Avril Maddrell; Cameran Ashraf (CA), webmaster.

**Opening and Minutes from 2010 -**

The meeting was called to order by PH, who welcomed the attendance at the annual business meeting. Copies of last year's minutes, as well as the 2011 business meeting agenda, having been provided by DJB, were circulated amongst the attendance for consideration during the meeting.

PH then called upon the attendance to introduce themselves; this done, the floor was then opened for the discussion of issues pertinent to GORABS.

The minutes of the 2010 GORABS business meeting were then passed - proposed by DR and seconded by DLM.

It being a biennial year, the election of the principal officers was the first item on the agenda. As EO and PH would be progressing to the position of joint immediate past chairs, in accordance with the GORABS by-laws, the secretary of 2009-11, DJB, was declared elected chair of GORABS for the period 2011-13, by acclamation. He duly accepted the position.

It was proposed by MF and seconded by DJB that Justin Tse succeed to DJB to the position of GORABS Secretary, serving in this office for two years (2011-13) before automatically progressing to the position of chair (2013-15); this was put to the attendance and, the position responsibilities having been explained, Justin elected unopposed to the position of Secretary.

The GORABS officers requested that David Rutherford continue as Treasurer for another year, to which he was perfectly agreeable.

As DO and DMD are mid-term in their GORABS service as ordinary committee members, the filling of these two positions does not arise until our 2012 Business Meeting.

With regard to the other two ordinary committee member positions now falling vacant, DR nominated MF, seconded by DO to the first vacancy: the position of OBM/Webmaster working with Cameron. Mike was previously a chair of GORABS, and the resolution was passed with acclaim, the board expressing delight at having Mike back in GORABS service. With regard to the second vacancy, ED proposed and EO seconded the name of Garrett Smith of Kennesaw State University, Georgia: GS was duly deemed elected to the position of ordinary committee member.

### **Financial Report for the year 2010-11 -**

The financial report of our treasurer, DR, reported a \$750 dollar outlay for the Sopher award (2009), which was paid during 2010; also a \$250 gratuity to Professor David Ley for his delivery of the 2010 GORABS Annual Lecture, as also to Professor Lily Kong, for her delivery of the inaugural (2009) GORABS Annual Lecture, also paid during 2010, as at the time of the lecture, the guest lectureship did not carry a stipend or gratuity.

The GORABS financial reserves are, therefore, as follows:

**Checking Account: \$1,535.92   Savings Account: \$2,733.50   Total Reserves: \$4,269.42**

Two further cheques have recently been written, of \$250 each - one in payment of the agreed travel bursary for Brad Huff to attend this AAG 2011 conference and the second to Dr Claire Dwyer, our 2011 GORABS Annual Guest Lecturer.

The treasurer concluded that we need place a check on the healthiness of our account - it is too healthy! We need some worthwhile projects on which to expend our resources!

We have only 61 members paying dues. We need to promote ourselves far more.

He suggested that the Sopher Award be, in future, presented at the GORABS award banquet. We could also promote the Annual GORABS lecture in advance once we know the lecturer. We must use the facility of having a highlighted session way more.

#### **AAG 2011 Conference Report -**

We were very lucky this year with the timing of our business meeting and annual lecture, although we could do with more time for the conducting of our business meeting. We also need a report on every paper session from a participant (incoming secretary and chair to seek these, as last year) and ED has kindly agreed to submit his notes, again this year, from the annual lecture.

As agreed last year, post-conference newsletter should include a list of all sessions and a summary of the papers delivered at the annual conference.

#### **GORABS ListServer -**

With regard to our ListServer - we really must (immediately!) put all the names from the old server onto the Jiscmail server, which has been operating for almost a year, as permission may be assumed, it having been given in each individual signing up to the original server. We have lost a lot of communication flow in not seeing to this before now.

#### **GORABS website -**

The site had two updates during the year - the uploading of the 2010 newsletter (there was only one, owing to lack of submissions, possibly due to the listserver difficulties noted above) and one further update done, about ten days before the conference, with a memorandum of GORABS events, times and dates, for the convenience of our members.

MF will work as webmaster, as he has access to the site, and CA may assist as necessary. Some updates are needed almost immediately, in view of the earlier than usual holding of the AAG 2012 conference, in February 2012, in New York.

#### **The Sopher Award -**

This GORABS-sponsored award for younger scholars or early career/non-tenured faculty was again not awarded this year, owing to lack of applicants. We did advertise it on the GORABS website again throughout this year, but owing to an oversight, the date was not updated from 2010 to 2011. Also, we missed opportunities to promote it on the AAG newsletter, so we will promote both opportunities for 2012 and beyond, also looking at advertising to a wider audience through other printed and electronic outlets which our GORABS membership has access to.

#### **The Stoddard Award -**

This is our senior scholar award, and needs to be awarded only occasionally. We could link the award automatically to our annual guest lecture, but some of the attendance was apprehensive

about this. Perhaps a better idea would be to use the award between conferences, and we could look at awarding it to senior scholar Wilbur Zelinsky, in the next month or two and we could then advertise this in the AAG newsletter. Other names on our short-list since last year's meeting include David C. Harvey, Roger Stump, Wilbur Zelinsky and Ceri Peach.

### **The Third Annual GORABS Lecture -**

This was organised by PH and EO and was this year delivered by Claire Dwyer; the event attracted an attendance in excess of twenty persons and, while not so well attended at last year, was most enjoyable and informative. The room had seating 40 which is appropriate, but we overlooked having the event noted as our highlighted session in the AAG news, which we must ensure does not happen in 2012 or in the future.

The lecture itself, titled 'A', was very well received, and a lively question and answer session ensued, directly after which the Annual Business Meeting was held.

In terms of the 2012 GORABS guest lecturer, it would be good to have a crossover or interdisciplinary scholar, who would attract attendance from beyond GORABS. Fourteen names had been placed before the 2010 Annual Business meeting, for consideration. PH reported he and EO had been in touch with Rachel Silvey of Toronto, and undertook to approach her in connection with the 2012 GORABS Annual Lectureship; failing that, we can approach Professor David Livingstone or another on the 2010 short-list.

### **GORABS Online Journal -**

The online journal has had only one enquiry - talk of a print journal as its not viable otherwise. Maybe access the conferences and editorial board to find submissions.

### **RGS-IBG Geography of Religions, Faith and Spirituality Working Group (GRFSWG) -**

DJB gave a brief small update on RGS group, as the business meeting time allocation was rapidly drawing to a close, and participants for the next paper session were already entering the room to set up!

The GRFSWG organized a very enjoyable and well attended session in September 2010 at the Royal Geographical Society in London, in the context of the annual RGS-IBG conference, followed by an equally successful annual business meeting. Some of the group was in attendance at AAG2011, but the main focus will be (in addition to the RGS 2011 conference) to making a contribution to the AAG 2012 in New York.

### **Any Other Business -**

EL gave update on Stanley Brunn's religious atlas. People are to write her their email.

We will look, as a committee, at continuing the annual travel bursary. Again this would be positive news to report in the AAG newsletter between (or shortly before) the annual conference and this can only be good in raising our GORABS profile.

DJB reminded the attendance of last year's board meeting suggestion (from Stanley Brunn, on sabbatical in Iceland this year) that GORABS invite theologians and religious scholars from the locality the AAG conference is held in each year, to our sessions and the AAG could look at waiving the attendance fee. Perhaps we could sponsor/organise a fieldtrip or indoor event (given the February weather at New York in February 2012) [?!]

On these, and all other matters, the committee will liaise electronically in the coming weeks, and also via the newly augmented listserver, where all members of GORABS may have their say in initiating new discussions or contributing to existing ones. Indeed, the listserver should be used far more for discussion than simply announcing conference events.

There being no further business, the 2011 Annual GORABS Business Meeting closed at 12.40p.m.