Session Title
Temporality, Spiritual Ethics, and the Marketing of (Dis)Enchantment

With globalization and expanding communications networks, the formations upon which individuals have traditionally anchored identity — local, religious, as well as political — become increasingly unsettled. Such changes create space for the development of new subjectivities, embedded in social relationships and systems of power, which engage both innovative visions of community and new criteria for exclusion and marginalization.

This session explores “religion and time” through understandings of the past, fascination with and rejection of "the time before.” Bringing together scholars working in diverse geographical, religious, and historical contexts from the US and Europe to Indonesia and Senegal, our conversation engages issues of emphasis and erasure, especially as instantiated through constructions of knowledge, authenticity, ritual performances, and material culture. Drawing on theorists from Mary Douglas and Max Weber to Alfred Gell and Jane Schneider, broad themes running through the papers include dis/enchantment, nostalgia, and economic globalization.

Each of the communities we consider here wrestles with self-understanding, continuity of relationships, and local livelihoods in the face of industrialization and market capitalism. The first paper considers a religiously motivated, North American fair-trade community and members’ struggles with ways that the production and consumption of household goods come to be gendered. Another category with gendered implications, “spirituality,” becomes a tool through which community members smooth over the disjuncture of the Ten Thousand Villages’ histories and present. The second paper focuses on the mobilization of past religious teachings to support current economic development efforts in a Senegalese Sufi order. These nineteenth century models are applied to contemporary community challenges, such as environmental stewardship and community organization. The third paper investigates misalignment between traditional arts in Indonesia and global practices of intellectual property law, such as copyright. Resisting ownership of traditional art forms is not “anti-capitalist,” but instead involves a recognition of ancient origins, successive collaborations, and art producers’ need for local autonomy in the face of global markets. The fourth paper engages Weber to consider ways that traditional non-human-others are mobilized by contemporary communities from Iceland to PNG to articulate and support resistance to environmental degradation, thus becoming both a pre- and post-modern response to versions of economic globalization that do not account for the well-being of nature and human communities.

Paper 1
Where the Heart Is:
Nostalgia, Gender, and Consumption in a Religiously Motivated Fair-Trade Organization

Laurel Zwissler, Central Michigan University, laurel.zwissler@cmich.edu

In North American public space, hard-policed tensions between secularity and religion in the public sphere, while nonetheless allowing a third category of “spirituality” to flourish, have historically relegated all non-economic transactions to the private sphere. This traditionally feminine domain is idealized as free from the Douglasiand dirt of politics and the flow of history.
Yet the market also intervenes in intimacies, with domestic consumption representing care-taking, that is, women’s moral value. As strict separation between home, community and world becomes increasingly untenable, a nostalgia for this imagined refuge underlies many contemporary discourses: political, religious, and economic. Double-edged messages of domestic consumption as both moral virtue and as frivolous, even corrupting in its required engagement with the outside world, create a historically familiar problem for women, caught in the middle as conduits between public, in this case the market, and private, the home and heart.

I bring these historical trends together with fieldwork on a fair-trade organization in the USA and Canada, Ten Thousand Villages, which works with volunteers, predominantly women. Participants negotiate between their loyalty to the Christian group who founded the project and their desire to compete in a secularized retail market. In this struggle, the language of spirituality serves both to present the stores and their household items to customers as non-religious, and to justify this presentation as nonetheless faithful to the original religious roots of the fair-trade project. Spirituality becomes an attempt to promote tacitly gendered ethical values, originally grounded in a particular religious community, as universal.

Paper 2
Religiously Present and Past in a New Senegalese Sufi Community

Laura L. Cochrane, Central Michigan University, cochr1ll@cmich.edu

Mbacké Kajoor, a rural historical site for the Murid Sufi Order in Senegal, is now home to a new daara, a spiritual community. A focus on religious education paired with economic development motivates the leaders of the new daara. They see a combination of knowledges—qur’anic, agricultural, and trade—as a way to bring economic development to the area, and are thus building an educational center that will train people in all of those areas. They are modeling this new project after the religious teachings of Shaykh Amadu Bamba, founder of the Muridiyya. Bamba started his teachings here in the late nineteenth century. The Muridiyya has since grown to be one of the most populous orders in Senegal, and has a substantial international reach. Many credit Bamba for “bringing Islam to the modern era” by addressing the nineteenth century economic and environmental needs of the Sahel through his religious teachings.

The leaders of the new daara are implementing Bamba’s ideas in a new educational center and daara, this time to address twenty-first century challenges, including economic globalization. By drawing on Bamba’s teachings, they call on the intense connection Murids feel to their founder’s teachings and the community Bamba built. This paper argues that the project has had early success and resonance within the Muridiyya because their connection to the past has encouraged widespread participation in the current building project.
Paper 3
If the Puppets Want to Live:
Ritual Arts, Ancestral Time, and Intellectual Property in Indonesia

Lorraine V. Aragon, University of North Carolina, aragon2@ad.unc.edu

Many practitioners of Indonesian regional arts—including shadow puppeteers, gamelan musicians, masked dancers, and textile makers—say they do not consider themselves to be individual creators of their works, but merely followers of their group’s traditions. Following Alfred Gell’s notion that the cultural arts repertoire serves as an “extended mind,” I examine how a transgenerational sense of creation and spirited artworks inform the way Indonesian producers seek authenticity, local prestige, and ritual efficacy. Acknowledging ancestral origins for their practices, most Indonesian artists and artisans rebuff recent initiatives to enclose their works with copyright or other intellectual property laws. Artists’ denial of authorship claims over dramatic performances and works of graphic art emanates from a sense of their position on a continuing trajectory from ancestral spiritual achievements toward future realizations. Government agents argue that traditional artists thereby throw away profitable protection for cultural property. By refusing ownership over arts resources and legal prohibitions on imitation, though, artists limit potential alienation of their local production as well as the disenchantment of their practices and industry by outsiders. Despite appearances, most Indonesian regional artists are not rejecting a modern capitalist lifestyle in pursuit of some nostalgic past. Rather, their narratives and practices reveal how they prioritize promotion of their skills and spiritual knowledge of breathing arts while subsuming creativity beneath a venerated canon of temporal depth. Their stance maintains local relationships of respect and service to their familiar audiences (human and numinous) without which their collaborative idioms and livelihoods will fall into desuetude.

Paper 4
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirits of Anti-Capitalism:
Re-Rethinking Disenchantment, Again

Michael Ostling, Arizona State University, Michael.Ostling@asu.edu

Historians and social scientists have been debating Max Weber’s notion of “disenchantment” for nearly a century. Lately, the critics have seemed to be in the ascendant, with one eminent scholar recently dismissing disenchantment as a “dead horse.” The present paper attempts a resuscitation by sidestepping the usual narratives of secularization and progress into which disenchantment is usually corralled, focusing instead on disenchantment and re-enchantment as local practices intending rupture with (or reconnection to) a “time before”—a time imaginatively remembered variously with revulsion or nostalgia. Following Jane Schneider and sharing her longitudinal, comparative framework, I highlight the deployment of spirits—huldufolk in Iceland, fairies in Ireland, demoiselles in France—to re-assert (or invent) traditional obligations toward the land and its resources. Recollections of the fairies can be acts of romanticized nostalgia, but they can also serve to motivate resistance to the encroachments of globalizing modernity.

Discussant:
James Peacock, University of North Carolina, peacock@unc.edu
Sleepless Nights: Rituals of Nocturnal Sociality

Panel Co-Organizers: Robert W. Blunt, Religious Studies, Lafayette College
Zebulon Y. Dingley, Anthropology & History, University of Chicago

Panel Chair: Zebulon Y. Dingley, Anthropology & History, University of Chicago
Discussant: James H. Smith, Anthropology, University of California Davis

In his classic ethnography of the Andamanese, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown argued that “the feeling that night is a time of insecurity”—its “negative social value”—is a result of the relative suspension of public social life between sunset and sunrise (1922: 333). The correlation of intense sociality and privacy or isolation with cyclical patterns in the natural world has roots in Durkheim (1912), and is evident in the work of other of his intellectual heirs (Evans-Pritchard 1940, Mauss 1950). But in this understanding, ethnographic evidence for the nocturnal continuity of social life (like the collective singing and dancing rituals of the Andamanese, which Radcliffe-Brown describes as occurring only at night) become functionally adaptive responses to the “social dysphoria” of the night, rather than calling its very existence into question.

Nevertheless, the cultural distinction between night and day is a salient one calling for explanation and theorization, as are the common associations of night and darkness with danger, secrecy, and supernatural agency. Rather than assume that these associations spring from the vulnerability of isolation from the society on which individuals depend and that nocturnal religious or ritual activity addresses these feelings, this panel examines “night” as a temporal framework within which the boundaries between the licit and illicit can become fluid, or be suspended entirely. Like the “liminal phase” of rites of passage (Van Gennep 1909), the night is structured in its anti-structure (V. Turner 1966, T. Turner 1977) by concrete practices. These papers analyze a range of nocturnal practices (real and imagined) for the ways they might produce, rather than respond to, nocturnal imaginaries. By prioritizing nocturnal ritual as a form of embodied social memory (Shaw 2002), this panel thus approaches the study cultural concepts of the night as complex historical phenomena.

Drawing on ethnographic field research in Kenya, Tanzania, and India, the papers explore the nighttime as the scene of encounters between witches and dreamers, naked men and frightened villagers, albinos and artisanal miners, in which fertility, political legitimacy, and social health are all at stake: Sean Dowdy’s paper explores an event of collective panic in an Northeast Indian village, where rumors of hostile “naked men” emerging from the forest and terrorizing villagers every night for two weeks, to reflect on how such panics often resist ritual or cosmological resolution. By contrast, Robert Blunt examines an institutionalized form of naked, nocturnal terrorization—“nightrunning,” in Western Kenya—as a ritual of socially distributed fertility dependent for its efficacy on the anonymity of darkness. Jane Saffitz’s paper examines the occult capacities of albino body parts for miners and traditional healers in Tanzania, using Swahili concepts related to bodily fate and light to consider the possibilities that emerge from decoupling associations between night, darkness, and seeing. Laura Meek situates dreaming in the Southern Tanzanian Highlands within a range of transformative practices in the struggle against the occult agency of witches, and Zebulon Dingley analyzes contemporary Mijikenda fears of nocturnal witchcraft in relation to histories of political decay and intergenerational conflict.
The Arrival of the Naked Men: Reflections on a Collective Panic
Sean M. Dowdy, Anthropology, University of Chicago

This paper explores an event of collective panic that occurred in Mayong (Assam, India) in June 2013. For two weeks, villagers reported nightly encounters with “naked men” (langta manuh) who had emerged from the forest, threatened violence, and lacked intelligible speech. As reports increased and panic set in, village elders instructed a group of uninitiated boys (deka raiz) to set up a nightly camp and act as sentries to protect the households. Huddled with makeshift weapons, they gathered each night around a fire, trying to make sense of who these naked men were, where they were from, and what was to be done about them. Each day, their nightly embellishments were added to the public accounts, which in turn became more elaborate in their rumorings. Borrowing inspiration from Julien Bonhomme’s work on pan-African “penis theft” rumors, this paper explores how sense-making of a collective panic both mirrors and amplifies ambiguities present in the everyday interactional order. It also considers the panic as productive of a more general trope of “nocturnal enmity” (xondhyar xotruta) in Mayong, which exhorts warnings about what to do when encountering strange people, animals, and things that are “out of place” in the darkness. Scaling up, the paper concludes with more general reflections on the limits of the cosmological imagination in states of panic—i.e., when interactions take on an air of violent immediacy, resist ritual order and attunements, and shatter what Kant once noticed as the sublime connection between the “starry sky above” and the “moral law within.”

Doing Theory After Dark: Running at Night in Western Kenya and the Anthropology of the Good (Enough).
Robert W. Blunt, Religious Studies, Lafayette College

Sherry Ortner has recently described Marxian and Foucauldian inspired anthropological concerns for power, domination, and inequality as “dark anthropology.” In juxtaposition, recently Joel Robbins has challenged anthropologists to explore ideas of the good life, conceptions of value, and ethics in different ethnographic contexts; what he calls an “anthropology of the good.” Between these poles, this paper attempts an anthropology of the “good enough” to examines beliefs and practices that may partially, and counterintuitively, ground local conceptions of trust. The phenomenon of “nightrunning” in Western Kenya, I argue, undergirds an economy of lending and borrowing—rather than theft and victimhood—of reproductive potential; nightrunners remove their clothing at night to “bang their buttocks” against their neighbors’ closed doors and throw rocks at their roofs to prevent neighbors from “sleeping,” a euphemism for sexual intercourse. Due to the way Bukhusu understand nightrunners to be sterile unless they “run,” while annoying, they are nonetheless considered deserving of sympathy. Key here is that Bukhusu do not necessarily see such seemingly absorptive nocturnal activity as witchcraft. While the identities of nightrunners are protected by the darkness of night—a chronotope which usually indexes witchcraft and political corruption—Bukhusu claim that nightrunners are categorically people that one knows “in the light of day.” The paper inquires how practices like nightrunning can help us rethink what constitutes social intimacy and trust where liberal discourses about good governance have proliferated, and are structured in no small way by tropes of transparency and light.
Laying Bare the Work of Good Fortune: Albino Medicine, Visibility Politics and Fate as Bodily Practice.
Jane L. Saffitz, Anthropology, University of California Davis

Based on 18 months of research in Northwest, Tanzania, this paper explores the healing practices of artisanal gold and diamond miners alleged to consume *dawa* (medicine—broadly conceived) containing the body parts of people with albinism. In recent years, rumors have attested to the occult capacities of albino bodies to increase one’s lot in life and suggest an underground trade in albino body parts led by traditional healers, miners and politicians. Through an ethnographic vignette capturing the (occult) perils of mining and healers’ remedies, I explore the potentials of albino body parts to navigate darkness and attract mineral wealth. This requires expounding on two concepts salient to miners and critical to the capacities albino body parts: *nyota* (literally ‘star’ but also ‘fortune/fate’) is a multidimensional embodied force unique to clans and individuals—its status an indicator of one’s social, moral/ancestral and bodily alignment. *Mwanga* (‘light’, ‘brightness’ and ‘enlightenment’) is a crucial component of healthy *nyota*, as those that are dark, dirty or tarnished signal that one has been bewitched. Essential to mining in that torches are necessary to navigate darkness beneath the earth’s surface and discern trace amounts of gleaming minerals, *mwanga* is also used by miners as metonymic of economic, social and personal development. In contextualizing these concepts in the pursuits of one miner, Nsembi, I elucidate the logics and potentials of albino body parts for miners and suggest a decoupling of conventional associations between night/darkness and daytime/light, as well as between light/seeing and darkness/unseeing.

Dreams as Medical Practice in Tanzania
Laura Meek, Anthropology, University of California Davis

In contemporary Tanzania, dreams are often understood to be experiences of the world, rather than expression of subconscious desires, fantasies, or fears. As has been documented in Africa and beyond, in cases of bewitchment dreams may be perceived as one’s soul interacting with that of the witch during the night (Evans-Pritchard 1937, Ginzburg 1966). In this paper, I explore a case of bewitchment of a family that I followed closely for over a year during my fieldwork in the southern highlands of Tanzania. I focus specifically on the dreams of the mother, Sarah, and their role in curing her daughter, to argue that such dreams (njozi) can be construed as a type of ‘medical’ practice. I draw from Green’s (1996) argument that the Swahili concept ‘dawa’ (usually translated as ‘medicine’) is better understood more broadly as ‘transformative substance or practice’. I explore how the “other dimension” where Sarah’s dreams took place is characterized by its own forms of causality and temporality, involving ‘transformative substances/practices’ such as the ‘name of Jesus’, ‘the fire of Jesus’, the ‘power of darkness’, and spiritual strength. Sarah learned to practice this ‘dawa’ through her church (based out of Texas), and she and her family do not see her actions as witchcraft, even though her nighttime battles culminated in the death of a relative. I draw from this case, as well as regional colonial documents (Brown & Hutt 1935) and contemporary scholarship (Langwick 2010), to explore how such dreaming problematizes the distinction between medicine and religion.
The Bitter Flesh of Man: Predation and Necrophagy in Uwanga
Zebulon Dingley, Anthropology and History, University of Chicago

This paper examines Mijikenda imaginaries of a specific form of nocturnal witchcraft (Uwanga) in relation to precolonial institutions of elder power in coastal Kenya. 19th century Mijikenda society was structured by a gerontocratic hierarchy of age sets and ritual guilds responsible for the maintenance of social order through the administration of “oaths,” the adjudication of disputes, and the levying of ritual fees and fines. The most powerful such group were the Azhere a Fisi, or Hyena Elders, owners of the lethal Hyena Oath and ritual friction drum, the Mwanza, which when played was supposed to have sounded like a hyena. But as the gerontocratic order and guild systems went into decline over the late 19th and early 20th century, the ambivalent regard in which elder power had been held increasingly gave way to fear and suspicion. By the second half of the 20th century a form of witchcraft had developed that I argue condenses and reimagines the negative dimensions of predatory elderhood in nighttime rituals of domestic invasion, enslavement, castration, and necrophagy modeled on local imaginaries of what may have occurred during the secret nocturnal meetings of the Hyena Elders. Through the case of a village headman accused of Uwanga, I suggest that such low-level officials within Kenya’s Provincial Administration—as the figures currently responsible for village-level dispute resolution and assessing related fees and fines (now called “corruption”)—have become new foci of political ambivalence, suspicion and fear manifest in specific forms of contemporary South Coast Kenyan witchcraft.

Sleepless Nights: Rituals of Nocturnal Sociality

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Discussant
Panel Proposal for Society for Anthropology of Religion biannual conference 2017

Panel name: Ontology, Cosmology, and the Politics of Ethno-Racial Difference
Convenors: LaShandra Sullivan (Reed) & Elina I. Hartikainen (HCAS)
Discussant: Michael Cepek, UT San Antonio
Presenters: Brent Crosson (UT Austin), Elina I. Hartikainen (HCAS), LaShandra Sullivan (Reed), Kerry Chance (LSU)

Ontology, Cosmology, and the Politics of Ethno-Racial Difference

This panel examines the politics of recognition of race and ethnicity as produced by and in our "time". Via ethnographic analyses the panel asks how ethno-racially marked subjects make claims for racial and ethnic recognition through invocations of cosmological relations to objects like air, spirits, forests, and land. While the "ontological turn" in anthropology has been criticized for its detached relationship to the political realities of its ethnographic sites, the subjects of anthropological analysis do on occasion claim ontological alterity for political purposes. This panel examines how ontological arguments contribute to the making of race- and ethnicity based political claims to state recognition. Thinking beyond questions of authenticity, how do contexts of different racial ideologies-- national, regional, or diasporic--entail the mapping of race and ethnicity onto onto-epistemological arguments in such a way that it is taken up as politically efficacious performance?

Is God a Trini or a Rock?: Time, Nation, and Ontological Difference in Amerindian and African Rituals of Sovereignty
Brent Crosson Asst. Prof. UT Austin

This paper asks how the nationalisms of Amerindian and Afrocentric cultural activists in Trinidad alter: 1) the germinal opposition of diasporic and indigenous presence in the Americas, 2) the conceptions of territorial sovereignty/nonsovereignty that derive from this opposition, and 3) the dominant temporal framings that have defined the Caribbean as an eminently modern region. In the Caribbean region, scholarly and popular accounts have often assumed that Amerindian nations disappeared, and that the African slaves who allegedly came to “replace” these autochthonous populations were separated from their indigenous land of belonging. In detailing how an Amerindian and Afrocentric movement assert the endurance of their nations in Trinidad, I propose a concept of multinationalism. As opposed to the dominant framings of the Creole or multicultural nation, which posit different forms of national unity-in-diversity, multinationalism posits an agonistic field of sovereignties, defined primarily in terms of iterative practices of ontological difference rather than territorial dominions. As such, their sovereignties of practice propose neither a system of mutually exclusive units nor a framework of “nested sovereignties” (Simpson 2014). As these Amerindian and Afrocentric nations form solidarities through differing with modernist conceptions of sovereignty, they articulate nations through sedimented presences that exceed the framing of the Caribbean and/as modernity.

“Oxalá goes to war!”: African Deities Enter Politics in Salvador, Brazil
Elina I. Hartikainen, Core Fellow, Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies
In the 2000s, activists from the African diasporic spirit possession religion Candomblé successfully mobilized large numbers of the religion’s practitioners into a religious political movement in Salvador, Brazil. A key aim of the movement was to carve out a space for the religion and its practitioners in Brazilian political discussions. In addition to practitioners, the project found a receptive audience in state representatives and institutions invested in expanding Afro-Brazilian social and political inclusion. This paper explores the tensions but also new political possibilities created by Candomblé activists’ efforts to bring their religious political project in dialogue with the secular expectations of state recognition. More specifically, I ask 1) to what extent and in what ways do Candomblé activists discuss the centrality of co-present African deities to the religion's ontology as part of their political project, and 2) what effects do activists' efforts to bring such religious notions of divine agency into the field of secular politics have on the deities? I argue that on the one hand activist assertions to the direct participation of the deities in Candomblé politics provide a means to push at the boundaries of secular politics, but on the other hand the ways in which the deities are described by activists to act in the political sphere are heavily constrained by the concern with presenting Candomblé as worthy of state recognition. Ultimately, then, the paper traces the ways in which Brazilian state politics of recognition condition and constrain but also reconfigure the performance of ontological alterity.

Guarani “Being” and Land Struggle
LaShandra Sullivan, Assistant Professor, Reed College

This paper examines ontological claims to Guarani ethno-racial being and territorial belonging amidst often violent conflicts with agribusiness interests in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. Central to this analysis are the historical production of race and ethnicity amidst transitions from a cultural regime linking ecology and cosmology to one based on flexible labor, profit, and legal claims. Specifically, Guarani activists sometimes reference the spirit “owners” (donos) of forests in their land claims. The ongoing presence of the spirits are especially notable given the absence of forests due to the massive deforestation of the region that has accompanied a long favored agribusiness development model. That model displaced Guaranis in the state and reintegrated them into the countryside as day laborers, commuting from city peripheries and indigenous reservations to work for agribusiness firms. Many of these same Guaranis return to the countryside to protest for land reform by occupying plantations in roadside squatter camps. This paper analyzes the land conflict by relating Guarani protestors’ condition as floating labor to their invocations of spiritual ties to land and Guarani being.

Habitable Air: Climate Politics in Urban South Africa
Kerry Chance, Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University

This paper examines how residents of shack settlements in urban South Africa manage air pollution that is at once biochemical, cosmological, and infrastructural. I approach air pollution from the perspective of long-standing political struggles to breathe from below, rather than as a new crisis to be solved by governmental efficiency, corporate accountability, or technocratic expertise from above. I focus on the tension between breathing and being unable to breathe without facing radical life-shortening illness, characteristic state in historically racially segregated and environmentally endangered communities. Examining a key practice mediating this state that residents refer to as “coughing out” (uKubhodla in the isiZulu vernacular), I ask how state-citizen interactions over air pollution shape, and are shaped by, the production and destruction of intimate domestic spaces, and
the securitization of formal and informal infrastructures. I interrogate how these co-constitutive built environments map onto new legislation, practices of bodily healing, as well as forms of scientific knowledge. The paper broadly aims to analyze how breathing, the most taken-for-granted of human activities, is a highly differentiated practice across urban geographies. A multi-scalar ethnography of breathing illuminates how ordinary citizens grapple with the post-liberation struggle era. In this vein, I argue that breathing embodies innovative challenges to an emerging consensus about climate politics.
Double Panel  
Society for the Anthropology of Religion  
May 15-17, 2017, New Orleans, LA

Title  
When the Gods Read What We Write: Rhythms of Reading and Writing across Theology and Anthropology

Panel Co-Organizers  
Dr. Marc Roscoe Loustau, Catholics & Cultures Fellow and Visiting Lecturer, College of the Holy Cross  
Dr. Hannah Hofheinz, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Church History, Ecumenical Theological Seminary

Abstract  
The papers gathered together in this double panel address a question that emerges at the unstable nexus between rhythms of theological and anthropological reading and writing: What happens when scholars take divine beings seriously as subjects (and not only objects) of theological and anthropological reading and writing?

The title glances toward the 1996 edited volume When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography, but seeks to take advantage of a far-reaching insight emerging from the late 1990s self-reflexive zeitgeist in anthropology. At that time, anthropologists were becoming increasingly aware that their “own” key concepts and practices of reading and writing were being used in surprising ways, and this awareness brought a relativization of the discipline’s cherished notions of ethnographer-as-subject and cultural other-as-object. Where the phenomenon of non-anthropologists reading anthropological texts exploded ethnographic notions subjectivity and objectivity, we ask what startling consequences arise when the gods read what anthropologists and theologians write.

Panel I gathers four papers that consider the themes of memoir, temporal becoming, and possession, with a response by a leader in the field of theologically-engaged anthropology. Loustau’s paper considers the practice of memoir-writing in Hungarian-language “sacred ethnology” as a form of engagement with the face of the Virgin Mary. Theologian Henderson-Espinoza will examine the auto-ethnographic memoirs of Gloria Anzaldúa, challenging us to consider the possibilities of forming non-hegemonic subjectivities through epistemologies of the body. Reed will draw on ethnographic work in Washington, DC and memoirs of demonic possession to transgress conventions by invoking three voices of possession into an anthropological space. Finally, Whitmore troubles the religious/secular distinction by considering ethnographic practices as forms of temporal becoming that “enable us to be stronger than anything that may happen.”

Panel II gathers five papers around the topics of formation, writing, and divine agency, with a response by a comparative Catholic-Hindu theologian. Gonzalez engages the work of anthropologist Galina Lindquist to explore how spectrality and neoliberal disjunctions of time
blur the border between “religious” and “critical” reason. Considering whether theological meanings shift over time, comparative Catholic-Islamic theologian Takács asks whether writing about a text entails some participation in the revelation from whence the text emerged. Relatedly, Seeman explores the relationship between sacred and secular publishing in Hasidic Judaism to raise questions about the transcendence of ethnographic texts. Dugan uses ethnographic work with millennial-age American Catholic missionaries to argue that prayer practices condition temporal frameworks within which these missionaries learn and practice gender. Hofheinz will show how Marcella Althaus-Reid draws on Michelle Rosaldo’s ethnographic research to illuminate the liberatory consequences of understanding “God” as theology’s authorizing subject.

Collectively, the presenters will address potentially unsettling questions for the disciplines of theology and anthropology, many of which concern notions of rhythm and time: How do our understandings of reading and writing change when humans and divine beings engage in them simultaneously? Do human and divine beings read and write within the same temporal frameworks or using the same rhythmic styles? What limits to knowledge and understanding are undermined or reinforced when humans and divine beings read and write together? The panels address these questions critically and reflectively. By bringing together theologians and anthropologists, the panels not only talk about the topic at hand, but perform it. In so doing, they will expose for explicit consideration implicit transdisciplinary practices shared among theologians and anthropologists.

Panel I: When the Gods Read What We Write: Memoir, Temporal Becoming, and Possession

Chair
Dr. Marc Roscoe Loustau, College of the Holy Cross

Respondent
Dr. Derrick Lemons, Willson Center Fellow of Religion, University of Georgia

Papers
“Memoir and Sacred Ethnology in Contemporary Transylvania”
Presenter: Dr. Marc Roscoe Loustau, College of the Holy Cross

Works of “sacred ethnology” are not only bestselling popular-academic texts in contemporary Hungarian-speaking communities, they also challenge deeply-held assumptions about the subject of ethnographic reading and writing. This paper presents an interpretation of two representative sacred ethnological texts, The Mystery of Csíksomlyó (Pallás Akadémia 2000) and The Glory of Csíksomlyó (Pallás Akadémia 2010). The author, a Franciscan priest named Árpád Daczo (Father Lukács), combines several genres and research methods: intensive ethnographic fieldwork, bildungsroman memoir, oral research presentations at academic conferences, Catholic natural theological reflection, and mystical narration. His intentional blurring of mysticism and ethnography challenges anthropological conventions about the subject of reading and writing. In The Mystery of Csíksomlyó, he writes about opening a new ethnographic text at which point he collapses to his knees, loses consciousness, and sees “the Blessed Virgin Mary smiling at me as clear as day.” These visions lay the foundation for his own ethnographic research and textual
production. I will argue that the tradition of sacred ethnology shows a potentially jarring, and therefore generative, way of putting anthropology and theology into conversation with each other. In Daczó’s writings, divine beings are full-fledged subjects and active contributors to the reading, writing, and dialogue that lie underneath ethnographic argumentation as its lived practice. Sacred ethnology also recasts the practice of ethnographic writing as a form of remembering. Remembering and writing become a series of face-to-face encounters with the Virgin Mary, and the ethnographic past becomes an account of sharing intimate facial expressions.

Title: “Non-Hegemonic Subjectivities: The Role of Radical Interconnectedness and Theories of the Flesh”
Presenter: Dr. Robyn Henderson-Espinoza, Pacific School of Theology

Western epistemologies have created, what I call, hegemonic subjects. Rooted in the logic of white supremacy, hegemonic subjects result from a radical disconnection from the temporal rhythms of becoming. Conversely, non-western epistemologies (including non-western epistemology of the body and theories of the flesh) impact and construct non-hegemonic subjectivities through a temporal rhythm of becoming that is entangled with the radical interconnectedness of all things. Religion plays an important part in this work, but not in the traditional, western sense that is an over-exposed feature of contemporary U.S. life. I look instead to the writing and thought of Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating to shape a theory of radical interconnectedness that plays an important role in the formation of today’s non-hegemonic subject through the temporal rhythm of becoming.

Title: “Unblinded: coming to grips with demonic possession at the Little Vatican”
Presenter: Dr. Joel Christian Reed, Michigan State University

Anthropological models of spirit possession have proven useful to a range of scholars, yet recently seem to have hit their limit. While documented academic accounts of possession witness to the phenomenon’s existence, they point most often to abstractions, relativizing evil as culturally, religiously, and emotionally charged. A common trope is that possession events and behaviors are subject to learning and amenable to social patterning. Other grids for interpreting possession include neurological and psychological frameworks. Stripping the topic of subjective interpretation in the name of neutrality few scholars opt to vouch for the genuine existence of evil spirits. Doing so might threaten one’s career or reputation, even while opening up startling new roads of analysis and conjecture. Based on two years of fieldwork in Washington DC’s ‘Little Vatican’ neighborhood, this paper brings together three types of voices that might otherwise never come into the academic conversation: American demoniacs, the demons who speak through them, and clergy and lay members of the exorcism and deliverance community. Conclusions point to one of anthropology’s grandest failures, that of sidelining orthodox Christian views on the nature of objective evil. Refusing to allow supernatural explanations of possession to stand on their own, anthropology is being surpassed by a range of writers particularly in the subjects of theology and memoir. If divine beings could read what anthropologists write on the topic of possession, they would point out that the unifying, transcultural theories we seek were revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.
This paper argues both with and against Foucault’s understanding of *askēsis* to make the case that the religious/secular divide in anthropological modes of reasoning is overdrawn. Foucault, drawing from the ancient Greek concept meaning “training” or “exercise,” defines *askēsis* as the “set of necessary and sufficient moves, of necessary and sufficient practices, which will enable us to be stronger than anything that may happen in our life.” Understanding ethnography as a form of *askēsis* helps to move us beyond the debate over whether ethnographic practice is a science or an interpretive “art.” It is, in significant respects, both. However, Foucault sets up his particular understanding of *askēsis* over against what he describes as “the” Christian understanding. Christian *askēsis*, according to Foucault, requires fundamental self-renunciation, whereas that of ancient Greece “involves, rather, acquiring something.” This distinction is overdrawn, as is evidenced, for instance, by St. Ignatius of Loyola’s *Spiritual Exercises*, which are designed precisely so that the retreatant can “acquire” the skills necessary for discernment in the context of “anything that may happen in our life.” The fact that Foucault overdraws the distinction between ancient Greek and Christian *askēsis* suggests that it functions, like the terms “secular” and “religious” themselves have in the discipline of cultural anthropology, as a boundary term meant to mark off other projects from his own. Once we recognize its limits as such, then it becomes possible to allow the rubric of *askēsis* to frame our understanding and practice of ethnography in such a way as to broaden the range of theoretical commitments and genre expressions in anthropology to include “religious” modes, and to interpret this as a positive development for the discipline.

Panel II: When the Gods Read What We Write: Formation, Writing, and Divine Agency

Chair
Dr. Hannah Hofheinz, Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology and Church History, Ecumenical Theological Seminary

Respondent
Dr. Mathew N. Schmalz, Associate Professor, College of the Holy Cross

Papers
Title: “‘If you pray about it, God’ll give you an opportunity to do it’: Gendering Prayers, Catholic Millennials, and the Rhythms of Ethnography”
Presenter: Dr. Katherine Dugan, Springfield College

The ethnographic study of gender and religion has been reconsidering “agency” in the lives of religiously-imbued men and women. My paper asks what happens when scholars consider that part of the “agentic capacities” (to reference Saba Mahmood) of the religious subject is God—divine beings active in human time. This paper draws on ethnographic work among millennial-generation Catholics who strive to embody gender-essentialist ideals of woman- and manhood. Each morning, these young adults spent close to an hour engaged in disciplines of this gender-essentialist performativity with gendered—and gendering—prayer forms. Women inhabited the...
feminine genius through prayer journals and men practiced authentic masculinity with daily examinations of conscience. I propose “gendering prayer” as an analytic framework for examining the role of divine beings in gender formations. The first part of this paper studies the ways gendering prayers created the conditioned times and spaces within which missionaries both learned and practiced their gender performances. The second part of my paper considers what is at stake for scholars in examining the divinities active in the ethnographic lives we study. How ought we make sense of the force of gods in the day-to-day lives of religious practitioners? What rhythms do we have to pay attention to in order to write about them? How do we attune our linguistic ranges to be capable of describing and analyzing these claims? This paper concludes by asserting that our ethnographic language is enhanced, not limited, by considering the agentic capacities of divinities in our research.

Title: “Conjurations of Spiritual Capitalism: The Anthropology of Galina Lindquist Between the Imperatives of Critique and ‘Real Presence’”
Presenter: Dr. George Gonzalez, Monmouth University

Those who have studied “religion” have often used their own distance from “religion” (especially its popular expressions) to caricaturize and dehumanize others. Recently, Robert Orsi has called on historians of religion to write history with the ‘real presence’ of divine and spiritual beings restored to the scene of scholarship and Amy Hollywood, further advancing a longstanding thematic within her thought, has argued against the tendency in critical circles to associate the ‘religious’ with uncritical epistemologies. For her part, Aisha Beliso-De Jesus writes of transnational experiences of Santería in terms of “co-presence”. However, the realities of an explicitly spiritual neoliberal Capitalism pose a special political quandary for the those who study religion: What do we risk and what is at stake when we critique new forms of Capitalist spiritualities, as scholars of religion, on political grounds and what do we risk and what is at stake if we fail to draw connections between Capitalism’s organized conditions of precarity and the ghostly figures it gives rise to? In this paper, I will, as a primary matter, turn to the work of the late ethnographer of post-Socialist Russia, Galina Lindquist, still largely unknown in American religious studies, to posit a framework for engaging explicitly capitalist spiritualities in ways that can hold larger economic structures politically accountable while also, at the same time, eschewing the tendency to denigrate and reduce the magical practices of ethnographic subjects on critical grounds. As Derrida suggests and Jean and John Comaroff have also maintained, neoliberalism is characterized at a constitutive level by a certain disjointedness of time and spectrality that disrupts ontologies of both linear progress and of the ‘real’. I will turn to Lindquist's ethnography to discuss the ways in which spectrality is lived out at the level of intersubjectivity and the ways in which conjuration muddies the borders of 'religious' and 'critical' reason.

Title: “Liberating Lives in Text: When a Theologian Learns from an Anthropologist How to Write”
Presenter: Dr. Hannah Hofheinz, Ecumenical Theological Seminary

The late Argentinean theologian, Marcella Althaus-Reid, taught that we come to know God within the daily rhythms of desires, relationships, and actions—as truly lived. This requires attending carefully to the materials of human life in concreto. Theology’s failure to do so
impoverishes (and perhaps fully occludes) its achievement of its fundamental task. To echo the liberationist mantra: theology must remain a second act; life always comes first. Per Althaus-Reid, attention to the materials of life as lived unlocks ideological cages that make the theological understanding of the concept “God” into a pet object, rather than theology’s authorizing and transforming subject. Althaus-Reid’s sharpest words on this subject critique feminist liberationists who purport to center theology in the lives of Latin American women, but who instead project an objectified image of women into their theological construction. As part of her critique, Althaus-Reid reaches for guidance from feminist anthropologists to learn how to write human life with temporally and socially dynamic specificity. For instance, she suggested that Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo’s ethnographic practices manifest in text the materiality of the Ilongot’s negotiation of bodies, violence, and social opportunity, and learning from her opens possibilities for politically liberative theological writing. This paper argues that Althaus-Reid’s work exposes productive tensions that arise when anthropology teaches theologians how to write about the complex rhythms of human life. These tensions, I suggest, open space to reconsider the potential need for divine agency in theological or anthropological writing—and its political implications.

Title: “The Demand for Subjectivity in Comparative Theology”  
Presenter: Axel Marc Oaks Takács, Harvard Divinity School

Comparative theology is a method of entering into a discursive religious tradition other than one’s own in order not only to learn deeply therefrom, but also to be transformed with new theological insights granted from the process of interreligious reading practices. The primary media for this process are texts from the intellectual and spiritual tradition of another religious tradition. The comparative theologian is often trained in the methods and theories of the study of religion and area studies as well as in the theological tradition of the so-called home tradition. While the field requires objectivity in the act of critically explaining the history and context of the texts, it will inevitably fail if the scholar refuses the subjectivity demanded in the act of appropriating the perduring meaning conveyed in the act of interpretation. The scholar takes seriously the claims of the text’s author, especially as it pertains to the inspiration or revelation whence he/she claims the text emerges. As such, the text becomes the field of the comparative theologian who very nearly appears to be giving agency to it. What is the role of subjectivity in the process? How does the scholar avoid projecting meaning onto the text (eisegesis)? Is the practice truly interreligious whether or not the present-day religious community still holds this text of meaning and value? When the scholar writes after her engagement with the text, in what way is she somehow participating in the ongoing revelatory or even mystical experience whence the text emerged? Finally, how might the study of religion learn from comparative theology? This paper aims to begin to answer some of these questions.

Title: “Inscribing Divinity: Writing Chabad Hasidism”  
Presenter: Dr. Don Seeman, Emory University

In the Hasidism of the Chabad movement, writing and publishing are not just potentially sacred acts, but acts that may well constitute participation in a divine drama of messianic revelation. The recent Rebbe’s contributions to the world of publishing (including ritual acts of publishing sacred books in different settings through portable technology) are legendary. But this leads the
ethnography of Chabad into a set of quandaries. Is the academic scholar a participant in the divine drama by dint of publishing and clarifying the teachings of the movement, and what responsibilities would that entail? How do Hasidim themselves understand the interplay of academic and sacred publishing and work to blur or demolish boundaries between the two? And what happens when the anthropologist places the locus of authority in everyday life rather than the established teachings of the movement and its leaders? This is a familiar post-modern moment for ethnography at large but here the question of the transcendence of the ethnographic text is posed.
The politics of religious time and secular time

Convenor: Kim Knibbe, University of Groningen

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What time do we live in (Butler 2008, 1)? This is a question that is answered differently across religious and secular contexts. Pentecostal and evangelical networks and churches may propose a millennial eschatology, urging people to become saved on a personal level but also shoring up Christian Zionist politics (Shapiro 2012). How does this relate to the everyday religious practices advancing a modernist sensibility of continuous progress and improvement? Alternatively, religious actors may propose cyclical notions of time, practicing a repetition of history that invests this with moral and political significance. Conversely, secular actors (including researchers) may view religious actors as belonging to a different time, representing something that moderns have ‘left behind’, implicitly promoting a teleology of increasing liberation and freedom. History repeating itself, from this perspective, is a problematic notion that may express anxieties about the state of the world, and the role of particular (religious) actors.

Notions of history and time thus always imply a politics of ‘othering’. What consequences does this have? How do these politics of othering reinforce or challenge implicit and explicit (racial, class, economic, gender) hierarchies? What empowerment is placing oneself in a particular time expected to afford on the level of everyday life, as a group and politically?

Meanwhile, it is important to also address the ‘politics of time’ in anthropological research and writing, as pointed out famously by Johannes Fabian (Fabian 1982). What are the implicit assumptions on time and the other that animate anthropological and sociological research agenda’s in the past and the present (c.f. Harding 1991)? How have they contributed and co-constituted religious and secular notions of history and time? Anthropology, but especially more ‘applied’ forms of the social sciences such as sociology and non-western sociology are intimately involved in constructing modernist notions of time, as well as constructing the infrastructures of modernism. Has the anthropology of religion sufficiently accounted for the role of the social sciences in the politics of time? How might anthropologists of religion discover new ways of understanding the interactions between religious time and secular time by examining this role?

What time do we live in? In this panel, the contributors will explore how people answer this question differently, how they act on their notions of history and time, and how they relate to other notions of time and history. We will engage with notions such as “the politics of time”, denial of coevalness (Fabian 1982), as well as how sociology and anthropology have constituted religion as its ‘epistemological other’ (Vasquez in Bender et al. 2012, 23; c.f. Trouillot 2003).
Re-remembering and the 'usual cyclicity': on the value of temporal repetition in the Tokoist Church (Angola)

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Using as case in point the Tokoist Church in Angola, one of the largest Christian movements in Angola, I address the issue of temporal repetition in Christianity, focusing on the ideological and moral aspects involved in what could be seen as a 'theo-teleology': narrative and ritual displays that enact and simultaneously perform a theory of time. Describing the emergence and role of the concept of 're-remembrance' (relembramento) in the Tokoist Church's theology, I will explain how it addresses other, secular conceptions of time in Angola, which are mediated by the transition from colonial to independent, socialist and authoritarian regime. In this respect, I will argue that such Christian-based discourses on temporal cyclicity operate as conservative arguments vis-à-vis contemporary political conflict.

Keywords: Temporality; historical repetition; Angola; religion; politics.

Pentecostal time and secular time in the encounter between Nigerian missionaries and the Dutch

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In this paper I will explore the notions of time and history that underlie the encounter between Nigerian missionaries and Dutch secularism. In an earlier article I have described the encounter between Nigerian missionaries and Dutch secularism as a meeting of modernities. In this paper, I wish to elaborate on this notion, to examine ideas about time, progress and teleology in more detail, as well as how these notions contribute to a form of 'othering'. This includes an examination of how social scientists and theologians are themselves implicated in creating a narrative on secular time that implicitly creates an opposition between ‘migrants’ who are “still” religious and native Dutch, who have gone through the experience of dechurching, the sexual revolution and other upheavals to arrive in a time of progress. In the case of Nigerian Pentecostal missionaries, their self-identification, social and religious embedding very much resists this form of othering. Nigerian Pentecostals have created a vast and powerful transnational social field, focused on church planting in preparation for the end times. At the same time, their preaching on day to day life is very much focused on new beginnings, an eternal present where the future is brought into being through declaring and prophesying that everything will get better from this day onward. Where and how do religious and secular notions of time and history connect, and where do they depart? What consequences do these connections and
departures have? This exploration connects to a larger exploration of the ways differences are constituted in a post-colonial Europe through encounters between worldlings with entangled historical trajectories.

Religion, sexuality and secular politics of time in Dutch health approaches

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This paper analyses how a form of cultural politics – visible in Dutch health care practices that are claimed to be neutral - is legitimized by a paradoxical politics of time. Through an empirical case-study I investigate how the secular (as a break with the religious past) becomes part of an ever continuing present, while the religious (in whatever form or context) is always seen a ‘remnant of the past’. I explain how in contemporary discourse the so-called sexual revolution in the 1960s/1970s in the Netherlands is not only seen as a historical event, but serves as a strong symbol of a broader secular break with a religious past which seen as suffocating and oppressive. Drawing on Webb Keane’s (2006) concept of semiotic form I explore how within the practices and speech of these health organisations in their encounter with religious or cultural others, the sexual revolution is made part of the present rather than located in a particular moment in time. I argue that sexual health programmes serve to re-affirm the ‘secular break with the past’ as an act of Dutchness that has particular significance in the context of national health programmes (cf. van der Berg) as well as in international development (Bartelink 2016).

“Either Dusty or Dangerous”; Cultural Sexularism in the Netherlands

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This paper explores cultural secular interpretations and understandings of modernity in Dutch society through an examination of cultural secular notions of sexuality. In doing so, the paper urges for a much-needed careful and nuanced analysis of cultural secularism and the cultural secular. In the Netherlands, the notion of sexual freedom has become deeply intertwined with cultural ideas about secularization, resulting in stubborn convictions that see freedom from religion as a prerequisite for sexual liberation. Hence, sex, and sexuality in particular, have become crucial stages where boundaries between religion and secularism are imagined, highlighted, and discussed. In the three months of preliminary anthropological
fieldwork on which this paper is based, I explored secular sex and sexuality: those practices and notions of sex advocated by secular professional organisations (e.g. health-care organisations) working in this field. Secular sex was largely portrayed as the exact opposite of what was perceived as religious sex. Rather than advocating actual practices and notions of secular sex, organizations working in this field were more eager to discuss and illustrate how not to engage in sex, and this was precisely where religion came in. In this process of secular Othering, I observed a discrepancy concerning the secular attitude vis-à-vis Christianity, and Islam. Though many interlocutors expected ‘those weird Christians’ to, eventually, ‘get there’, I, additionally, observed some not to be underestimated insidious depictions of Christians as people not to be taken seriously. Islam, in contrast, was by no means presumed disappearing, as it was rather orientalised as an exotic religion that had arrived permanently. Expected to endure current modern times, though, Islam was simultaneously considered a very serious threat, pre-eminently because the supposedly Islamic notions of sexuality were, on many levels, considered very dangerous.

In sync with the time and synchronizing time: the Hillsong megachurch network

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In this paper I discuss the politics of time operating within the global Hillsong megachurch network from Sydney, Australia. This neo-Pentecostal church has developed into a global network of churches and has successfully initiated new churches in Europe and other continents around the world since the turn of the century. With the use of the latest media technology Hillsong churches offer a globally shared church experience through their music and by integrating elements of popular culture within a Pentecostal/revivalist tradition. It is Hillsong’s ambition to be a modern inclusive contemporary church in sync with the time, understood as modernity. With a globally standardized liturgy, a high circulation of travelling pastors, and the extensive use of social media, the Hillsong megachurch network challenges the limitations of time and place. Based in ethnographic research in Hillsong Amsterdam and in New York City, I will present various ways time is being synchronized and regulated as a mode of governance and control, as a mode of religious authentication and a mode of othering.

Earthing in a ‘modern’ age: Gardening, sacralization and the everyday politics of time

Dr. J.H. Roeland, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Drawing from interviews with passionate gardeners in The Netherlands, this presentation explores how such an ordinary activity as gardening can develop into a spiritual practice. I will in the first place describe the meanings people attach to this particular activity in terms of sacralization of nature and time. Secondly, I will explore the motivations for gardening that I found among the participants in this research, in order to formulate a sociological explanation for the ‘spiritualization’ of such an ordinary, prosaic activity as gardening. As I will suggest, these motivations take us back to well-known philosophical reflections on the ‘discontents of modernity’, as discussed by, among others, Freud and Giddens, and sociological analyses of ‘alienation’ on the one hand, and Weber’s notion of ‘cultural rationalization’ on the other. I will argue that the garden, which is often associated with pleasure and leisure, might actually be a space in which people cope with the tensions and struggles of ‘modern’ life, and develop alternative ways of living. Finally I will argue that the practice of gardening entails three perceptions of time: (1) a nostalgic perception, in which gardening is experienced as a way to re-connect to nature and ‘traditional’ life (a connection which, in the perception of these gardeners, has been lost in ‘modern’ times); (2) a hyper-actual perception, in which gardening is experienced as ‘being in the here and now’; and (3) a future-oriented perception, in which gardening is seen as contributing to a future ecological and sustainable world.
Title: Critique as Horizon, Critique as Specter: reflections from the anthropology of religion

Organizers: James S. Bielo (Miami University), Rebekka King (Middle Tennessee State University)

Participants: James S. Bielo (Miami University), Saliha Chattoo (University of Toronto), Nofit Itzhak (University of California, San Diego), Rebekka King (Middle Tennessee State University), Jon Bialecki (University of Edinburgh, discussant)

Sponsoring Journal: Critical Research on Religion

Format: Roundtable
- Each participant presents 5-7 minutes: succinct, engaging framings for panel-audience discussion drawn from fieldwork that highlight broad comparative issues and questions
- Discussant presents 5-7-minute response
- Discussion among presenters, discussant, and audience

Abstract:

Critical Research on Religion launched in 2013 and has become a premier inter-disciplinary venue for advancing critical theorizations of religion. “Critical” indexes an approach in which the positive and negative impacts of religion are identified and interrogated, with the hope of fostering human flourishing. In collaboration with the journal, this panel asks how anthropological ethnographers engage with the horizons of critique and the specter of critique in their fieldwork and writing on Christianity. What are the ambitions and challenges of a critical ethnography of religion? How does the critical theory of religion work alongside other paradigms? What methodological designs and techniques emerge from the critical orientation? Why are there differential imperatives to critique when researching “fundamentalist” or “progressive” religious communities and movements? Presenters take these questions up in a diverse set of ethnographic contexts: creationist imagineers who designed a recently opened biblical theme park; Pentecostal congregations who organize annual Hell Houses; Catholic charismatic humanitarian missions in France and Rwanda; and, Jewish Affinity Christians.
Time/Space in Global Christianity

Scholars have long connected time and space. For anthropologists, the conversation often begins with Durkheim who, along with Hubert and Mauss (1909), moved the study of time-space beyond metaphysics by insisting that it was socially constructed and therefore empirically observable. For Durkheim, human beings became aware of the extension of space and the duration of time by encountering boundaries and intervals—distinctions that arise from social life. “We cannot conceive of time, except on condition of distinguishing its different moments,” he wrote, “It is the same thing with space.” (1915: 10-11). Van Gennep’s work also provided an important early basis for considering the intersection of space-time in the social life of rituals (1960 [1909]). His stages of *rites de passage*—separation, liminality, and incorporation—relied on spatial and temporal metaphors to clarify how temporal changes in social status relied on the physical movement between places and over “thresholds.” For Van Gennep, such rites produced ritualized recognition of the passage of time and the differentiation of space.

Building on this early work, especially with regard to ritualization, anthropologists have demonstrated how kinship produces continuity with the past (e.g. Hugh-Jones 1979), how embodiment operates in collective memorialization (Low 2000) or how “social” time differs from the “monumental” time of physical structures (Herzfeld 1991, Halbwachs 1941). Through their work on place and embodiment, anthropologists have shown that time is not an abstract principle: it is shaped, organized, and punctuated (Barthes 1980) in complex ways as people negotiate the self and its relations to others (Munn 1986). More recently, Thomas Tweed (2006) theorized the ways that religion situates individuals and communities in time and space.

Our roundtable draws on this experience-near anthropology of time and space, while also examining metaphysical conceptions that insist that certain things are eternal and thus out-of-time, and that ritualization can in fact collapse space and speed up or reverse time in defiance of secular logic. Each of our short papers highlights an aspect of time/space in the context of Christian processes of becoming for individuals and the societies in which they live. More particularly, we ask how embodied practices produce but also exceed the local by stretching far back in time or by extending across “the globe” as a whole.

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**Sisters in Christ: Gendered Mentorship in Global Christianity**

Jessica Hardin  
Assistant Professor of Anthropology  
Pacific University
Joel Robbins (2009) argues that scholars have largely understood the global spread of Pentecostal Christianity as a process of compensation or deprivation in the face of the neoliberal transformation of global south societies. He claims that, while this may be true, scholars have neglected to ask how these churches succeed as institutions in these “kind[s] of resource-poor conditions” (Robbins 2009: 56). Robbins suggests that ritual may be responsible for the global institutional success of Pentecostal Christianity, defining institutional success of Pentecostal churches as “their ability to engage people’s time in the construction and maintenance of congregations that regularly come together to worship and whose members work to evangelize those who do not belong” (2009: 56-57). The key to the social productivity of Pentecostal Christianity is, he argues, the ritualization of social interaction. While the “ritualization of practice sacralizes everyday conditions” (Csordas 1997: 101), this ritualization also requires the organization and valorization of certain kinds of social relationships. Institutionalization, therefore, depends on diffusing the divine in everyday conditions and organizing people in time and space. Pentecostal churches in Samoa encourage people to fellowship—a Christian concept of being with others in Christ—and to form relationships in ways that do not flourish in other domains of everyday life. In this paper, I explore gendered peer relationships as essential to the institutionalization of global Christianity because they integrate newly born-again people into a new community. Specifically, women-centered friendships provide women with social support in the life-long process of developing “spiritual maturity.” These relationships provide guidance, feedback, and the co-presence of female others, which forms a community of social support.

That All May Be One: Simultaneity and Proximity in Child Sponsorship Programs
Hillary Kaell
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Concordia University, Montreal

Although scholars of language often focus on dialogism, in his recent work on Pentecostal ritual Matt Tomlinson (2014: 92-93) draws on Mikhail Bakhtin to describe how discourse can also exert a “centripetal force.” According to Bakhtin, the Enlightenment gave rise to “monologues” in which unity was “illustrated through the image of a single consciousness: the spirit of a nation, the spirit of a people, the spirit of history, and so forth.” By these lights, disparate voices could (and should) be “gathered together in one consciousness and subordinated to a unified accent” (1984: 82; also Erben 2012). As Bakhtin notes, a pure monologue is actually impossible. However, my interest lies in how Christian child sponsorship organizations have nevertheless engaged in many “monologue projects” that attempt to collapse time and space through the illusion of simultaneity. This paper focuses on two such projects: child-sponsor letter exchange and prayer concerts and calendars. In each case, I deconstruct how
organizations efface the exigencies of temporal/spatial difference—such as time zones or time lag in communications—to construct a sense of proximity. More broadly, this paper contributes to an ongoing discussion about the everyday practices that produce Christian globalism.

**Spiritual Pilgrimage as Time Travel: Chronotopes in African Diaspora Tourism**

Stephen Selka
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Indiana University, Bloomington

Afro-Brazilian religion plays a central role in the construction of Bahia, Brazil as a “living museum” and a “window into the past.” Drawing on Bakhtin’s concept of chronotopes, this paper explores the ways that anthropologists, religious practitioners, politicians and tourism promoters have framed Bahia as a place where Africa has been preserved more faithfully than in Africa itself. It focuses in particular on contemporary African American “pilgrimages” to Bahia and to the Afro-Catholic Festival of Our Lady of the Good Death (*A Festa de Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte*) in particular. There I explore the ways that African American travelers simultaneously frame Bahia as a place where they can connect with their ancestral past and Brazil as an underdeveloped nation where Afro-Brazilians have yet to achieve the level of politicized racial consciousness that African Americans have reached.

**The spatiotemporal transformations of Lutheran airplanes**

Courtney Handman
Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Reed College

In this paper I examine the overlapping concepts of time and space that were mediated by the first missionary aviation project in colonial New Guinea. When Lutheran missionaries turned their attention toward the highlands of New Guinea in the 1930s they also became the first to “use aviation for Christ.” In doing so they brought together three overlapping timescales: world historical concerns for Christian evangelistic advancement, colonial concerns about penetration into “primitive” spaces in the interior of New Guinea, and infrastructural concerns about the alignment of radio transmitter stations that the planes used to maintain position as they flew above the landscape. For Lutheran missionaries, the emerging capacity to move quickly across or above the New Guinea landscape was a central sign of the spread of Christianity. Missionaries emphasized the qualities of the different modes of transportation that they used as indexes of the Christian character of the region. From an imagined pre-Christian
immobility of “the natives” to the “muck” of the roads used in early mission history to the lightness, speed, and sense of freedom of the mission airplanes, transformations of the modes of transportation organized the evangelistic project and created the space and time in which that project took place.