

‘Politics of Religious Knowledge and Ignorance’
Society for the Anthropology of Religion (SAR) Conference, Victoria College,
University of Toronto, May 21-23, 2019

Abstracts

May 21

9:00-10:45am ~ VC 206

Gender, Religion, and Secularity

Chair: Jennifer A. Selby (Memorial University of Newfoundland)

- **Jennifer A. Selby (Memorial University of Newfoundland, jselby@mun.ca) Tracing Secular Sensibilities on Postcolonial Bodies: Transnational Muslim Marriage in France**
Beginning in 2006, a series of laws aiming to restrict *mariages blancs*, *gris* and *forces* ["fake, fraudulent and forced marriages") passed in France. Government officials argued that marital fraud had "not stopped rising," particularly among the transnational unions of French and non-EU national partners that, in 2005, made up one third of legal marriages. Further guidelines followed in 2010 and 2011 for municipal marriage officiants to assess marital love in such cases, as well as stricter punishments. This paper examines these laws as expressions of postcolonial governmentality that prescribe an increasingly narrowly defined "secular body" and as aimed at "traditional" arranged marriages. Drawing on the experiences of marrying transnational Muslims of Algerian origin in a Parisian suburb, I discuss some of the impacts of this regime on the bodies of my interlocutors. More theoretically, I critique and extend anthropological work on the secular body (Asad 2011; Connolly 2011; Hirschkind 2011), namely in that, in the contemporary French context, my data show the increasingly marked presence of "secular sensibilities", their necessary ties to a constructed and pejorative Islam, and their implicit mores on individualism and sexual emancipation.
- **Ali M. Kassem (University of Sussex, A.Kassem@sussex.ac.uk): Embodied Pedagogic Exercises: Coloniality and the Muslim Hijab in Lebanon**
Islamic dress has long been a topic of both public and academic work. As one of the most visible signs of Islam, and framed as a symbol of the religion, its motives, nature and roles have extensively been debated. Through photo-elicited in-depth interviews and focus groups with over 85 Muslim (Sunni and Shia) Lebanese women, this paper will argue for a pushing of the conversation outside of the Eurocentric epistemic territory. By building on, and surpassing, the work of Saba Mahmood (2001, 2006) I approach the various forms of the Hijab as a form of ritual and argue that the dress is a pedagogic exercise in a non-Western civilizational model activated and pursued through intention, repetition and a clear *Telos*. Further, putting Mahmood's work in conversation with Decolonial theory, and drawing out the dress as a marker of inferiority along the lines of the human (Grosfoguel 2011, 2013, 2014), I attempt to unpack the effect of coloniality (Mignolo 2011) on the success and possible forms of this embodied knowledge transmission. In doing so, this paper will explore the violent workings of coloniality in its erasure of non-Western forms of knowledge as it demonstrates their continued (borderline) existence.
- **Heather Munro (Durham University, heather.l.munro@durham.ac.uk): Religious Knowledge as a Tool for *Haredi* Women's Agency**
Judaism is unique among world religions in that religious knowledge is deeply encoded in texts, and textual study is an integral part of practicing Judaism. In the *Haredi* (ultra-orthodox) world, textual knowledge is tightly controlled by men, through strong rabbinical injunctions against women studying religious texts and having physical contact with holy books. However, due to social changes in the last twenty years, *Haredi* women have received more secular education, including more higher degrees; this has consequentially led to an improvement in the quality of religious education for girls, due to community leaders' fears of women leaving the religious life once they have contacts outside the community. This combination of more secular knowledge, combined with better religious education, has led to a new syncretic feminist movement in the *Haredi* world, where women adopt aspects of classic equity feminist ideology but reject ideas which clash

with *halacha* (religious law). *Haredi* women leaders in turn articulate a demand to differentiate between *halacha* and tradition in determining restrictions based on gender. Despite being denied access to texts, *Haredi* women are utilising religious knowledge to gain agency in resisting the male regime of authority.

- **Isaac Friesen (University of Toronto, isaac.friesen@mail.utoronto.ca): Religious Authority and Secularism in the Vernacular in Provincial Egypt**

Questions about the relationship between religious and secular authority have been widely debated in the anthropological literature. Scholars such as Hussein Agrama (2012) and Saba Mahmood (2016) portray secularism as near-hegemonic in society; controlling, transforming, and subsuming the religious at every turn. However, these perspectives have primarily understood the secular as a state project, and have not sufficiently considered secularism as a vernacular experience. My paper examines claims of religious authority at an adult language program in provincial Egypt. This program is unique in that, although it is run by the Coptic church, the vast majority of students are Muslim. Through an analysis of participant observation data collected over several years of research at the program, I will first illuminate how a secular ethos emerges at the program that complicates assertions that secularism entails a constant struggle and anxiety over the secular/religious problem-space. Having not observed religion to be a subject of regular contestation in the classroom, I then turn to the real dividing line in most program social dynamics and debates: gender. I argue that it is often contestations around gender that lead to exclusionary religious-based claims, and that these authoritative religious discourses mirror those routinely manipulated by the ostensibly secular Egyptian state. In conclusion, this project sheds new light on the interplay between religious and secular authority by showing how each category operates in the vernacular.

9:00-10:45am ~ VC 211

Entangled Agencies: Ethical and Legal Perspectives on Indigenous Religious Knowledge of Territory
Organizers/Chairs: Raphael Preux (Université de Montréal) and Émile Duchesne (Université de Montréal)

Panel abstract

In an age where, all around the globe, a considerable number of indigenous territories are subject to intrusive natural resources exploitation politics, governments are justifying such politics by an erroneous vision according to which indigenous people are not exploiting or truly using their territories. Anthropologists and other academics have long been investigating indigenous people's relationships with their territories as a non-intensive economy based on the respect for the environment. By doing so, some of them were searching for a paradigm differing from exploitation and a possible model that could inspire a quest for a better world. What we question is the economic reductionism of this position: by sticking to the economic practices of indigenous peoples, religious practices were sometimes assimilated to simple techniques of environmental control and management (e.g. dreams as omens for hunters). But it is an individualistic conception of agency that results from Western philosophy and consists of an asymmetric parallelism between a free will and a passively extended world. Our point is that economic and religious practices must be jointly understood when indigenous societies are studied, because both are so practically imbricated that they are almost ethnographically undifferentiated. In the study of indigenous religious knowledge of territory, anthropologists have not sufficiently stressed that the territory is less a given environment than a value and the source of a primary causality and juridicity, which are based on mythological narratives, norms and rules of conduct. We argue that territory is a source of agency, knowledge, and power for indigenous societies. Knowledge of the territory can be translated into a pragmatic and technical form of power but can also contribute to the acquisition of shamanic/magical power, whether it is in a mana-like form or another. In this light, relations to animal masters, ancestors, spirits and other non-human beings through dreams, rituals, singing and so on, concern the knowledge of an exteriorized territory and condition the possibility to act individually and collectively on and with this territory. Such a view questions and invites us to reconsider the complex modalities of agency in indigenous societies. This panel, by using a comparative approach between ethnographic contexts from indigenous societies in Amazonia and the boreal forest of Canada, aims to address the following questions:

- How are the territory's religious knowledge and its contextual and historical adaptations linked to indigenous conceptions of ethics and juridicity?

- How do indigenous personhood and its inherent rights and obligations relate to territory? How are indigenous collectives constructed in relation to territory?
- How are knowledge about and from the territorial transmitted, forgotten and/or hidden, depending on historical and intersubjective contexts?
- What is the importance of the territorial in the relation of indigenous collectives with non-human beings?

Individual papers

- **Carole Delamour (Centre interuniversitaire d'études et de recherches autochtones, cdelamour@hotmail.fr): "Knowledge-power": Rethinking Power in Light of the Relational Skills of the Ilnuatsh of Mashteuiatsh**
In Algonquian traditions, there are power distinctions between the different types of people using drums to communicate with non-human entities who share ancestral territory (Tanner 1979, Vincent 1973, Savard 2004). However, today, in a context where use of territory and associated knowledge are decreasing, these distinctions are not so clear anymore and tend to be recomposed. This paper is based on research conducted between 2012 and 2017 on the relationship that the Ilnuatsh of Mashteuiatsh, in Quebec, have with the *teuehikan* (drum). I will present the ilnu *teuehikan* practice and the different powers associated with *kakushapatak* and *kaminotoshit*, both of which refer to people who have the power to mediate with non-human beings through *teuehikan*. I will analyze how these distinctions of power are now apprehended, in a context where the practice of *teuehikan* is being revitalized, after being subjected to religious and cultural prohibitions. We will see that what is currently valued in these forms of power no longer relates so much to spiritual powers as to knowledge and acuity in understanding territory. We will suggest some lines of thought to understand how these semantic valorizations refer to skills and intimate relationships with territory and the animals that the Ilnuatsh are reappropriating.
- **Robert Crépeau (Université de Montréal, Robert.Crepeau@umontreal.ca): "We are the Masters of the Forest": Kaingang Religious Knowledge in Perspective**
Among the Kaingang of Southern Brazil, a *kujà* (or shaman) is distinct from another *kujà* by the fact that each one has a different animal *jagrê* (or guide) which also turns out to be a *tóg*, a term that could be translated as "master", i.e. the master entity of the animal species. The *jagrê* therefore corresponds to a master entity, which has specific characteristics in terms of its physicality and interiority. The importance of the concept of the "master entity" in rethinking relationships with animal or plant entities seems fundamental. Indeed, the anthropology of religion has long translated the relationship described by shamans with their auxiliary entities into magico-religious terms. However, the fact that shamans refer to prototypical animals or plants that are the master entities of their species - and not particular members of them - radically transforms our understanding and the translation of what they express on this subject. The elicitation of master entity concepts cannot be adequately done by the usual referential method that assumes a correspondence between words and the world. Their interpretation must be based on the system of rules, obligations and rights that these concepts introduce into the flow of social practices and interactions.
- **Raphaël Preux (Université de Montréal, raphael.preux@montreal.ca): From Secrecy to History. Achuar Politics and Epistemology of Visionary Knowledge**
The ways of socially sharing one's visionary knowledge among the Achuar of Ecuador illustrate a case where the classical model of the communicative act (information passed by a Speaker to a Catcher-Hearer) collapse. First, the potent person (*kakaram*) achieving a vision quest through communication with a territorial ancestor (*arutam*) has to keep it secret and avoid assuming the role of direct transmission. Then, after many years, this very vision often turns into a complex narrative, including many co-speakers, where individual biography become entangled with local history and legends, mythical imagery or narratives, and political discourses. This diachronicity, or social life, of one's visionary knowledge challenges a reductive understanding of visions as timeless collective representations, in which individuals participate to exercise symbolic control over their environment. Moreover, while visions are narratively presented as omens, Achuar people, like anyone on earth, know that some predicted events do not occur. So, unless we accept the return of the spectrum of the principle of contradiction, it is necessary to rethink the epistemology of Achuar visionary knowledge and the relations between individual agency, territorial ancestry, and collective fiction or imagination. I suggest a pragmatic understanding of Achuar visionary knowledge as a specific modality of social relationships, in which the acquisition of power is made problematic but also possible through a set of ritual obligations that produce intertwined agencies beyond the classical dichotomy between individual and collective.

- **Émile Duchesne (Université de Montréal, Emile.duchesne2@gmail.com): Territory as Value: Producing Value and Persons Among the Innu of the American North-east**

In this presentation I want to show how territory has emerged as an economic value among the Innu of Unamen Shipu, an Algonquian speaking people who were traditionally nomadic hunters and gatherers in northeastern Quebec (Canada). In the first place, I will show how the relation with territory was fundamental in the production of the person in Innu society. Hunting and gathering activities permitted the Innus to acquire *manitushiun*, a mana-like form of shamanic power whose accumulation is constitutive of Innu personhood. Even if this dimension is still important today, major changes have occurred since the Innus left nomadism in the half of the 20th century. The experience of dispossession and the emergence of the capitalist mode of production have led the Innus to think of their territory in terms of value. They have noticed that their land could now be sold according to the logic of the Canadian state. In response, they have developed their own non-market value of territory, which complements the traditional production of persons. This new conception of territory has led to an inversion of the relationship between personhood and territory: at the time of nomadism, mobility depended upon kinship ties whereas nowadays production of personhood is dependant upon relationships with territory as well as its physical integrity. For the Innu, seeing territory as value is an ethical stance based upon their traditional belief and mode of conduct conceptualized in opposition to the politics of the State.

9:00-10:45am ~ VC 212

Experiences of Religious Authority

Chair: Jean-Michel Landry (McGill University)

- **Jean-Michel Landry (McGill University, jean-michel.landry@mcgill.ca): The Shari'a and the Questions That Animate It**

The Islamic legal tradition (or shari'a) continues to develop and expand today through a hermeneutic mode of inquiry called *ijtihad*. The principles and methods subsumed under the term *ijtihad* enable classically trained clerics to derive from Islam's scriptural sources a set of ethical guidelines that help Muslims confront key issues of our times—e.g., sex-reassignment surgery, investment in Bitcoins, gender asymmetries. In recent decades, anthropologists and historians have shown that this practice of knowledge is often driven by the need to answer questions and concerns coming from the laity. Indeed, many Islamic scholars mobilize the tools of *ijtihad* to solve the doubts or dilemma of ordinary Muslims.

This paper seeks to expand our understanding of Islam and other knowledge traditions by conceptualizing *ijtihad* as a practice aimed not only at answering questions, but also at raising new ones. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Lebanese religious seminaries (2012–2013), I show how aspirant shari'a scholars learn to raise, debate and formulate questions deemed relevant within the knowledge economies of Islam—i.e., questions that are informed by the Islamic tradition and, if adequately pursued, promise to enrich it. By approaching the shari'a through the set of questions (rather than the rules or precepts) that animates it, I propose a rethinking of how religious traditions develop and the role that questions as well as other forms of problematization play in this process.

- **Christa Mylin (SUNY Albany, cmylin@albany.edu): Believing and Belonging: Finding Space to Belong in the American Mennonite Church**

The American Mennonite Church in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, has existed for over three centuries. Some people remain in the church because of ancestral connections, while others have only recently joined a Mennonite church, attracted by their commitment to Anabaptism. This long-standing, tight-knit community has created a culture that appears intimidating to outsiders. However, personal interviews reveal that individuals raised within Lancaster County Mennonite culture also struggle to belong, due to personality differences or as a result of institutional restrictions, such as those limiting roles for women in the church. This study examines belonging as an emerging and fluid process, which is guided by personal relationships, experiences, and convictions. It also considers how belonging is hampered or encouraged by institutional structures, including both formal church structures and informal social structures that define social and cultural capital. This project is historical and ethnographic. It provides an overview of changes in church structures and power relationships within the last half century, noting a move toward less authoritarian

leadership. Focus groups and personal interviews offer insight into experiences of belonging, which are sometimes unconscious and emerge from external life experiences. Efforts to belong may be intentional, such as deciding to attend another congregation. This research concludes that belonging is a subjective experience and may change over time. Though it is impacted by external factors, it is largely determined by an individual's social relationships and personal beliefs.

- **David Belfon (University of Toronto, david.belfon@utoronto.ca): Because He Said So: Questions and Questioning in the Leavetaking Accounts of Formerly-Orthodox Jews in Toronto**

This paper explores the ways in which leavetakers from Orthodox Judaism in Toronto navigated questions and questioning in their former communities. The politics of questioning are central to their leavetaking narratives, with interlocutors identifying their former community's tendency to suppress questions, doubts and differences of opinion as being a key determinant for disaffiliating.

Leavetakers describe that fundamental and benign religious matters alike were above challenge throughout their upbringing. Home and school came to signify spaces of suppression and rote repetition, with willful ignorance becoming the order of the day. Interlocutors relate how the community's aversion to addressing questions about various aspects of Jewish observance and belief created an atmosphere not in keeping with engagement, discovery and meaning-making—tenets that leavetakers argue are crucial to practicing authentic Judaism. Interlocutors relate that if they persisted in asking questions on verboten topics they were labeled as troublemakers by rabbis, parents and teachers. A moratorium on tough questions meant that leavetakers frequently report feeling disengaged from Judaism, finding few opportunities to participate meaningfully in religious practice.

Upon reflecting on their time in the community, leavetakers posit that the Orthodox Jewish community's general distaste for tough questions and its inclination toward reflexive obedience stem from its prevalent culture of self-conscious ethnocentric privilege. Unsolicited questions, leavetakers argue, threaten the discourse of Orthodox triumphalism that keeps authority figures in power and limits community exposure to non-normative viewpoints on religion and religiosity.

- **Rachelle M. Scott (University of Tennessee, rjacobs2@utk.edu): To Know or Not to Know: Buddhist Epistemologies and Authority in Thailand**

South Asian religions have long placed an emphasis on the possession of religious knowledge as a prerequisite for religious authority, from the Brahmanical knowledge of a proper horse sacrifice (aśvamedha) to the salvific knowledge of the divine or the essential self. In early Buddhism, the wisdom of the Buddha was frequently contrasted with the limited ritual knowledge of the brahmin priest. The Buddha's wisdom was based on direct experience, not specialized training in Brahmanical texts and rituals. As the Theravada Buddhist tradition developed in South and Southeast Asia, however, Buddhists did, in fact, develop varying epistemologies based on knowledge of the texts, purity of practice, or ritual specialization. All of these were linked to distinct forms of Theravada Buddhist authority. This paper will explore the varying ways that knowledge (or the lack of it) is linked to religious authority in contemporary Thailand. In particular, the paper will focus on contemporary Buddhist education (and its links to the monastic ranking system), forest meditation masters (many of whom are lauded as illiterate), and the monks and spirit-goddesses whose knowledge of lucky numbers trumps other indices of religious power.

9:00-10:45am ~ VC 215

Author-Meets-Critics: A Discussion of Jon Bialecki's *A Diagram for Fire: Miracles and Variation in an American Charismatic Movement*

Organizer/Chair: Courtney Handman (University of Texas at Austin)

- **Participants:** Webb Keane (University of Michigan), Andreas Bandak (University of Copenhagen), Matthew Engelke (Columbia University), Hillary Kaell (Concordia University), Girish Daswani (University of Toronto), Timothy Larsen (Wheaton College); **Discussant:** Jon Bialecki (University of Edinburgh)

11:00-12:45pm ~ VC 206

Belief and Ignorance in Religious Practice

Chair: Nicholas R. Abrams (University of Toronto)

- **Nicholas R. Abrams (University of Toronto, nicholas.abrams@mail.utoronto.ca): “You Wanna get Twoored?”: Ignorance of Evil and the Racial Politics of Witchcraft in KwaZulu-Natal**

Despite the centrality of colonialism to the history of witchcraft and the anthropology of witchcraft, questions regarding race and racialization have been by and large treated as separate from this conversation. By approaching translations of witchcraft into Christian care hospices and church communities in a “Coloured” (a South African racial category that refers to those of mixed European and African ancestry) working class township in KwaZulu-Natal, this presentation seeks to follow the racial politics of witchcraft in the context of pervasive anxieties about citizenship and belonging as a minority group during decolonization. Contrary to those anthropologists of religion who argue that there no value to thinking about witchcraft in terms of “belief,” I take up the contradictions inherent to the contemporary “common sense” (that which was bequeathed by the genealogy of apartheid racial science) regarding the distinctions that people make between “African” and “Coloured culture” to follow how local understandings of the category “belief” might provide insight into the ways in which ideologies of race in South Africa are shifting. I explore the ways in which confusion about witchcraft is taken up in Coloured Christian discourses: how “ignorance” becomes a way of marking racial boundaries, how anxieties about “knowledge” of witchcraft are put into relation with broader anxieties about citizenship, and how concepts associated with the post-colonial production of so-called “African traditional religion” are being translated and racialized in (counter)public discourse.

- **Yahia Baiza (The Institute of Ismaili Studies, YBaiza@iis.ac.uk): Religion, Scientific Reasoning, and Knowledge: A Critical Examination of Religious Knowledge and Its Internal Properties**

Since the rise of Enlightenment in the early 18th century in Europe, religious knowledge has increasingly been criticised and challenged by scientific reasoning. For the latter, the validity of knowledge rests upon its verifiability by senses or provability by logic. Consequently, information and statements, religious or non-religious, qualify as a form of ‘knowledge’ when their inner quality, without any external referent, proves to be objective in a sense that they are not personal, private, and subjective. Rather, it can be shared, tested, and experienced publicly. Against this background, this paper presents a critical examination of religious knowledge, while taking into account the scientific criteria and justifications for knowledge.

This paper’s discussions are formed and informed by a central thesis, which asserts that religious expressions are not meant to provide objectively verifiable facts in the sense of modern scientific knowledge, even though a good number of them are scientifically verifiable and logically provable. Rather, religious knowledge is different in nature and purpose. The sub-thesis states that religious expressions, whether in the form of creeds or rituals, have a different set of functions, such as guiding and promoting the pursuit and transmission of knowledge, particularly ethical and spiritual. This paper concludes that religious expressions, tenets, and rituals, regardless of their referent to supernature or belief in God, possess many convincing and logically provable properties, regardless whether a person believes in them or not.

- **Guangtian Ha (Haverford College, gha@haverford.edu): The True *Murīd* Do Not Know: Ritual and Ignorance among China’s Jahriyya Sufis**

To an anthropologist in search of authoritative “explanations”, fieldwork among the Jahriyya would appear a nightmare. Nearly all rituals receive multiple explanations, some brief, others more elaborate; and many *murīd* (followers), aware of their relative ignorance, refer the anthropologist to those they consider in the know who often only provide further references. A search for meaning presently becomes a mapping of structures of power along lines of knowledge and ignorance. And yet when those who supposedly know are so few and far apart in their respective explanations, the search for “meaning” or symbolic explanation for ritual acts instantly runs the risk of reducing fieldwork to select interviews.

This presentation first traces the origins of such interpretive multiplicity among China’s Jahriyya Sufis, and then move on to argue that, in those Jahriyya rituals which seem to most resemble “liturgical rituals” in recent anthropological theory, there is still an irreducible grain of transcendence that transforms the mundane into the sublime. Ultimately this presentation asks, *how can we reformulate what we mean by the “symbolic” to rediscover within liturgical rituals those “WOW” moments that lead towards the transcendent? Do we need “meanings” to forge an essentially affective rapport with the sacred as well as the “social”?*

Returning to certain writings of Lévi-Strauss this presentation probes what classical anthropology can still offer by way of theoretical inspiration.

- **Anishka Gheewala Lohiya (London School of Economics, A.Gheewala-Lohiya@lse.ac.uk): Krishna has Stolen the Butter! On Not-knowing the Playful World of Baby Krishna**

A beatific blue baby god stares out, smiling naughtily as one hand goes in a butter pot, the other heading towards his mouth. Krishna has done it again, stealing butter and Vaishnava Hindu hearts. The Pushtimarg (The Path of Grace) believe that through their daily worship to a deity of baby Krishna they slowly develop a kinship relationship with Krishna; for my interlocutors, that of a devoted mother. Each day, devotees wake up, wash, feed, sing and play with their deity of Krishna, like one would their child. However, they live with a paradox. Unlike Hindu paths of knowledge (*jñāna*), the Pushtimarg lead with *bhakti* (devotion) which does not lead to knowledge. In fact, for them, the search for knowledge is a different path entirely, which is ultimately inferior to the path of loving and selfless devotion. One can never understand the true nature of Krishna as divine, despite devotees 'knowing' what your Krishna's favourite sweet is. The question this paper explores is how devotees perform their daily worship, while living in this contradiction, to develop a relationship with Krishna in order to 'know' him as a member of the family. I begin with Krishna's nature, both as divine and as a member of a devotee household, moving to discussions of different ways of 'knowing', while addressing how this particular ritual-like worship is a type of communication and relationship-building activity.

- **Khurshid Sana Khan (BRAC London, khurshidsanak@gmail.com): Madrasa-Based Religious Knowledge and Ignorance, Populism and Blasphemy Law in Pakistan: Untangling the Religio-Political Nexus**

This paper explores the religio-political nexus among rising populism in religio-political parties, position of belief in madrasa based system of knowledge, ignorance-fueled religious intolerance and its sources amid a rigid and populist application of the blasphemy law in Pakistan. It discusses the factors that affect such multidimensional nexus and highlights the impact of politicization of religion on the nature of religious knowledge and its dissemination through madrasas.

While the term 'belief' can be anti-modernist for many in the west, the notion of belief exists in Pakistan and religious knowledge imparted at madrasas aims to build religious beliefs and ethical and moral standards among madrasa students. In sect based madrasas, students form their own knowledge community and use it for their collective endorsement or rejection of situations.

The role of madrasas in recent inter linked blasphemy cases of a Christian woman Asia Bibi and of Mumtaz Qadri strengthen the view that certain madrasas endorse populist application of country's blasphemy law. The paper argues that the rise of a convicted killer Qadri to almost sainthood and the belief of thousands on his intercession powers can't be understood rationally as religious beliefs exist beyond rational grounds. Moreover, the debate between the Barelvis and the Deobandis on grave visitation and intercession aims at claiming religious power and authority over the body of Islamic knowledge and differentiating it from what they see as ignorance according to their belief and religious knowledge.

The paper concludes that while madrasas emphasize on the mystical experience of knowledge and many madrasas see the rejection of cognitive knowledge as something totally justifiable, Pakistan's wish to reform madrasas also needs to be viewed in the context of its indigenous experience of modernity.

11:00-12:45pm ~ VC 211

Mentoring Session 1

Chairs: Joel Robbins (Cambridge University) and N. Fadeke Castor (Texas A & M)

- This session is open to any graduate students.

Topics to be covered will include:

- Publications: thesis into book, conference paper into article, learning to edit
- Decolonizing the study of religion
- Work-life balance in academia

11:00-12:45pm ~ VC 212

Sacred Mountains: Politics, Power and Revelation

Organizers/Chairs: Jonathan Miles-Watson (Durham University) and Shayne A. P. Dahl (University of Toronto)

Panel abstract

Half a century has passed since Eliade (1959) posited a widespread phenomenological connection between sacred mountains scattered around the world. His ideas, developed considerably by Eck (1987), present a shared framework for understanding mountains as sites that mediate between culturally diverse formulations of earth and heaven, the world of the living and the realm of the ancestral dead. Mountains deemed sacred are mountains that appear to have a gravity of their own around which orbit spiritual communities, annual and seasonal ritual practices, and stories of otherworldly encounters. The various mountains that Eliade discusses are presented as diverse expressions of a central unifying, age old, conception of the Cosmic Mountain, which functions as an *axis mundi*, central to the stability and preservation of both local and global ecologies and, in some case, of the renewal of the world itself.

Eliade's conception has quite rightly been criticized (Leach 1966, Smith 1978, Korom 1992, et al.) for generalising from a superficial base of evidence and for missing crucial differences in its quest for harmony. Despite a surge in the ethnography of individual sacred mountains (Ortner 1999; Cruikshank 2005; de la Cadena 2015), anthropologists have resisted the recent comparative exploration of sacred mountains (Debariueux and Rudaz 2015, 40; cf. Gose 2018). In this panel we intend to return to the comparative exploration of geographically dispersed sacred mountains, while attending both to locally situated ethnographic details and the significant differences that can be traced between (and indeed within) the mountains under consideration. In particular, we explore the way that the global phenomenon of mountainous terrain is locally interpreted and translated into local politics and economies and how it figures into ways of being-in-the-world and being-towards-death (Heidegger 2010[1953]). As well as the power dynamics involved in the claiming, representing and remaking of sacred mountains through the engagement of both local and global groups. Power, politics, and revelation come into play on the slopes of sacred mountains. They are elevated nodes of history, around which competing temporalities gather, twist and compete for the future.

The papers that we have selected contribute ethnographically and historically rich accounts of life lived in, on, and around a sacred mountain. By placing the papers in dialogue with each other (and general theory) we aim to begin a conversation that attends to the complex ethnographic realities of the local ecologies of these mountains at the same time as demonstrating awareness of their relation to wider, global environmental, political, historical, and ecological concerns. Insights derived from developing long-term relationships with the mountains are brought into contrast with the position of these significant geographic markers in global discussions about ecology, spirituality, and the place of humanity in the cosmos.

Individual abstracts

- **Jonathan Miles-Watson (Durham University, jonathan.miles-watson@durham.ac.uk): From Mt Olympus to Mt Meru: Entangled Mountain Myths in Northwest India**
In this paper I engage Eliade's 'Cosmic Mountain' with the mountainous region of Shimla, located in the Western Himalaya. This region has variously been termed "our own Mount Olympus", "The Land of the Gods" and "the Mountain of the Goddess Shyamala Devi". I will employ these three acts of naming as convenient markers for the (admittedly more varied and complex) processes of colonial, nationalist and regionalist engagement with the mountain, as well as the knowledge of the mountain that is held by residents, intracontinental pilgrims and intercontinental tourists. In particular, I will focus on the way that this typology points to (and to some extent elides) the ongoing processes through which the mountains of this region have inspired the actions of the various humans who formatively move and knot around them. I will unpick this tangle of actors, as a way of assessing the assertions of power that lie behind claims of heritage, before demonstrating that the phenomenology of the mountainscape leads it to act as a node of significance, around which these various abstractions tangle - drawn together by the very tensions that pull them apart. There is, therefore, a cross-cultural element to the way that experiences of this landscape both develop and restrict the revelation/presentation of its being and this resonates with Eliade's original vision, opening the possibility of a return to the comparative theory of the Cosmic Mountain.

- **Jenny Butler (University College Cork, J.Butler@ucc.ie): Identity Politics and Power Play at the ‘Holiest Mountain in Ireland’**

This paper will examine the different ways in which Croagh Patrick Mountain in County Mayo, Ireland, has been utilized for the creation and maintenance of national and religious identities. Locally known as “Patrick’s Cone” or “The Reek”, and globally known as the ‘holiest mountain in Ireland’, it is home to the most well-known Roman Catholic pilgrimage in the Irish context, drawing thousands of devotees each year on the traditional date to make the climb, the last Sunday in July, which coincides with the harvest festival of Lughnasa, which has pagan origins. The association with Ireland’s Patron Saint, Patrick, symbolically representative of Christianity, lends much to the site’s religious and cultural resonances. A significant symbol in the mythic history of the country, it is believed that the site was important in the ancient pagan religion. Given the layering of traditions over time, the site is an interesting locus of religious syncretism, with identifiable “pagan” aspects being absorbed into the Christian pilgrimage. The layering of meanings around the mountain continues as different religious groups, including contemporary Pagans and Celtic Christians, attribute values and conceptualizations in a re-storying of this sacred landscape. By drawing on ethnographic data to examine the site’s significance in different contemporary religious worldviews, and how the site becomes a nexus between different traditions while also being a contested symbol and space, claimed by different groups as “their mountain”, many insights can be gained into Ireland’s changing religious and cultural landscape.

- **Maria Turek (University of Toronto, maria.turek@utoronto.ca): A Tibetan Sacred Mountain, Translocalized**

This paper offers preliminary thoughts on the cult of the mountain Dokham Kugyal in the historical Nangchen kingdom (1300-1950), located in today’s Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in China’s Qinghai Province. Situated just outside the capital of the kingdom, the mountain and its deity were believed to sustain the dynastic “life-force” (bla), the body of the king, and to protect his realm against evil and harm. In a typically Tibetan way, the sacred mountain embodied local knowledge and practices of cosmology, morality, and ecology. This paper will examine an exhortation liturgy devoted to Kugyal and edited by Adeu Rinpoche (1931-2007), chaplain to the last Nangchen king Tashi Tséwang Dorjé (1910–1961). Because the ritual text was published in India after the kingdom’s demise sometime around 1983, I will ask how issues of local identity and belonging, reflected in the composition, are influenced by the post-1950 displacement of Tibetans in exile and the globalization of Tibetan Buddhism. In other words, how can such intensely local discourses and practices be translocalized, transferred or reimagined in new, multiple locations and against competing discourses? On a meta-level, this paper will inquire into the various implications of the fact that research involving displaced communities and diasporas may sometimes interfere with emic processes of knowledge-making and transfer, generating an artificial superstructure through which obscure ritual and historical knowledge is remembered and distributed.

- **Young Hoon Oh (University of California, Riverside, young.oh@ucr.edu): Paradigm of Relativity: Sacred Peaks Climbed in Himalayan Mountaineering**

A Sherpa decries Russians who began climbing before observing the ritualized expedition puja. Korean mountaineers are dispirited by an invalid puja lacking a lama. Sherpas argue with each other about the nature of the god of a mountain of heavy snowstorm. Inquiries on Himalayan sacred mountains with vignettes such as these have been ordinarily framed on a dualism that rather simplistically dichotomizes between Sherpa and West, reverential and sporting, religious and scientific. Instead of probing the “objective” veracity of the, this paper asks how the dualism as such has survived a century of Himalayan mountaineering and has played on Sherpas’ eventual monopoly of the tourism industry. Based on years of ethnographic research among Sherpa guides, on and off Himalayan peaks, this paper examines the ways in which the notion of the sacred mountain is recreated (and often contended) around the evolving international industry of Himalayan mountain tourism. I suggest that, as a form of knowledge produced at the crossroads of patterned encounters, the dualism of sacred Himalaya *both* ignores and results from two relational features of the Himalayan sacred mountains: for one, the mountain in the environment full of sacred objects, and, for another, the mountain in the all-too-humanized landscape. A paradigm of relationality seems necessary in the study of religiosity to consider the essentially contextual nature of revelation and sacredness, on the one hand, and, on the other, to acknowledge the epistemological limit of knowledge-making as to religious phenomena.

- **Shayne A. P. Dahl (University of Toronto, shayne.dahl@mail.utoronto.ca): Alpine Affects and Mountain Politics in Northeastern Japan**

Sacred mountains exceed description and can represent a “terrible multiplicity” for Japanese. They are climbed for pleasure but also represent the elevated abode of Shintō gods, Buddhist deities, and ancestral souls. For Buddhists, they are mandalas capable of turning humans into Buddhas. Despite the contradictory web of meanings that sacred mountains conjure for contemporary Japanese, they remain popular sites of human activity in the 21st century. In this paper, I consider the affects that sacred mountains produce in relation to the meanings attributed to them. I draw upon ethnographic research conducted on Shugendō (“mountain asceticism”) in Dewa Sanzan, a mountain range in Yamagata Prefecture. I argue that sacred mountains are special sites of affective entanglement and self-transformation in contemporary Japan. They are places where revelatory experiences figure into the religious politics between Shintō and Buddhist institutions of mountain asceticism. Shugendō qualifies as a “religion” but the shape it takes in contemporary Japan embraces, with some difficulty, the secular sentiments of modern practitioners. Some genuinely seek communion with gods and others, a raw corporeal entanglement with “nature” that unites them with an imagined ancestral consciousness.

11:00-12:45pm ~ VC 215

Ethics, Embodiment, and the Senses

Chair: Josh Brahinsky (Stanford University)

- **Josh Brahinsky (Stanford University, Jbrahins@gmail.com): Letting Go: The Somatic and The Political in Evangelical Submission**

This essay explores the various forms of yielding required in charismatic worship. This includes giving God moral authority, letting go of attachment to this world and its objects, yielding undesirable thoughts and desires to God, and also, allowing this relationship deep into the body. These culminate in a form of release that brings with it a sense of losing and then reconstituting the self. I propose that bodily release which follows from focused attention is a cornerstone of charismatic practice. My analysis expands Saba Mahmood’s portrayal of Islamic submission through comportment to include ways in which submission can engender a deeply embodied form of release. Further, it asks why this practice has expanded from a few thousands to nearly half a billion practitioners, a growth that is most apparent on the cusp of capitalist expansion.

“It is all about letting go,” explains long-term charismatic preacher Everett Wilson; he calls it “The Flop.” Charismatic practice involves submitting oneself to a higher power by yielding personal authority. One must follow the rules of the church and obey the pastor. Wives and children submit to their husbands and fathers. All life decisions are to be guided by God. Yet, for charismatic evangelicals, letting go is central to their practice precisely because it is more than just an allegory for faith or an agreement to a moral path. For while charismatic submission includes ethics, it also travels further. Through regular spiritual practice, charismatics surrender and let go of thoughts, desires, the flesh, and even the self - although not necessarily in that order. Once in the body, letting go becomes somewhat unpredictable, insinuating a fluid sense of change and freedom into church practices that otherwise rely on relatively inflexible doctrines. Here, the idea that submission generates an opening for transformative political possibility builds upon Mahmood’s description of ambivalent resistance within submission.

In this essay, then, I illuminate ways in which theological concepts of yielding to authority find their way *under the skin*, and explore how this process affects charismatic practitioners. We systematically walk through the various modes of charismatic release: from moral thinking and action; to the psychological project of yielding the mind; and then to somatic release in which the body is given over to God and to a sense of raw freedom. Finally, I look at what charismatics mean when they speak of both releasing the self and energizing a new one and think about how this individualizing process of flow appears to resonate with market practices and ideologies.

- **Bryan Clancy (Queens University Belfast, bclancy01@qub.ac.uk): Corporation, Church, Family? The Ordinary Ethics of Knowledge Creation in Northern Ireland**

Have you ever landed in an airport and a group of people is surprisingly waiting to welcome you with signs, banners and a hot cup of coffee? If you haven't directly experienced this, you have certainly witnessed this scene. An unexpected welcome can make you smile and you can feel a surge of joy as people remember you and are happy that you made it. This is Church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland, a carefully constructed, well orchestrated, volunteer driven, machine. The banners and smiling strangers are welcoming you Home (as printed on the banners) as you have just arrived to a Sunday church service. The seamless transition from car to lobby, with warm smiles and hot cups of coffee is like floating through an IKEA. So what is this, a corporation, a church, or a family? How does the business of church construct a family narrative? The implications of executing a flawless church service with all the right printed material and comfortable lighting, is all staged to welcome you home. This corporate passivity starts to feel like family intimacy and you have passed through a commercially flawless experience into a functional family gathering. So is this an ethical family substitute, or a false corporate construct. This paper will examine through fieldwork and with the analysis of Lambek (2010) and Grønseth and Josephides (2017) what is said and unsaid that contributes to the construction of this Family Church Identity.

- **Jacob A. Boss (Indiana University, jaboss@indiana.edu): The Steel Cocoon**

This paper explores conceptions of ethical knowledge and ignorance in the genre of transhumanism known as biohacking. By examining attempts by biohackers to develop technologies of liberation while negotiating their status as embedded in a capitalist context, I will show how the egalitarian vision of biohackers partakes of the same death of expertise discourse as the health care profiteers they despise. I assert that the biohacker proposal for human flourishing is in danger of promoting life as what Ilana Gershon calls the 'little corporation,' not the ultimate ethical being but the ultimate neoliberal self. I draw on my ethnographic studies of biohackers, as well as literary and digital media sources to clarify the motivating vision of the biohacker genre of transhumanism. For biohackers, the perfection of form is the opening of the door to the possibility of ethics. Arguing that history attests to the failure of all religion, philosophy, and governance to make us good, biohackers conclude that we must engineer ourselves to be good. Following David Graeber, I argue that technologies of bureaucracy become internalized when the goal of biohacking is the production of control. Corporeal data domination obscures the possibility of poetic exploration and liberatory social transformation achieved by breakthrough technologies. Biohackers who seek to disassemble the functions of the church, state, and corporation, only to reinstate them inside their own bodies risk internalizing what Hannah Arendt worried would be the stultifying refuge of total automation.

- **Connie Gagliardi (University of Toronto, connie.gagliardi@mail.utoronto.ca): “Knowing” and “Unknowing” the Mystery of Faith: Knowledge and Revelation in the Crafting of Iconography in the Holy Land**

How is “knowledge” complicated when religious practices impart a different conception of agency within the teaching of tradition? How do we conceptualize the nuances of “knowing” and “know-how”, given the omnipotence of the Divine and processes of revelation intrinsic to religious traditions? This paper looks to the contemporary crafting of Christian iconography, and the teaching of this ancient Byzantine tradition, in the Holy Land. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in icon workshops in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the paper explores contemporary reverberations of Byzantine theologies of workmanship in iconography, whereby the hands of the iconographer are vehicles for how the Divine wishes to be depicted. Iconographers are therefore instructed to suspend their egos and surrender to the will of God. Through auto-ethnographical accounts of my writing of an icon of St. Michael the Archangel, I demonstrate how the reconfiguration of agency within the iconographic tradition engenders the Mystery of the Christian faith through an “un-knowing” of how the icon will emerge. However, the Mystery bears a possibility of revelation; and Byzantine theologies of iconography speak to this revelatory paradigm. This paper argues that the process of revelation that occurs in the crafting of Byzantine iconography is particularly transformative within the context of Palestine. Through an ascertained ‘unknowing’ in pedagogies of iconography in the Holy Land, I explore the possibility of spiritual revivalism amongst Palestinian Christian youth who are learning iconography.

- **Thomas Fearon (Goldsmiths, University of London, an201tf@gold.ac.uk): Between Worldly and Divine: Transformation and Embodied Knowledge in Anthropological Fieldwork**

This paper attempts to re-engage with the literature which reflects on the ‘ethnographic self’ and the knowledge produced when we allow experiences of the divine to transform us and our research. These encounters can occur when our fieldwork sweeps us across the boundaries that typically distance us from

the religious actors we meet and engage with religion beyond the surfaces of materials and language. I argue that these moments of boundary crossing enable us to develop meaningful and embodied relationships, to realize knowledge otherwise partial. Drawing on personal fieldwork experiences with a Charismatic-Christian student congregation in London I reflect on moments where I have fleetingly crossed these boundaries and on their enduring affect.

When put into conversation with the student ministry's biblical notion of 'epignosis' (divine knowledge) and liturgy of ecstatic worship, this paper further considers how my own experiences can be considered analogous to the forms of embodied knowledge animated amongst the young worshippers themselves. Tracing this productive ethnographic oscillation from a worldly and anthropological ignorance to an embodied Christian 'epignosis', I emphasize the attitude of being vulnerable to the potential of transformation in our ethnographic endeavors which can- momentarily- situate us within the religious worlds we seek to comprehend.

- **Nicholas William Howe Bukowski (University of Toronto, nicholas.howebukowski@mail.utoronto.ca): Hot Heads and Soft Hearts: Knowledge, Sociality and Atmospheres in the British Columbia Christian Soccer League**

This paper addresses the question: what is the role of sport in the production of religious knowledge? Specifically, this paper is interested in the forms of bodily knowledge that emerge from amateur evangelical Protestant Christian soccer players' participation in the British Columbia Christian Soccer League. For the mostly male players, soccer was a medium that allowed for the transmission of knowledge about the state of their "heart" and ultimately, their relationship with God. Within the form of soccer, as a sport of close interaction, and intensity, the players' actions on the field communicated to them knowledge about the desired production of an evangelical disposition. From these forms of knowledge about the "heart", some players stated the belief in soccer as a site for the enactment of a particular kind of theology of sport that involved the fulfillment and playing out of close bonds of community and intersubjectivity as rooted in creation. The question emerges: what conditions the possibility of these forms of knowledge and sociality produced through soccer? Drawing partly from Matthew Engelke's idea of "ambient faith" (2012), the paper proposes additional attention to non-representational theorist Ben Anderson's idea of "affective atmospheres" (2009) as conditioning the emergence of this bodily knowledge and intersubjectivity for evangelical soccer players. This ability of soccer to act as a site of bodily knowledge about their "heart" derives from the "affective atmosphere" of intensity, rawness and authenticity of the soccer field.

**12:45-2pm ~ Alumni Hall
Lunch**

**2:00-3:45pm ~ VC 206
Mystics, Spirits, and Their Institutions
Chair: Paula Pryce (University of British Columbia)**

- **Paula Pryce (University of British Columbia, ppryce@bu.edu): Knowing and 'Unknowing' as Charismatic Persuasion: Performance, Ambiguity, and Eroticism in American Contemplative Christianity**

American contemplative Christians take their knowledge seriously. In the American context in which religious institutions have relatively little practicable authority, priests and other ritual officiants use varieties of knowledge – performative, rhetorical, ambiguous, and erotic – as tools of charismatic persuasion. In a pluralistic maelstrom of religious factions, leaders make their aesthetic, phenomenological, and intellectual case for the allure and authenticity of their genre of Christianity by creating innovative rites, crafting persuasive scholarly arguments, and honing their capacity to convey contemplative "presence." This paper will draw from ten years of ethnographic research with monastic and non-monastic practitioners of a contemplative Christian meditation technique called Centering Prayer to explore how liturgical leaders wield "performative knowledge" and "unknowing" (Pryce 2018) to entice practitioners into their fold.

- **Arun Chaudhuri (York University, akc@yorku.ca): The Electric Prince: Religion, Race, and the Esoteric Mysticism of A.K. Mozumdar**

The case of A.K. Mozumdar (1863-1953), a Bengali mystic who immigrated to the U.S. in 1903, is typically known for its place in the intensifying debates about citizenship and immigration at the turn of the century. This paper examines the lesser known and discussed side of Mozumdar's life – the spiritual practice and teachings that he actively developed. Upon being denied citizenship due to his race, Mozumdar lived the rest of his life as an American resident, where he began to write and lecture prolifically, and conducted spiritual healing performances based on his own esoteric theories of spiritual energies, meditation, and healing that drew variously on Christian mysticism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Theosophy, and New Thought. He gradually built a small, but devoted, following, becoming known as a charismatic healer with a deft command of spiritual energy and cosmic rays. This paper discusses Mozumdar's esoteric mysticism in relation to the broader socio-political context of early 20th-century North America. With larger discussions of North American occultism, esotericism, and new age religiosities in mind, this account of the case of A.K. Mozumdar considers what his ideas about the affective forces of energy, light, rays, and electricity may have signaled about his ambivalent relationship to an American society in which racialized immigrants were scrutinized and regulated by the state and the public. This particular case then opens up to broader questions about immigration, globalization, and religious transformation.
- **Rodrigo Toniol (University of Campinas, rodrigo.toniol@gmail.com): Minutes of the Spirit: The World Health Organization and its Forms of Instituting Spirituality**

World Health Organization documents are as long-lasting as non explored, either by scholars identified with the field of health anthropology or by researchers in the social sciences of religion. This paper is an attempt to reduce this gap. To do so, I analyze minutes, official texts, transcripts of speeches, resolutions, and reports. I reflect on how spirituality was enacted in the institution and, mainly, how this category has been articulated with others such as culture, religion, rights, and wellbeing. The paper has two main sections. First, I explain some of the questions that are related to the analysis of "spirituality" in the social sciences of religion and justify the reasons why this text can contribute to such debate. Secondly, I dwell on the documents analyzed, presenting them from two axes of variation: the spirituality of Others and the spirituality of All. In the conclusion I outline a set of empirical consequences associated with the "officialization of spirituality" in the WHO, and point to directions that new analytical considerations of this topic could follow.
- **Meredith McLaughlin (Yale University, meredith.mclaughlin@yale.edu): "Bureaucratic Miracles: Religious Knowledge in Encounters with the Indian State"**

This paper considers narratives of the miraculous and the mythical within bureaucratic process in contemporary India. Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork in a predominantly Sunni Muslim community in rural India, I consider how accounts of saintly intervention in bureaucratic settings may complicate and contest the authority of the state. In this Barelvi community in Southern Rajasthan, practices of saint veneration attest to the saints' powers of intercession and their capacities to influence real-world outcomes. Stories of their miracles recount how saints defy physical realities and subvert worldly, political authorities. Following accounts of miraculous encounters between saints, their devotees, and various arms of the Indian bureaucracy, I demonstrate how saintly insight and power are posed as a foil to the technocratic knowledge and sovereignty of the state. As well as demonstrating the affective and ecstatic dimensions of bureaucratic process, I argue that these encounters establish an alternative, spiritual hierarchy of power that can help citizens apprehend the limitations of an unpredictable and often overburdened rural administration. Furthermore, I seek to provide insight into the relationship between Muslim minority communities and the Indian state—one that is often characterized by institutional marginalization amid broader trends of exclusionary religious nationalism. By considering instances of the miraculous within bureaucratic encounters, I explore how local Islam can be an idiom for relating to and making sense of the conduct of the modern state.
- **Vlad Naumescu (Central European University, naumescuv@ceu.edu): Teaching the 'Mystery': Epistemologies of Revelation in the Orthodox Faith**

This paper explores the epistemic implications of a mystery-centered pedagogy in Orthodox Christianity, whose teaching is grounded on the claim that God is beyond human understanding yet made accessible in the mysteries of faith. Drawing on ethnographic work with Syrian Christians in South India, I look at the way Orthodox mysteries are articulated in distinct religious pedagogies that shape the modes of knowing and

ethical cultivation in their church. Though ideologically competing since colonial times, ritual learning and Sunday school education, cultivate an epistemic attitude based on the promise of knowability which maintains the mystery at the core of their practice. This raises broader questions about historical processes of rationalization, the extent to which they affect the nature of (dis)belief and our understanding of religion.

2:00-3:45pm ~ VC 211

Ritual as Knowledge-Making and Knowledge-Masking

Organizer/Chair: Aniruddhan Vasudevan (University of Texas at Austin)

Panel abstract

This panel will examine the role of ritual in offering particular interpretations and orientations towards religious knowledge while masking or deprioritizing others. The papers in this panel view this aspect of knowledge-making and knowledge-masking not only in terms of religious authority and power; they also show how a concern with knowledge boundaries might go along with concerns about collective identity, legibility, and questions of inclusivity and exclusivity. The *muhabbet* ritual of the Alevis, the *mayaana kollai* ritual as practiced by the Thirunangais in southern India, and the technology-mediated rituals of the *arahanthaka wandanawa* of Theravada Buddhist televangelists in Sri Lanka -- all produce new framings for some existing knowledge practices. In the process, they foreground and highlight certain connections and not others. The presentations in the panel examine what is at stake in each of these contexts, for these communities of practitioners, in their ideas about what needs be revealed, explicated, made known, and what could remain masked. Further, these papers ask if this masking is an act of concealment or an invitation for deeper engagement, a sign of exclusion or a demand for deeper commitment, disavowal or self-preservation.

Individual abstracts

- **Alex Kreger (University of Texas at Austin, moyindau@gmail.com): Freights of Love: Knowledge Exchange and Ethical Publicity in the Staging of an Alevi Ritual**
Turkish Alevis practice a ritual called muhabbet which involves the exchange of religious knowledge through sung poetry and conversation and is commonly referred to as the “marketplace of love.” Traditionally this exchange took place within relatively exclusive networks which formed around saint shrines connected by caravan routes in Anatolia. Today some Alevis living in Europe frame this idea of knowledge exchange in terms of a Eurocentric cosmopolitan universalism that aspires to a borderless, stateless world. Many of these Alevis find that the metaphors describing knowledge exchange in Alevi poetry, which draw from associations with traditional Anatolian caravan economies, map conveniently onto modern European ideas of multicultural exchange. They even draw parallels between imaginaries of exchange in early modern Anatolia and early capitalism in the Low Countries of Europe. This paper examines how these imaginaries of knowledge exchange play out in the staging of a muhabbet ritual in Antwerp, Belgium for a mixed Turkish and Belgian public. It argues that these Alevis construct themselves both as ethical subjects of the Alevi religious path and as model European citizens by performing a certain moral egalitarian publicness in the staged muhabbet ritual. Given Alevis’ history of secrecy and exclusivity, a key aspect of performing this publicness is their negotiation of the boundaries of what should be said where, when, and to whom.
- **Aniruddhan Vasudevan (University of Texas at Austin, aniruddhan@utexas.edu): To be the Goddess: Identity and Separation in Thirunangai transgender women’s devotion to Angalamman**
Goddess Angalamman is worshipped by various Tamil communities in southern India. Thirunangai transgender women are particularly devoted to her worship, and many of them serve as priestesses, ritual officiants, and mediums for the goddess during moments of trance. While their devotion to Angalamman offers them a place in the cultural world alongside other communities who also worship her, their own narrativizing of the Thirunangai-Goddess relationship helps them distinguish themselves from others through fresh interpretations of myths, iconography, and gender. Thirunangais (especially the Maruladis, those who ‘dance the deity’ in trance) have their own readings of why they are special to the goddess, why she is central to their transgender identity, and why she might herself be a transgender goddess. Through a discussion of mythological and iconographic interpretations offered by two Thirunangai devotees of the goddess, this paper shows that while such narrativizing offers a rich sense of self and meaning to many Thirunangais, they do not find the need to make known their specific theology. Such an approach, this paper

argues, helps them balance their expressions of oneness with and separation from the non-Thirunangai world around them.

- **David Strohl (Colby College, djstrohl@colby.edu): Implicit Knowledges: Religious Authority and Secrecy in Mumbai's Ismaili Muslim Community**

In this paper, I argue that anthropologists must develop more expansive notions of secrecy and concealment to make sense of the production and circulation of knowledge in esoteric traditions. Anthropologists often portray esoteric knowledge as a concealed object that religious specialists gradually reveal to initiates. Many traditions certainly involve such instruction, but then what do we make of the fact that many esoteric texts circulate in public? And what of the fact that practitioners say the meanings of these teachings are indeterminate? To address these questions, I analyze the ways Ismaili Muslims draw on ideas about authority, expertise, and the nature of “esoteric” (*batin*) knowledge when discussing aspects of their religious tradition with non-Ismailis. A close look at the pragmatics of these conversations reveals how speakers prompt audience members to infer the meaning of certain statements using knowledge of the tradition's history, ideologies about religious authority, and practices. I use the term “implicit knowledge” to refer to how Ismailis draw on this combination of linguistic competency, pragmatic awareness, and shared background information to actively interpret and speculatively talk about religious ideas in public and private settings. I conclude by discussing the importance of attending to how knowledge is concealed, produced, and reproduced in the study of esoteric traditions.

- **Krishantha Fedricks (University of Texas at Austin, kfedricks@utexas.edu): Televangelist version of Nirvana: Production of Knowledge through Ritual Discourse and Media Technology**

This paper offers insight into the emergent knowledge framework of spiritual liberation through discursive and technological strategies by presenting the new televangelist ritual of Arahamthaka Aandanawa (veneration of enlightened human beings). It is a new mediated ritual introduced by the Mahamevnāwa Buddhist monks, the first organized Buddhist televangelist group in Sri Lanka. Mahamevnāwa televangelists propagate the idea of the possibility of attaining Nirvana (salvation) in this life, thereby contesting the traditional Theravada belief in Nirvana in the afterlife. This new ritual offers fresh interpretations of the doctrine of Nirvana through a semiotic ideology of immediacy that is anchored in the use of Sinhala language scriptures, promise of individual salvation in the here and now, and use of media technology that democratizes access to the teachings. Through an analysis of the new linguistic forms and audio-visual technologies used in this ritual, this paper examines how these new communicative techniques help televangelist monks produce new knowledge of salvation and how they enable Mahamevnāwa followers to access such knowledge. The paper shows that the knowledge is embodied and produced in the ritual practice through various discursive strategies and the technological affordances of religious media.

2:00-3:45pm ~ VC 212

Making Requests and Making Time: Rethinking the Efficacy of Religious Knowledge

Organizers/Chairs: Fred Klaitis (SUNY at Buffalo) and Yang Shen (Boston University)

Panel abstract

Prayers, vows, wishes, sacrifices, begging, and humanitarian appeals are all varieties of requests that have the potential to shape what might be known about relationships among humans and spiritual beings. In this panel, we explore how such requests help to constitute and mark experiences of time, including anticipation, patience, immediacy, fulfillment, disappointment, urgency, credit and debt, presentness, ephemerality, and eternity. Inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's argument that “practice is not in time but makes time,” we consider how religious knowledge derives from processes of retemporalization, whereby practitioners acquire new understandings of how (if at all) events follow one another over the course of time. In particular, we consider how requests inspire forms of trust and mistrust that give religious knowledge its efficacy.

Individual abstracts

- **Fred Klaitis (SUNY at Buffalo, fklaits@buffalo.edu): “Yes, No, or Wait – but Never Maybe”: Asking and Listening to God in African American Pentecostal Churches**

For many Pentecostal Christians, recognizing and accessing the sources of personal well-being is contingent upon knowing God's will. Based on fieldwork with African American Pentecostal believers in

Buffalo, New York, this paper discusses how such knowledge may depend on developing particular habits of asking while learning to regard other kinds of requests as illegitimate. These believers encourage one another to evaluate forms of asking – including prayers to God and requests for scarce resources directed towards kin, friends, church colleagues, and social service agencies – along a moral continuum ranging from self-centered “manipulation” to proper forms of “waiting” for responses. Maintaining that God responds “Yes, no, or wait – but never maybe” to requests for guidance, believers aim to bring their requests (together with their responses to those made by others) into line with the rhythms of “God’s timing” so as to overcome hindrances and receive blessings. Metaphors of “moving by one accord” and “redeeming time” lost to the devil indicate the perceived power of legitimate requests to bring about collective safety and prosperity, whereas being “out of order” indicates failure to acknowledge or act upon God’s timing. At stake in these forms of retemporalization are ethical stances on care that are premised in Simon Coleman’s terms on the invocation of boundaries among humans and God which must be continually marked and crossed.

- **Yang Shen (Boston University, ysanthro@bu.edu): The Efficacy of Framing Moments in Lottery Divination Performances in Chinese Temples**

Despite accusations of “being superstitious” (*mixin*), divinatory practices persist in and around Chinese Buddhist temples in today’s neo-socialist China. Among various genres of divination, the “efficacious lot” (*lingqian*) stands out in Han imaginations of a typical temple encounter. The practice involves a temple-goer shaking a hand-size container full of wooden lots until one lot emerges indexing a pre-written poetic text. In this paper, I develop a performance and ritual attunement model in order to grasp the epistemic consequences of these divination performances. Specifically, self-help lottery divination produces a framing-epistemic effect because the divinatory performer must become an asking agent. This agent formulates a burning question and requests responses in the form of poetic resonances. The emergence of a singled-out wooden lot iconically depicts the singularity of a particular life moment at which the performer becomes a questioning self. While previous studies and popular discourses have tended to focus on poetic texts and text-interpreters, I point out that only after the diviner’s entrustment action does an interpreting helper come into play. This happens in a temple’s open courtyards and halls, where co-temple-goers may become interpreters by listening to a divinatory practitioner’s life situations and relating them to a poetic narrative. I suggest that the interpretive relationships are established case by case through a sequence of tentative and decisive entrustment moves. Over time, long-term trust relationships are formed, giving efficacious addressability to poetic-divinatory knowledge.

- **Hanna Kim (Adelphi University, hannakim@adelphi.edu): On the Containment of Religious Knowledge: A Case Study Involving an Earthquake, Survivor Requests, and a Transnational Hindu Community**

After the January 2001 Kutch Earthquake in northwestern India, humanitarian organizations, local communities, and religious groups undertook the reconstruction of this remote region. Rural and urban Kutch were transformed by hundreds of thousands of new homes and the construction of infrastructure, resulting in an opening of the region to capital, increased tourism, and outside interests. This paper looks at one aid provider, the transnational Hindu community known as BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. What does an examination of what was requested and who received what reveal about survivors’ and others’ perceptions about appealing to BAPS? Were religious factors central to survivors’ relationship to their BAP benefactors? Does this data enhance or erode the efficacy of religious knowledge?

This case study considers the disparate perspectives concerning the relationship of BAPS Hinduism to humanitarianism. Through sketching the temporal map of survivors’ requests with BAPS’s efforts to fulfill these, what emerges are visions of a reconstructed society intimately connected to each party’s assumptions about BAPS. Paying closer attention to the spectrum of overlapping to opposing ideas, including the interpretations of BAPS’s critics (NGOs, architects, anthropologists), this paper examines strategies for the containment of religious knowledge as well as areas of epistemological rupture. The broken landscape provoked new relationships, albeit of unequal power, that nevertheless highlight how appeals for aid create ethnographic realities that illuminate anthropology’s own fundamentalisms alongside a more generous embrace of new knowledge.

- **Sara Swenson (Syracuse University, sara.ann.swenson@gmail.com): Better Futures for the Dead: Upgrading Ghosts with Infrastructure in Southern Vietnam**

This paper analyzes the conversion of ghosts into spiritual guardians for concrete bridges in Vietnam. Bridge construction in the Mekong Delta is a popular philanthropic activity for charity groups from Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's economic epicenter. Concrete bridges symbolize development – expediting agricultural exports from rural villages and enabling school attendance for children. However, with infrastructural change comes social change, even for the dead. Many villages have lost community members to dangerous river crossings. Unaware that they have died, ghosts threaten the lives of other bridge-crossers by demanding help. Groundbreaking ceremonies encourage the dead to awaken to new responsibilities and become guardians of the coming bridge.

Wealthy donors from the city join charity tours to attend such groundbreaking rituals for bridges they have funded. Upon arrival, offerings to ghosts and to the Buddha are prepared, prayed over, and consumed by volunteers in communion with local government officials. The arrival of urban volunteers marks a shift into what Victor Turner calls “liminality” – a time of ritualized reversals in which the feared dead are warmly addressed and the distant wealthy are present. This paper responds to Laura Bear's 2014 call for a new anthropology of “modern time” by applying Turner's ritual theory to Bear's concept of “heterochrony.” During ghost conversion rituals in Vietnam, I argue, “modern futures” are inaugurated through religious re-imaginings of “past futures.” The chronicled fates of ghosts and farmers are demolished and reconstructed in tandem with local infrastructure.

- **Gareth Fisher (Syracuse University, gfisher@syr.edu): Re-signifying Time: Agency, Temporality, and Destiny among Buddhists in China**

In the 2000s, Dharma Master Jingkong, an Australian-based Buddhist monk with a significant following in mainland China, began to predict a series of impending natural disasters. The cause of these disasters, Jingkong claimed, was the collective bad karma earned by residents of China and other Asian countries. Jingkong mobilized his followers to beg collectively to a pantheon of buddhas and bodhisattvas at set times each week. When the time had passed for the foretold “disaster” and none had occurred, the followers believed that it was due to the strength of their collective efforts at asking for the mercy of these higher beings. Drawing on Laura Bear's notion of “timescapes” as a means of highlighting the inequalities created by conflicts in time, this presentation will explore how participation in Jingkong's mass movements was appealing for Jingkong's mainland Chinese followers, many of whom had been economically marginalized in China's transition to a market-based economy. This appeal was rooted in restoring the importance of an idealized, future-oriented time and a sense of agency over that time gained through the mastery of asking and receiving from advanced deities. These were orientations familiar to the followers from the early socialist period of the PRC when the state had oriented them toward the pursuit of an inclusive, egalitarian socialist future. The religious worldview that informed Jingkong's predicted apocalypses also resonated with the religious-type fervor that had characterized the futurism of an earlier cult of Mao.

- **Adeline Masquelier (Tulane University/Aarhus Institute of Advanced Studies, amasquel@tulane.edu): Discussant**

2:00-3:45pm ~ VC 215

Oscillating Mediation: Tracing Religious Technologies from Erasure to Hyper-Presence

Organizers/Chairs: Hillary Kaell (Concordia University) and James S. Bielo (Miami University)

Panel abstract

Anthropologists have been fascinated with new media technologies because such media help constitute lifeworlds. Anthropologists of religion are uniquely positioned to explore this relationship between technology and world-making. As fieldworkers, we engage lives that acknowledge or conjure the presence of absent agents and embrace the possibility of coterminous realities. And, we are attuned to the strong affinities between uncanny, transcendent, and magical phenomena and the capacity of modern tele-technoscience to compress time and space. As a result of these intersections, anthropological and interdisciplinary scholars of religion have taken a variety of approaches to thinking about religion *as* technology and/or expressed *through* technology. This body of scholarship has been highly productive, fleshing out how technological mediation constructs social realities from the material worlds in which human beings are embedded. Certainly, scholars working in this vein

have become all too familiar with religious desires for immediacy and aspirations to 'do away' with mediating forms and processes.

This panel takes media's capacity to be variably present as a point of departure for an expanded discussion of how religious actors mobilize technology. We structure our comparative case studies around the process of "oscillating mediation." By this, we mean the ways in which physical and digital media are made to shift among states of erasure, masking, and hyper-presence. We are especially interested in contexts where experiences of media are designed to saturate the senses. In the process, religious communities, performances, and individuals may also shift between states of hyper-presence, masking, and erasure with respect to the public spheres they inhabit. We contrast cases in which religious actors deploy technologies to help make (in)visibility happen and cases in which they resist the imposed constraints of technologies. In still other cases, religious groups use new media to circulate their messages, but as importantly, to legitimize a place for themselves as future-oriented citizens. Collectively, we approach the nexus of religion, technology, and the public sphere by asking how mediation may oscillate and asking what lifeworlds result.

We explore these themes through five papers that address wide-ranging case studies. De Abreu explores the potentiality of presence in the context of real-time television transmissions of the Eucharist among charismatic Catholics in Brazil. Bielo examines the ideologies and practices of experiential designers, whose engagement with technology defined the creative labor behind the controversial Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C. Kaell interrogates the promises diverse technologies have held in the context of child sponsorship programs, namely the expected possibility of creating affectively rich transglobal Christian publics. Moll draws from her fieldwork with Islamic television preachers and audiences in Cairo to examine divergent assessments of the practice of feigned weeping (*tabbaki*) in mass-mediated contexts. Finally, Mosurinjohn explores practices of strategic misrepresentation in digital game design world-making, with a particular emphasis on the ways in which agential relationships are constructed among humans and non-humans.

Individual abstracts

- **Maria José de Abreu (Columbia University, me2674@columbia.edu): Outstanding Elasticity: Presencing Here-Else**

My paper is about the one-hour mise-en-scène exposure of the Eucharist on TV in real-time transmission by Catholic Charismatics in Brazil. Given the technical possibilities of television to be at the same time both in the here—in front of the spectator—and there—on the scene—it can also neither fully be here, nor entirely there. How will the claims for the mystery of real presence be realizable in light of such split and oscillation at the heart of a showing? How do the postulates of real-time and real-presence meet on the TV screen?

- **James S. Bielo (Miami University, bielojs@miamioh.edu): Technology as Prosthesis at D.C.'s Museum of the Bible**

The Museum of the Bible opened in Washington, D.C. in November 2017 to both widespread controversy and acclaim. Controversy brewed on multiple fronts, namely: illegal and unethical practices related to biblical antiquities, and critiques that the museum traffics a stealthy evangelicalism cloaked in the falsely neutral claim to be "non-sectarian." Acclaim was directed primarily toward the museum's aesthetic success, from its architecture to its exhibits. The creative labor that materialized the museum came not from faith-based entities, but from high-profile experiential design firms who specialize in creating immersive environments. In this paper, I explore the ideologies and practices of experiential designers, with a particular emphasis on how they seek to mobilize multi-media technologies as a prosthetic for human experiential capacities. I argue that experiential design has significantly shaped the religious publicity of the museum, in terms of both engaging new media technologies and bearing the imprint of the values that designers bring to their work. Ultimately, the case of the Museum of the Bible is especially revealing for how an expression of religious publicity can be shaped by the imperatives of the experience economy as much as theological and political ambitions.

- **Hillary Kaell (Concordia University, hillarykaell@gmail.com): Policing the Technologies of Global Intimacy**

Since their inception two centuries ago, child sponsorship plans have promised mission-minded Christians that new technologies can bind them relationally to children overseas. At first, these technologies included trains and advanced postal systems, later snapshot photographs and films. In about 2010, one after another the major U.S. Christian sponsorship organizations launched more complex social media platforms, including basic intranet e-mail communication systems. Focusing on sponsors who support World Vision

and Compassion International, this paper interrogates the promises such technologies seem to hold for creating transglobal Christian publics of “recognition and reflection,” to quote Lauren Berlant. In particular, I linger on the inherent paradox of the technological mediation at the heart of sponsorship’s global projects: the more such organizations try to disguise their mediation of sponsor-child relations, the more intensive is their surveillance and policing of those relations.

- **Yasmin Moll (University of Michigan, ymoll@umich.edu): Televised Tears: Sincerity and Artifice in the Egyptian Islamic Revival**

There is an authoritative Islamic tradition of feigning weeping (*tabbaki*) in devotional contexts, including in hortatory preaching. This practice, one closely associated in contemporary Egypt with Islamic Revivalism, is an expression of pious humility through which pietists pretend to cry in order to (ideally) develop the embodied capacity to shed real tears in the future. Secular Egyptians tend to dismiss such weeping as insincere, but so, too, do revivalists in a specific context: on-camera weeping. Drawing on fieldwork with Islamic television preachers and their followers in Cairo, this presentation explores how the latter approach televised tears as an object of critical appraisal and deliberation on piety and its media forms more broadly. How does the mass mediation of preacherly weeping – and the aestheticization of such weeping through a variety of televisual techniques – create the conditions of possibility for new expressions of religious ambivalence and skepticism about old religious practices? How do Islamic television preachers and their media producers negotiate these off-screen critiques in their own on-screen staging of pious affect? What can televised tears reveal about the mass mediation of sincerity and artifice in Egypt’s contested (and crowded) religious field?

- **Sharday Mosurinjohn (Queen’s University, sm110@queensu.ca): Ontology, Agency, and “Misrepresentation” in Digital Games**

The complex worlds of digital games necessarily deal with meaning-making and cosmological ontology. Through storytelling, they establish a world picture, often by rearranging well-known stories from the “world religions,” or inventing religions *ex nihilo*. In addition to exploring how gamers discover enchantment, redemption, and transcendence in these worlds, we can consider how objects, processes, and all sorts of other-than-human things in them can be conceived of as agential. In this sense, and in terms of avatar embodiment, digital games offer powerful alternatives to normative understandings of agential relationships between “mind,” body, and other matter. But is it possible to use game design as a heuristic for a scholarly conversation on distributed agency? Is it possible to design games around some normally infrascapable gaps and processes in order to virtually embody a collaborative, decentered, and non-anthropocentric sort of agency? This paper describes a preliminary attempt to do so under the rubric of “misrepresentation” as a design tool. Digital worlds inherently misrepresent the physical phenomena they’re trying to represent, with advances in gaming typically aimed at getting closer to the real world in terms of graphics, physics, AI, etc. But to embrace the gap between gameworlds and conventional models of perceived reality is to grasp a tool for attuning us to what passes outside the register of experience. The end goal is to develop a theory of misrepresentation, a small selection of simple open-source games illustrating different kinds of misrepresentation, and exploratory studies illustrating how people respond to them.

4:00-5:45pm ~ Chapel

Presidential Panel

Chair: Simon Coleman (University of Toronto)

- Participants: Andreas Bandak (University of Copenhagen), N. Fadeke Castor (Texas A&M University), Matthew Engelke (Columbia University), Lauren Leve (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill), Amira Mittermaier (University of Toronto)

6:00-7:15pm ~ Chapel

Presidential Lecture

Chair: Simon Coleman (University of Toronto)

7:15pm-9:15pm ~ Alumni Hall

Reception

May 22

9:00-10:45pm ~ VC 206

Modern Revelations: Hidden Ethics & Politicized Revealing of Knowledge

Organizers/Chairs: Chris Taylor (George Mason University) and Lauren Zwissler (Central Michigan University)

Panel Abstract

This panel explores religious knowledge that is not merely absent, as in ignorance, but *obscured*. Revelation of obscured knowledge is a *moral* act as much a process of informing. In determining that knowledge has been hidden, rather than simply unknown, participants make claims within moral economies of power. “Hidden ethics” are of various kinds: secrecy meant to protect others from danger, elites’ suppression of knowledge that would empower subalterns or dissenters, or moral truths that have simply been laboriously unearthed through new efforts. Thus, “politics of religious knowledge” must engage with the operations of power which are constructed as obscuring - and those positioned as championing - their revelation.

Religious specialists often play a lead role in the custodianship of knowledge - and secrets. In contrast our research explores how lay actors make powerful claims to unveiling ethical obligations that were previously obscured, especially among non-state proponents in civic associations or community leadership. This panel illustrates how *public religion* is a prime motive of collective action today, in contrast to older theories of secularization, although narratives may range from politicized doctrine to less explicitly “religious” narratives of faith-based work. Papers show how lay followers mobilize after clerical leadership declares or discovers certain larger ethical “truths” (Hoenes del Pinal) and instances of lay persons’ agency in the management of hidden religious identities and practices (Taylor, Zwissler, Crocker). In contrast to believers’ engagements with the *un-*knowable (via ritual) or with theological knowledge (via scholarly labor), these papers discuss those who engage with what was secreted or deemphasized on purpose. These politics of “revelation” are processes of consciousness-raising, holding an ideological megaphone to specific discourses, thus forcing reinterpretations of previous worldviews.

This panel probes key questions in the anthropology of religious knowledge. Thrusting hidden ethics to the fore can challenge social norms, but also effects internal change. What happens to notions of “tradition” as ethical narratives are re-worked from scripture or from ritual expression to become more public and politicized tools? Should we view politicized religious knowledge in these cases as reformism, a civic or “de-privatized religion”, or an “invention of tradition”? In contrast to Durkheimian views of morality as “rules for action” meant to *reproduce* the collective, these papers highlight the exercise of moral agency. As Joel Robbins proposed, we view “the ethical domain as one that involves a kind of freedom that can be put in the service both of the adhering to normative expectations and to inventively going beyond them.” How does newly revealed religious knowledge confront extant ideologies – e.g. global capitalism, “modernization,” humanitarianism, or historical Catholic doctrine? Can actors collaborate from explicitly different ethical positions, as once-hidden ethics foster public contestation? Or what unintentional “friction” results from diverging moral engagements?

Individual abstracts

- **Lauren Zwissler (Central Michigan University, zwiss11@cmich.edu) and Chris Taylor (George Mason University, ctaylo41@gmu.edu): Panel Introduction**
- **Christopher Taylor (George Mason University, ctaylo41@gmu.edu): Hiding in Plain Sight: Islamic Charity and Ethical Obligations to Secrecy**
Islamic teachings hold that charity is best given in secret. Long before Marcel Mauss famously made similar arguments in his classic theory of the gift, the Qur’an (2:271) warned Muslims that gifts can be injurious to recipients, as when giving becomes a vehicle for self-aggrandizement or public status claims. In north India, however, new Islamic charities are growing in number and significance by employing public relations strategies that make gifts highly visible and far from secret. Yet scholars of Islamic law and ordinary Muslims alike in India are lauding such new organizations for reviving and modernizing the Islamic ritual of almsgiving to address Muslim poverty, even when they depart from older practices. This paper presents data from five new Islamic charity organizations operating in Lucknow, India as well as data from charity

practices among Muslims in the public bazaar. Charity given “in secret” in fact appears in numerous public practices. From the habituated and ubiquitous charity for street begging to the institutionalized donation events broadcast on social media, I analyze these practices as separate processes of performative identity-formation and public meaning-making among the community of pious Muslims in north India, even as “performed secrecy” remains a central ethical concern. Conclusions suggest that Islamic charity gifts are acceptable as public displays for the same reason that Mauss theorized gifts are necessary – in the service of group solidarity. Instead of Maussian alliance-making, however, this paper illustrates an alternative process for political solidarity of Muslims – India’s largest minority – through shared ethical identity formation shaped by gifting practices.

- **Elizabeth Crocker (American Association for the Advancement of Science, lcrocker@bu.edu):**
Gossip, Power, and Sacred Knowledge: Haitian Vodou and Negotiating Belonging in the Diaspora
 Stephan Warner argues that American forms of religion create expectations of a “free market” for religion where interested parties have free access to information so that they can make informed market decisions about achieved faith positionings. Yet, integral to many African diaspora traditions, secretism – rather than free information – is actively invoked to establish moral boundaries. Belonging is established not just through gaining access to secret sacred knowledge but the processes through which that knowledge is attained. Spirits, not the person, get to choose whether and how deeply someone becomes part of the religion. This contrast with American forms of “new volunteerism” based on agency of the individual creates tensions for non-Haitians interested in Vodou. Sacred knowledge for African diaspora traditions comes not from books or public observations but rather dreams, possessions, and active participation in a highly secretive tradition. With secret religious knowledge held in part by spirits themselves, this paper revises scholarly and American notions of “public religion,” as the contestations over religious knowledge extend beyond the material world. Gossip becomes an important tool for navigating indigenous and cosmopolitan horizons regarding sacred spiritual knowledge and power. In this context, gossip does not just tear others down but also rallies support and proves moral authority. This paper unpacks a case study from fieldwork in the Greater Boston Area to examine how gossip, and the politics of spiritual knowledge (*konesans*), are mobilized by Haitian and non-Haitian Vodouisants to negotiate power, belonging, and encourage change in the diaspora.
- **Eric Hoenes del Pinal (University of North Carolina at Charlotte, ehoenes@uncc.edu):**
On Care for the *Tzuultaq’a*: The Ethical Obligations of Q’eqchi’-Maya Environmentalism
 In 2015 Pope Francis published the encyclical *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* urging Catholics worldwide to take seriously the perils of environmental degradation and critically rethink the modern consumption practices that have precipitated it. The encyclical frames this as both an ethical obligation and an expression of Catholic faithfulness to God. Though much has been written about the content of the encyclical itself, the extent to which individual communities of Catholics have taken it up remains to be examined in much breadth. This paper examines how indigenous Catholics in highland Guatemala are engaging with Pope Francis’s encyclical, paying special attention to the way they understand care for the environment as an important part of their developing sense of Catholic piety. The paper examines first how clergy and parochial lay leaders have been working to incorporate the vocabulary of *Laudato Si’* into local liturgical practices and development programs. Secondly, it analyzes how the newly introduced discourse of Catholic environmentalism articulates with traditional Q’eqchi’-Maya visions of human beings’ relation to the land, which likewise posits that the future is in peril due to human negligence towards nature. To what extent do these two ideals of human-nature relations mirror each other, and to what extent might they be said to foment differing *ethoi* and/or modes of action in the world? What sorts of claims to knowledge about how to survive the threat of climate change does each imply? Finally, how do parishioners bring these together into an inculturated Catholic religiosity?
- **Laurel Zwissler (Central Michigan University, zwiss11@cmich.edu):**
‘If More People Knew’: Revealing Hidden Connections in Christian Fair-Trade Discourses
 Fair-trade is increasingly influential as a campaign for social justice, a popular personal practice, and a factor in the international economy. Ten Thousand Villages, a major fair-trade organization and the first in North America, was founded by Mennonite, Edna Ruth Byler, in 1946. Her informal networks burgeoned, growing from a non-profit, wholly owned by the Anabaptist relief organization, the Mennonite Central Committee, into an independent partner NGO. Mainstream economic discourse has historically obfuscated

exploitative labor relationships, a slight-of-hand that Goodchild theorizes as the “theology of money”: global capitalism constructs a regime of truth that forecloses ethical objections to business practices, because the only legitimized scale of value is money. Drawing on fieldwork with Villages stores in Toronto and with the flag-ship store in Pennsylvania, this paper explores ways that fair-trade movements contest this framing of the market as morally irrelevant by insisting that there are pre-existing ethical obligations between purchasers and producers. Fair-trade promotes cosmologies of consumer transactions as morally contagious: an object produced under exploitative conditions passes onto the purchaser moral responsibility for that exploitation. Fair-trade discourses reveal hidden knowledge through “transparent” supply chains, in order to promote more holistic understandings of global economic systems. However, even as Villages’ staff and volunteers work to reveal hidden connections between consumers and producers, they also make strategic decisions, depending on their given audiences, about when to promote or omit details about the organization’s connections to Mennonite Christianity, alternatively aligning with ideas of mission or “strategic secularization.”

- **Kristin Norget (McGill University, kristin.norget@mcgill.ca): Discussant**

9:00-10:45pm ~ VC 212

Roundtable Discussion

Rapid Religious Change: Why do Religious Beliefs/Knowledge at Times Change Very Quickly, and What Kinds of Societal Impacts do These Changes Have?

Organizer: Derrick Lemons (University of Georgia); **Chair:** Simon Coleman (University of Toronto)

Panel Abstract

This roundtable will utilize the foundation of theologically engaged anthropology to consider the question: Why do religious beliefs/knowledge at times change very quickly, and what kinds of societal impacts do these changes have? While religious cultural change has been studied by anthropologists and illustrated by the work of theologians, there is a critical need for more research about religious change that drives sudden cultural innovations throughout society, especially those driven by theological changes. This need can be met through a collaboration among anthropologists and theologians to discuss and debate ethnographic accounts and theories of rapid religious cultural change. The goal of this roundtable is to introduce anthropologists and theologians to a newly funded John Templeton Foundation project investigating rapid religious change and to recruit scholars to participate in one of five research working groups in Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, the United States of America and South Africa. This work will generate new knowledge regarding how religious beliefs end, arise, and endure across time and space. With this knowledge, anthropologists benefit by improving their understanding of how religious beliefs change and how theology influences change in the religions they study. Theologians benefit by learning how to innovate by connecting their work with diverse examples of lived religion from around the world.

- Participants: Valentina Napolitano (University of Toronto), Joel Robbins (University of Cambridge), Ingie Hovland (University of Georgia), Hanna Kim (Adelphi University), Derrick Lemons (University of Georgia)

9:00-10:45pm ~ VC 215

Encyclical: Circulation and/of Christian Knowledge

Organizer/Chair: Heather Mellquist Lehto (University of Toronto)

Panel abstract

Anthropologists have given increased attention to matters of circulation in recent years. Interest in patterns of globalization brought about conversations surrounding its flows, frictions, and assemblages; linguistic anthropologists have attended to the construction of communicative paths and networks; and across several subdisciplines anthropologists have taken interest in the study of infrastructures as modes and means for the circulation of messages, resources, people, and governmentality. This panel focuses on how matters of circulation inform the anthropological study of Christianity in varied contexts. We ask:

How do Christian ritual practices enculturate endurance and patterns of motility? How do networked technologies help to produce religious conceptions of space and solidarity? How do Christians construct and relate to “holy infrastructures” of their social and spiritual practices? What is the relation between Christian publics and civic infrastructure? How do Christian desires inform modes of participation in media networks? In what ways are pilgrimage hosts and pilgrims shaped by religious radio programming? How does thinking in terms of circulation shape the stories we tell about Christianity and how these stories will circulate?

Or are we (just) talking in circles?

“Encyclical” is an invitation to reflect upon how Christianity informs and is informed by cyclicity, modes and paths of circulation, and being encircled.

Individual abstracts

- **Heather Mellquist Lehto (University of Toronto, Heather.mellquist@gmail.com): Holy Infrastructures: Networks of Communion and Conscriptio**
During the construction of Sarang Church in Seoul, South Korea, a series of conflicts between the church, its neighbors, and the municipal government culminated in lawsuits that briefly halted construction. Opponents of the building argue that certain features are unjustified and/or illegal because of transgressions on public space, but Christians have argued that those features are ‘holy infrastructures’ that enable the transmission of grace and the Holy Spirit. This paper will explore these disputes and the ways in which they have tested the ability of South Korean state secularism to arbitrate claims that are based upon conflicting ontological claims made on religious grounds. Moreover, this paper will indicate that thinking about ‘holy infrastructure’ through the lens of contemporary social theory provides an entry-point to reflect upon the theological foundations of social science, as manifest here in the coincidence of infrastructural imaginaries in both the theologically-rooted framing of the church as ‘holy infrastructure’ and the ‘infrastructural turn’ in contemporary social scientific thought. I argue that the compatibility of the analytic of infrastructures with Reformed Protestant theological ideas about the organization of Spiritual and social life should lead us to further consider which theologies already abide within our secular social scientific imaginaries, to the exclusion or omission of others.
- **Courtney Handman (University of Texas at Austin, chandman@austin.utexas.edu): Savage Circulation: Problems of Movement in Colonial Christianity**
The rapid and easy flow of information is considered the backbone of many modernist institutions, with democracy and science being perhaps the two most prominent. In contrast, one way that colonial actors defined spaces of colonial control as being non-modern was by pointing to slow, difficult movement of information or people there. In colonial New Guinea complaints about problems of movement were central refrains in a discourse about the primitivity of the colony. Beyond the lurid attention to particular cultural traditions, colonizers emphasized the densely forested, mountainous terrain and the endless linguistic difference as characteristics that would continue to mark New Guinea as primitive even if those seemingly “barbarous” customs could be eradicated. In this paper I examine the ways that Christian missions in New Guinea theorized and theologized these barriers to movement, and the ways that this helped to construct a sacralization of communicative channels, whether these were radios, airplanes, or languages.
- **Marc Lousteau (College of the Holy Cross, Mlousteau706@gmail.com): Hostings: A Transylvanian Pilgrimage Site and Its Rural to Urban Circulations**
This paper will describe two ways that the Csíksomlyó Catholic shrine in contemporary Transylvania create routes of rural to urban circulations of embodied practices. Based on three years of fieldwork at this Catholic shrine in one of Transylvania’s ethnic Hungarian enclaves, I show how the Transylvanian branch of the World Family of Radio Maria, a global Catholic media network, organizes the first routing through its weekly call-in radio program. During this program, rural devotees place calls to the Radio Maria office to broadcast their petitions to the Virgin Mary. The programs are hosted by urban, middle-class Catholics, Radio Maria’s volunteer staff members, who answer the phones during the broadcast. Class and linguistic differences surface in the hosts’ lack of proficiency of rural callers’ styles of speech. Second, I present urban Catholics’ practice of giving food and drink to village-based pilgrim groups walking to the Csíksomlyó shrine. This is also a form of hosting made possible by a rural to urban circulation, but I show how this route draws attention to class-mediated differences in taste rather than speech. Using these two examples, I reverse the general trend in pilgrimage and tourism studies that focuses on urban visitors in rural locales. In the

process, I destabilize expectations about urban Catholics' dominant class position in contemporary Europe, showing that pilgrimage practices create unexpected opportunities for the urban middle classes to become uncomfortably aware of their lack of proficiency in rural lifeways, therefore constituting a class-mediated and religious politics of embodied practice.

- **Jason Price (IUPUI, jasonprice@gmail.com): The Encyclical Self in Born-Again Malawi**
What kind of selves are being painstakingly produced (and reproduced) again (and again) in Born-Again Malawi? In this paper, I float a theory that selves cultivated in Born-Again Malawi are fundamentally encyclical, which is to say en (in) + kylos (circle). What does it mean to cultivate a self in circulation amidst radical insecurity? In his classic essay on the matter, Emerson observed that “nothing is secure but life, transition, the energizing spirit.” In my research at an upstart Malawian Ministry of Deliverance, I have watched this observation play out in ritual practice, again-and-again, in much the same way that my interlocutors have observed their Born-Again colleagues (in Nigeria, South Africa, and elsewhere) play out their ritual practice, again-and-again, via televangelical channels freely available on free-to-air satellite television. What does it mean when cryptic unencrypted messages produce the possibility of encyclical selves that move around the categorical confines such as citizenship and ethnicity? The encyclical self, I will propose, is one that embraces the energizing spirit of insecurity to hold entropy in abeyance, a mode of enduring through a commitment to duration lived out (again-and-again) in circles.

11:00-12:45pm ~ VC 206

Land, Landscapes, and Environments in Religious Experience

Chair: Ian Turner (University of Toronto)

- **Ian Turner (University of Toronto, ian.turner@mail.utoronto.ca): Facebook Farmers and Urban Entrepreneurs: The Politics of the Sacred in the Place-Making and Place-Claiming of the Kathmandu Valley**
This paper interrogates the politics of placemaking enacted by the Newars of Nepal's Kathmandu Valley. Drawing from Appadurai's dichotomy of 'neighbourhood' and 'locality', the article asks how the dialectical relationship between material and immaterial placemaking is influenced by neoliberalism in Nepali politics and economic reforms. Drawing from past observations on ethnicity in Nepal as formed out of particular relationships with the state, it questions what moral, political, capital and religious concerns influence the 'return to the land' movement of indigeneity in the Kathmandu Valley, and how these are complicated by newly introduced democratic values. The article looks at one of the most popular Newar Facebook activist groups, the "Save Nepa Valley Movement", and considers not only what is uploaded by its users, but what the polymedia of the online platform allow to be shared, and how this compares with traditional forms of political protest in Nepal as well as social media protests elsewhere in South Asia. This research investigates how past perceptions of sacred territoriality become implicated in online social networks in which diaspora communities, such as the Canada Newa Guthi, are arguably most active. The paper aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the dynamic processes of urban and peri-urban placemaking and sacred territorialization in contemporary South Asia in its multiple technologies. Furthermore, it aims to address questions of religious authority in an age of virtual or online personhood.
- **Roger Ivar Lohmann (Trent University, rogerlohmann@trentu.ca): An Anthropological Theory of Haunting**
Different cultures posit distinctive haunting presences, ways of recognizing them, and evaluations of what they are. All cases of haunting involve the sensed presence of a mind—or its thought, feeling, or creativity—in places and times where it does not rightly belong. Wherever humans go, they can and often do make uncanny discoveries of convincing (to them) resident hauntings. They are convincing because they are accompanied by physical and emotional “signs” that people experience in their environments. Intertwined biological and cultural mechanisms of perception and imagination bias both autonomic and conscious interpretation of our experiences. Hauntings comprise one type of interpreted experience that arise when autonomic images, thoughts, and feelings appear in the guise of extant presences in our external environment. They manifest when our surroundings trigger associations built from past experiences. Hauntings can easily be mistaken for originating outside of ourselves because we do not purposely conjure them and because they arise in the presence of real environmental features. Thus, hauntings are byproducts of sensing and engaging with our environments and taking our internally generated experience

of presences for features of the landscape. In this way, hauntings seem linked to the physical world around us. In more dramatic cases, such evoked images affect our experience subtly but powerfully, such that they genuinely appear to be fellow living presences moving about with us in our surroundings.

- **Adam Dunstan (University of North Texas, Adam.Dunstan@unt.edu): The Sacred and the Settler: Native American Sacred Landscapes and Ontological Hierarchy in Religious Freedom Law**
Struggles to preserve indigenous sacred lands from desecration in the face of mining, recreation, and other extractive activities are ongoing realities for many Native American nations. While nations often view these activities as threatening the very foundations of sacred lifeways, when taken to court indigenous peoples very frequently lose, even while making seemingly strong claims under religious freedom laws. Drawing on political ontology theory and the concept of "exclusionary hierarchies of knowing" (to use Schultz' phrase), I argue that one reason these laws do not fulfill their stated purpose for indigenous peoples is due to the ways in which seemingly neutral phrases such as use, access, and burden are interpreted according to hegemonic settler discourses about causality, materiality, and ecology. The effect is an ontological hierarchy that marginalizes indigenous ontologies. In this paper, I draw upon ethnographic research involving a movement opposing ski resort expansion on the San Francisco Peaks (a mountain held sacred by 13 Native nations, including the Diné, who are the primary focus of this paper). Judicial interpretations in these cases sharply differed from the statements and actions of Diné individuals both in and out of the courtroom in regards to the divisibility of land, what actions can render a sacred object unusable, and influences which have the capacity to pollute land. This suggests a broader phenomenon in which implicit ontological assumptions structure religious freedom litigation, thus reifying settler causality as factual and rendering the lived experience of indigenous and other religious persons as "merely" religious/subjective/emotional.
- **Judith Ellen Brunton (University of Toronto, judith.brunton@mail.utoronto.ca): Striving town: Aspiring and Knowing through Oil Work in Alberta**
At the 2018 Oilfield Christian Fellowship Prayer Breakfast in Calgary, the morning's speaker—an executive from a large energy company—offered the audience his testimony and described the ways that God had worked through the oil industry to secure for him a life of wealth, moral certainty, and happiness. While this fellowship is certainly distinct in many ways from the broader religious landscape in Alberta, the experience of constituting one's knowledge and aspirations through work in the oil industry is more broadly applicable. In this paper, I will explore how labor in the oil industry, and the working culture that surrounds it, is charged with assemblages of meaning that produce potent aspirations and knowledge about what a good life is. I will be discussing two case studies: The Oilfield Christian Prayer Fellowship Breakfast—and the Fellowship's bible *God's Word for the Oil Patch: Fuel for the Soul*—as well as Calgary's municipal promotional campaign *Be Part of the Energy*. By thinking with these initiatives, I will sketch how labor, extraction, and land shape how people hope in Alberta.
- **Xiao Han (Université du Québec à Montréal, han.xiao@courrier.uqam.ca): The Production of Pu'er Tea and the Reconstruction of Ethnic Identity in the Perspective of Folk Religion and Theravada Buddhism: A Case Study of the Bulang Ethnic Group in Mangjing Village (Yunnan Province, China)**
The research object of this thesis is Bulang ethnic group located in Mangjing village in Lancang county of Pu'er City, Yunnan Province, southwest part of China. The traditional culture of the Bulang ethnic group in Mangjing Village can be dated back to their ancient cult of ancestors and sacred mountains. Through the centuries, Bulang people evolved from a slash-and-burn civilization to a community whose life became centered on the cultivation of Pu'er Tea. During this process, the Bulang cultural elite wrote their group history, and introduced the symbolic images of "tea soul" and "tea ancestor". The Bulang constructed their identity by making connection between ancient forest and Pu'er Tea. The elders perform rituals and transmit knowledge about the ancestors, reinforcing the identity of the community. The "Tea Ancestor Ceremony" provides social unity and defines ethnic boundaries while it generates economic benefits through their Pu'er tea production. Bulang culture and identity is strictly connected with the production and distribution of Pu'er tea: the Mangjing Bulang ethnic group had a tea commercial business 800 years ago and even became a transfer station of the Tea - Horse ancient roadway.

The improvement of quality required from tea traders that has been fulfilled by Bulang people by traditional tea planting technique. Bulang tea culture is also a product of political, economic and cultural interaction with other ethnic groups. Especially in the modernization and global marketing system, consumers all over the world are actively participating in determining the quality of Bulang Pu'er tea production in the form of

increasing demand in Pu'er tea's taste, ecological connotation and tradition. Bulang ethnic group utilizes Pu'er tea as a medium to inherit and promote the Pu'er tea culture in order to adapt to fast changing market and customers' consuming patterns. Bulang people elevated simple tea sales to the level of marketing Bulang culture and ethnic identity.

11:00-12:45pm ~ VC 212

Religion in the Making of Anthropological Knowledge

Chair: Joseph Webster (Queen's University Belfast)

- **Joseph Webster (Queen's University Belfast, j.webster@qub.ac.uk): Anthropology-as-Theology: Violent Endings and the Permanence of New Beginnings**

This article examines the temporality of dispensationalist imaginings of the apocalypse, with a particular focus on their acutely violent character. For the Brethren and for Jehovah's Witnesses, the most convincing 'signs' of the imminent apocalypse are violent ones. Drawing on a mixture of biblical and extra-biblical images – flames, hail, bullets, missiles – dispensationalism creates a semiotic landscape filled with natural, supernatural, and 'man-made' disaster. By analysing different images of 'violent endings' in circulation among the Brethren and the Witnesses, I ask two questions, namely, what are the *temporal effects* of this dispensationalist knowledge system, and what imaginings exist *on the other side of such violence*, after its perpetration? In the context of new debates about an anthropology-theology dialogue, I develop a mode of inquiry I call 'anthropology-as-theology', whereby anthropological analysis deliberately surrenders to colonization by theological knowledge. I suggest that, when viewed from the perspective of 'anthropology-as-theology', dispensationalist visions about the end of the world can provide new perspectives on permanence. Here, dispensationalist violence demands its own temporary disappearance by setting itself against its symbolic opposite of millennial healing, only to then reappear in a final act of dichotomising violence, with permanent (that is, eternal) consequences.

- **Pauline McKenzie Aucoin (University of Ottawa, rpaucoin@aol.com): On the Flighty, the Untrue, and the Emergent: Provisional Knowledge and Un-Truth Claims in the Anthropology of Religion**

The anthropological study of religion since Frazer can be described as the positivist study of those beliefs and ritual practices of non-Western societies, a study which, in its modernist and secular theoretical imaginary, cast these religions as primitive, superstitious, fetishistic, irrational, enchanted, unscientific; in a word untrue. Yet reflection on religion and truth raises important questions relating to ontologies of the untrue *vis-à-vis* the 'real, the actual, and the empirical' (Collier 1994), particularly when, despite their dealing with the 'unseen world', effect may be observable, even causal. Applying the perspective of critical realism, this paper explores the imaginary of fairy tales as written and told by 18th century French and British liberals and revolutionaries. My analysis will speak to emergent and cultural truths about fairies, and the importance of ideas as transitive knowledge during moments of political change.

- **Galen Watts (Queen's University/Cambridge University, 2019 Lent term, galen.watts@queensu.ca): The Commensurability of Anthropology and Theology after the Ontological Turn**

The ontological turn marked an extension of what has been a critical intervention characteristic of anthropology since its inception. The discipline of anthropology has historically been concerned with cultural variability, and in turn with challenging Western universalist assumptions. Yet prior to the turn, it was generally accepted that while cultures were relative to societies, the nature upon which these cultural schemas operated was everywhere the same. Proponents of the ontological turn such as Viveros de Castro and Henare argue this perspective is not relativist enough, as it continues to propagate a Western ontological universalism. Accordingly, they argue anthropologists must be open to the possibility not only of multiple worldviews, but multiple worlds as well. In this paper I offer a critical assessment of this recent intervention. I consider the following: (1) to what extent does the allowance of distinct ontologies—that is, affirmation of their existence—collapse the role of the anthropologist into that of the theologian? Or, to what degree does the ontological turn transform the role of the anthropologist—once understood as engaged in a task of re-presentation—to proselytizer? (2) What are the underlying normative assumptions—especially regarding the European origins of anthropology itself—which motivate the ontological turn? (3) In light of the turn, how should we conceive of the purpose and nature of the anthropological project itself? In other words,

what implications does the ontological turn hold for how we should understand anthropology as an academic discipline?

- **Quincy J. Amoah (Princeton University, quincy@princeton.edu): On Cucumbers and Oxen: Resolving the Problem of Substitution in Nilotic Sacrifice**

E.E. Evans-Pritchard, in his seminal account of Nuer religion, documents several confounding declarative statements by Nuer about being. Many scholars in anthropology, philosophy, and beyond found Evans-Pritchard's resolutions of the aporetic statements insufficient and offered alternative theories. One of the problems debated and variously revisited is the Nuer statement that "a cucumber is an ox" and therefore a cucumber-victim is an appropriate substitute in ritual situations demanding an animal-victim. The matter of the "cucumber-ox" also arose during the *ngitaleo* of the twin grandchildren of Nacap – a diviner of dreams and one of my Karimojong informants during my two-year study of ethico-moral life in Karamoja, Uganda. In my account, I take Nacap's statement that "a cucumber is an ox" seriously and argue that Evans-Pritchard's retort against his critics that the problem of the cucumber-ox is a matter of language and experience is valid. However, his inference that the two objects are "simply [linked] by a symbolic nexus" and therefore the "cucumber is an ox" statement and the justifications of ritual substitutions are symbolic is flawed. I deduce that a cucumber is an ox not because a cucumber 'stands for' an ox but because a cucumber 'appears as' an ox in Karimojong and related Nilotic life-worlds, and thus justifiably 'stands as' an ox in ritual. In other words, a cucumber-ox is iconic and therefore the clever symbolic and ontological interpretations of the matter, as attempted by previous scholars, are consequential category errors.

- **C. Travis Webb (CultureHum Foundation, ctwebb@culturehum.org): Inventing the Invention of the Study of Religion**

Though the term "religion" has a questionable imperial genealogy, I would side with the religious studies scholar David Chidester who concedes at the end of *Empire of Religion: Imperialism and Comparative Religion* (2014) that "we cannot simply abandon the term *religion* and *religions* because we are stuck with them as a result of a colonial, imperial, and now global legacy." Chidester uses South Africa as a location to study the "zone of interaction" between the British imperial center and its colonial periphery, and explores the ways in which colonialism in general, and Britain's imperial ambitions in particular, established the conditions for knowing something about other people's "religious" traditions. He argues that religion became, for the colonial empires of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the essential differentiating element of the peoples they conquered.

What Chidester does not deal with, however, and what no one has yet made a full accounting of, is the complex interplay between conquered cultural systems and secular epistemological structures that generate modern scholarship. This paper deconstructs Stephen Prothero's seminal essay "Henry Steel Olcott and 'Protestant Buddhism'," as well as Gananath Obeyesekere's original argument regarding Protestant Buddhism, to expand the narrow historical scope that has framed radical critiques of religion, religious studies, and the anthropology of religion, to make a more expansive claim about human knowledge making.

- **Alana Sá Leitão Souza (University of Toronto, alana.souza@mail.utoronto.ca): Anthropological Knowledge about Pentecostalism: A Case Study**

If we wish to pay attention to the production of anthropological knowledge about religion, it might be useful to focus on a particular case study. Within the Anthropology of Christianity, the development of Pentecostalism as a subfield has produced important data in thinking not only about the growth in popularity of these churches, but also about concomitant transformations in the wider world. This paper aims to discuss the production of knowledge in relation to a specific Pentecostal church, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG). Founded 40 years ago, the church has attracted extensive academic attention since the early 1990s. The UCKG has been a preferential case study for researchers to think not only about Pentecostalism in Brazil, but also to use as a prime example of what has been called "millennial capitalism" (Comaroff, 2000).

This discussion focus on the production of such knowledge, considering variables of time, space, discipline and method. In this review, I will engage with important discussions about the UCKG and about Pentecostalism in general. Themes will include its role in the globalization process (Coleman, 2000), its insertion into global capitalism (Comaroff, 2000) and researchers' doubts about the possibility of community

formation in a church like UCKG (Van Wyk, 2014). Moreover, I shall address Brazilian researchers' dichotomies of change and continuity in relation to those who attend the Church (Mariz & Campos, 2011).

11:00-12:45pm ~ VC 215

Geertz Prize Panel: A Discussion of N. Fadeke Castor's *Spiritual Citizenship: Transnational Pathways from Black Power to Ifá in Trinidad*

Organizer/Chair: Valentina Napolitana (University of Toronto)

- Participants: Valentina Napolitano (University of Toronto), Tamara J. Walker (University of Toronto), Elaine Pena (George Washington University), Brent Crosson (University of Texas at Austin); Discussant: Fadeke N. Castor (Texas A&M University)

12:45-2:30pm

Lunch (not provided)

2:30-4:15pm ~ VC 206

Heterodoxies and Hermeneutics: The Politics of Knowledge in Esoteric and Occult Traditions

Organizer/Chair: Omri Elisha (Queens College-CUNY)

Panel abstract

What can the anthropology of religion bring to the study of esoteric and occult epistemologies, in anxious times when the politics of knowledge are as contentious as ever? As mainstream religious and scientific channels of authority continue to be challenged by heterodox worldviews, from new religious movements to the latest conspiracy theories, public controversies over the nature of truth and reality are heightened. They are also overdetermined by discourses that rely on distinctions such as reason versus superstition, science versus "pseudoscience," openness versus secrecy, doctrine versus heresy, etc. In such a climate, unconventional forms of metaphysical and epistemic engagement, while growing in popularity, are more susceptible than ever to claims of ignorance and deception. The differences between alternative knowledge and "alternative facts" are all too easily confused, and it becomes easy to forget that esoteric and occult practices such as astrology, mysticism, and spiritualism, as otherworldly, arcane, or naïve as they seem to some, are often grounded in concrete explorations structured by hermeneutic disciplines. This panel is organized around the idea that it is possible to study and analyze such traditions not just by focusing on the substance or validity of their empirical and metaphysical claims but also by examining the interpretive, material, and discursive processes from which those claims are derived, and through which they circulate. Highlighting examples of occult spirituality and religious mysticism, we will consider the role of ethnographic and historical evidence in revealing how knowledge gets defined, cultivated, and disseminated by practitioners and adherents working both within and outside of mainstream structures of power and legitimacy. We will push against the common tendency, even among social scientists, to focus inordinately on the degree to which alternative knowledge systems succeed or fail at satisfying prevailing secular and religious doctrines, and critically assess the normative assumptions that support such characterizations, employed often indiscriminately by institutional gatekeepers, skeptics, and state actors. While recognizing that some heterodoxies, such as climate-change denialism, anti-vaccine movements, and "flat earth" conspiracies, promote untenable truth-claims that endanger public health and welfare, we aim to distinguish these from far less virulent forms that may transgress conventional areas of knowledge production but usually seek to coexist with or even complement them, as opposed to actively undermining them.

Individual abstracts

- **Jon Bialecki (University of Edinburgh, jon.bialecki@gmail.com): Resurrection, DNA, and the Quantum archeologists**

Transhumanists are a mixture of those who, either as vocation or avocation, anticipate and advocate for new technologies such as nanotechnology, cryonics, artificial intelligence, genetics, and gerontology in the

belief that these advancements will result in overcoming the limitations that have here-to-fore characterized our species, and thereby result in transcending humanity. The relation between transhumanism and the conventional scientific and engineering community is complex, and at time fraught and contested: transhumanists are at once deeply imbricated with scientific researchers, as well as with Silicon-Valley style capitalists, but at the same time transhumanists are often derided as pseudo-scientific and lost in self-delusion. No element of transhumanism is considered more outside of sober and respectable science and engineering than accounts of future resurrection of the dead - and this is especially the case when the dead have not been cryonically preserved, and resurrection is being discussed by the relatively small but quickly growing group of transhumanists who see transhumanism as not just simpatico with pre-existing religious sensibilities, but actually understand transhumanism as a religious mandate. Focusing on the Mormon Transhumanist Association, the oldest and largest religious transhumanist association in the world, I will argue that their language of religious striving and moral obligation strangely makes their vision of resurrection of the dead more grounded in conventional scientific and engineering practices than that of other secular and religious transhumanists.

- **Omri Elisha (Queens College-CUNY, oelisha@qc.cuny.edu): Astrological Knowledge and the Will to Be Aware**

Western astrology is having a cultural moment of nearly unprecedented popularity, and with it perennial debates about the scientific validity of a field that has long been derided as naïve and superstitious, and dismissed as pseudoscientific. Many critiques of modern astrology rely on misconceptions about what it is that practicing astrologers actually do, as well as their active engagement with regimes of knowledge that include scientific cosmology and astronomy. More importantly, as public discourse about astrology dwells on efforts to prove or disprove the empirical accuracy of astrological interpretations and predictions, much less is understood about how something we might call astrological knowledge is conceived, acquired, and applied through astrological consultations and inquiries. This paper peers beyond the surface of media horoscopes to consider Western astrology as an epistemic domain, where professional and aspiring practitioners enhance their craft, and the spiritual sensibilities with which it tends to align, by becoming versed in an eclectic mix of religious, scientific, philosophical, psychological, and mythological symbols, resources, and references. Contrary to its reputation as fanciful pop-culture escapism, astrology is a medium of intellectual and creative agency for trained practitioners, for whom the integration of diverse and seemingly disparate epistemologies is often less about efforts to access objective realities by occult means than acquiring the requisite subjective knowledge to reform one's objective realities through refinements of cosmic consciousness.

- **Erin Yerby (Brown University, erin_yerby@brown.edu): Spectres Emerge from the Body: Toward a Theory of Intense Figuration**

While we may doubt the senses, the body itself is taken to be a place easily identifiable, measurable, offering itself readily to the field of the visible and thus to objectification. But what happens when the body is understood as a *medium* of encounter with the shadows, the spectres that haunt and displace the present? Drawing on my ethnographic work on Spiritualist mediumship, I consider the body a place displaced by spectral sensations that raise a spectre of doubt around the 'place' of experience. Unlike Descartes' doubt, as a doubt in the body itself—or rather, what can be known through the senses—this *doubt* arises from "trust" in sensation, in the honed mediumistic techniques of attention to ephemeral sensations, affects and images of spirit presence. Here, the dead are not history, but past-presences—affecting forces of the present that emerge as if from the body itself. This paper explores Spiritualist mediumship as a site of intense figuration—the emergence of haptic images from the body that compose collective "forms" as *facts of sensation* (evoking Deleuze's term). Drawing upon Durkheim's notion of collective effervescence, William Mazzarella's recent work on mana, and Charles Peirce's formulation of belief, I look at how the spirits in mediumship compose an animating 'irritant' in the bodies who feel them, as they make visible a nascent moment in the abstraction and figuration of experience — that is, in the conversion of inner sensation to collective, animate, social forms.

- **Paul Manning (Trent University, paulmanning@trentu.ca): The Medium, the Message and the "Message Medium"**

Nineteenth-century Spiritualism has attracted the interest of media/technology studies because its emblematic ritual, the séance, was metaphorically likened to a "spiritualist telegraph", part of a series of occult doublets grounding Spiritualist epistemic claims in science and new electrical technologies. While

newfangled electrical media like the telegraph provided a metaphoric basis for epistemically presenting the séance as a real conduit of phatic contact between different worlds, Spiritualism also grounded itself epistemically in the stranger sociability of print publics created by the newspaper and post. Séances were publics, defined by the normative presence of *strangers* (Warner 2002): not only publics of actual séance-goers, but print publics, since séances were also read about in the press. The visitors to a séance were *strangers* both to each other and to the medium, the spirits contacted were called “strangers”, and the printed séances circulated in the ghostly community of Spiritualist “strangers”, fellow readers of a print public. Such print circulation allowed spirit “stars” to appear simultaneously at séances on both sides of the Atlantic. This similarity between séance and print public was replicated in a *hybrid genre* that conflated these different kinds of “publics” and “strangers.” The Boston *Banner of Light* (and other Spiritualist journals) held thrice-weekly public “free séances,” where a “message medium” answered letters from readers, read aloud by the “chairman”, and the transcript of the séance with the spirits’ replies would then be printed in the newspaper.

- Jordan Haug (University of California, San Diego, jordanhaug@gmail.com): At the Tip of Satan’s Tongue: Political Oratory and a Fantasia of Rumors in Papua New Guinea**
 Cannibalistic witchcraft, rumors of Satanic cults, and narratives of wayward youth mesmerized by rock music—conspiracy theories have recently hit the Papua New Guinea political campaign circuit in a big way. Harkening back to some of the greatest hits of mid-1980s American Evangelical pop culture, many Papua New Guineans are currently experiencing a recent iteration of the “Satanic panic.” In this paper, I focus on the reception of political campaigners’ perorations of these motifs during a 2016 special election on the island of Misima, in the Samarai-Murua District (Milne Bay Province). Concerns over concealment, conspiracy, and revelation played a central role in how these events were structured, understood, and engaged with during the 2016 political campaign. Gossip about occult activities, secret societies, and invisible powers dominated much of the political debate. By focusing on concealment, conspiracy, and revelation, I explore the generative role of epistemological uncertainty in Christian political campaigning and the resulting fantasia of rumors that dominated the 2016 election. I argue that the extemporaneous nature of these political events and the resonance of prominent conspiratorial motifs in political oratory reveal a great deal about the global circulation of Christian conspiracy theories, the role of power brokers in Melanesia, and Misimans’ reflections on the implications of the opacity of other minds.
- James Bielo (Miami University, bielogs@miamioh.edu): Discussant**

2:30-4:15pm ~ VC 212

Knowledge, texts, and interpretations

Chair: Kalpesh Bhatt (University of Toronto)

- Kalpesh Bhatt (University of Toronto, kalpesh.bhatt@mail.utoronto.ca): Politics of Interpretation: The Concept of Equanimity in the *Bhagavad Gita***
 All influential religious texts continue to live through manifold literary categories of knowledge production and consumption: readings, renderings, recitations, translations, commentaries, and criticisms. While these categories nourish life of a text by providing new interpretations that rejuvenate its semantic domain, intellectual appeal, and social significance, they also produce hermeneutical tensions among different denominations espousing the same text. The *Bhagavad Gita*, the most translated and celebrated work of Sanskrit, for example, has been converted into an interpretive battlefield for many millennia by theologians and philosophers from various schools of Vedanta, and in recent centuries by religious reformists, social activists, and Hindu nationalists. Exploring two such commentaries on a small section of the *Bhagavad Gita*—by a 20th-century Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi and a 21st-century scholar-sadhu Bhadrash Swami—this paper argues that production of religious knowledge is predicated on not only the author’s theological grounding, epistemological preference or ontological orientation but also on how this knowledge is revised and consumed by the practitioners in their everyday lives.

Comparing how these commentaries expound the concept of equanimity (*sthitaprajnata*), this paper addresses two questions about the production of knowledge: 1) How do commentators contextualize their

interpretations in contemporary religious, social, or political milieu? 2) How do these new interpretations of the religious text create customized frameworks for its adherents to address their secular concerns? This inquiry also brings to the fore multifaceted ways in which adherents use knowledge to understand, inform, and reshape their interior and exterior worlds. Even partial answers to these questions, attempted within the limited scope of this paper, would contribute to the scholarly endeavor of synthesizing theology and anthropology, and infusing religious practices, affects, and experiences into textually-oriented lives of religious books.

- **Christina E. Pasqua (University of Toronto, christina.pasqua@mail.utoronto.ca): Bible Comics, “Little Paper Missionaries” that Redraw the Boundaries of the “Real”**

In the mid- to late-2000s, a surge of Bible comics flooded both Christian and non-Christian print marketplaces. The history of comics that deal with biblical content long precedes this particular moment. However, the decade’s fruitfulness is reflected in the rise of Hollywood adaptations of comics in film as well as the ever-growing academic interest in comics studies. To better understand the implications of this overlap for the anthropology of religion, I use Michael Pearl’s *Good and Evil* (2008) as a case study. In this paper, I explore how a missionary tool developed by a particular fundamentalist Christian church in Pleasantville Tennessee (No Greater Joy Ministries), balances the desire to emulate the professionalism and familiarity of the comic book industry and its conventions with the need to create a resource that guides converts toward knowing the Bible (and its word-based content) through a medium defined by visuality. I narrow in on a particular series of panels in the above publication that mythologize the missionary encounter, conversion process, and hierarchy of knowledge that the convert has access to — where images are simply a starting point or a means to an end, namely the Bible itself — through invented, extra-biblical material. By way of visual and linguistic analysis, I argue that the comic produces visual conceptions of self (American Christian missionaries) and other (potential converts and dissenters in foreign lands) that highlight the limits of word alone in establishing religious authority and identity among religious, racial, and ethnic others. The comics form lends itself to not only depicting, but also engaging with competing forms of reality (professional, theological, narratological) in order to circulate an understanding of Christianity as both a powerful religious institution and a corporate force that can achieve ideological and aesthetic persuasion through cultural production. Pearl’s comic therefore reimagines the material bounds of what is the “real” or “true” Bible by constructing a visual etiology for his mission that optimizes the success of his various media projects both at home and abroad.

- **E. Frances King (University of California, San Diego, efking@ucsd.edu): Mail Order Missions: Episcopalians, Magazines and New Evangelism**

For over a century, magazines detailing global Christian mission work have arrived in mail-boxes around the world. Many magazines include activities and projects to give readers a manufactured connection to the non-Christian subjects of mission work. This paper will focus on the way contemporary Anglicans interact with mission magazines and material and how that interaction is designed to produce new forms of Christian knowledge. In this paper I discuss the ways that missionary magazines and other material produce and inform the nature of religious knowledge and expressions for churches and individuals. I compare depictions of Africa and Africans in *World Vision*, a contemporary non-denominational magazine and mission organization, the ‘30 hour famine’ a youth exercise, and a now defunct Church of England missionary magazine titled *Yes!*, in addition to ethnographic data collected related to this subject. This comparison will explore how printed material and activities are translated, or fail to translate, into active expressions of Christian faith. This translation relies on alienating depictions of non-Christians that paradoxically exist to manufacture the connection between the subject and reader. This process, and contemporary questioning of it, is producing new directions in missions and expressions of theology and religious identity in the contemporary Global Anglican Church. These shifts set up new understandings of evangelism and mission in mainline denominations at a moment when Western Christianity is experiencing a sharp decline in attendance.

- **Candace Lukasik (University of California, Berkeley, cblukasik@berkeley.edu): Knowing Ethos: Transnational Anxieties and Authority in Coptic Theological Education**

After the uprisings of 2011 and coup of 2013 in Egypt, emigration, especially among Coptic Christians, to the US increased dramatically. This paper explores how second-generation youth among Coptic communities in the United States are interacting with this immigration increase—seeking ways to center their relationship with the Coptic Orthodox Church beyond ethnic and ancestral ties. Instead, second-

generation American Copts are educating themselves in Orthodox theology and promoting education on the Church Fathers, Church history, and liturgical life as a means by which to engage in a Coptic and, more importantly, an intra-Orthodox tradition.

Coptic communal leaders in the United States have challenged the Coptic Orthodox Church on its lack of innovation and advancement in theological education, leading many youth and scholars to seek classes and degrees from Eastern Orthodox institutions. In order to prevent youth from leaving the Coptic Church and participating in, or even converting to, other Eastern Orthodox churches, Coptic Orthodox priests and educated, second-generation American Copts have sought to reinvigorate theological innovation through the establishment of youth ministries, schools, and colleges for the advancement of (Coptic) Orthodox Christian education.

Through 12 months of fieldwork in these educational settings, youth meetings, and regional conferences that promote theological dialogue, I argue that the impact of debates around immigration, secularism, and “Protestant” influence, has not only transformed practices of Coptic community-fashioning in a diasporic context, but has also challenged the institutional (and ecclesiastical) authority of the mother church back in Egypt.

- **Nermeen Mouftah (Butler University, nmouftah@butler.edu): The Difference in What is Shared: Muslims and Christians Mediating God’s Word in Post-Mubarak Egypt**

In August 2013, amid a military crackdown on Muslim Brotherhood protesters resisting the ouster of Muhammad Morsi, two bookstores run by the Egyptian Bible Society were set ablaze. The fires destroyed the shops at a time of rising sectarian tensions. This paper considers the targeting of bookstores—as opposed to churches, that had also come under attack—as a significant site of tension. I relate the event to Muslim-Christian polemics over the authenticity of scripture, and the efficacy of scriptural mediation through what Matthew Engelke calls publicity. Drawing on anthropological approaches to language and textual ideologies, this paper argues that Christian and Muslim reformers share a focus on scripture in its textual, rather than oral forms. Despite some significant differences in the hermeneutical practices for encountering God’s Word, many Muslim and Christian reformers are today united against two common enemies they see as detrimental to the knowledge of holy books, and education more broadly: illiteracy and rote memorization. This paper moves between sites that promote autonomous reading in *da’wa* and missionary work: religiously-sponsored literacy, the Cairo International Book Fair, the Egyptian Bible Society’s Bible Museum, and religious bookstores. Across these sites we glance real and imagined Muslim-Christian interactions to observe not only strain over scriptural difference, but how ideas of the efficacy of divine communication are exacerbated by a shared notion that the other’s methods of publicity are a threat to social order.

2:30-4:15pm ~ VC 215

New Approaches to Religious Coexistence

Organizer/Chair: John Dulin

Panel abstract

Many ethnographic studies of interreligious relations focus on boundary-crossing, like interreligious marriage and syncretic identities, which are often presented as opposed to transcendent religious imperatives of boundary creation and purification. Some of these studies have focused on shrines that receive visitors from different faiths. In these studies, conditions of mixing and conflict at shrines are taken as a microcosm of relations outside of them. This panel proposes to study patterns of interreligious relations in many different contexts, including neighborhoods, places of leisure, and workplaces, and to develop frameworks for understanding shifting patterns of interaction in a variety of contexts. Moreover, in contrast to the focus on syncretism in many studies, this panel’s papers will take an interest in instances in which religious difference is not trivialized, but also does not function as an insurmountable barrier to interreligious coexistence. In so doing, the papers will recognize that religious logics, practices, discourses, and/or values have a significant role in structuring relations across religious boundaries, in everyday and not-so-everyday contexts. We hope that this approach builds towards a comparative anthropology of interreligious coexistence, which looks at “coexistence”

as culturally constructed, with distinct forms in different locales that are conditioned in part by the logics of the religious communities being brought into relation.

Individual abstracts

- **Esra Özyürek (London School of Economics, e.g.ozyurek@lse.ac.uk): Muslim Engagements with the Memory of Jewish Holocaust in Germany**

In the last decade there has been widely shared discomfort about the way Muslim minority Germans engage with the Holocaust. They are accused of not showing empathy towards its Jewish victims and, as a result, of not being able to learn the necessary lessons from this massive crime. This presentation focuses on attempts made by practicing and non-practicing Muslims in Germany to engage with the memory of the Holocaust. It approaches a particular understanding of Holocaust memory as the German civil religion heavy with Christian elements through focusing on elements such as taking the guilt of the Holocaust on their shoulders, converting to new religious values, and the sacred elements of the memory of the Holocaust. It also shows how in this Muslim engagement with the memory of the Jewish Holocaust the Christian majority is also there to watch, mediate, and assess the validity of the engagement. In doing so, the presentation aims to highlight how minority-minority relations between religions often involve a triangulation with the majority religion, whether traditional or civil.

- **Girish Daswani (University of Toronto, daswani@utsc.utoronto.ca): Contradiction and Inter-religious Coexistence in Contemporary Ghana**

This paper looks at how religious co-existence in Ghana (between Pentecostals, Muslims and Traditionalists) is an important but often overlooked topic of anthropological and comparative inquiry. Starting from the assumption that Pentecostalism is incapable of providing a transcendent foundation for human co-existence (Marshall), I argue that, rather than difference, “contradiction” (and living with contradiction) provides an avenue for an anthropology of interreligious co-existence. By shifting the focus from “how” (religions are different) to “when” (they come together and apart), we begin to see patterns of interaction and involvement. When do Pentecostals and Muslims, in a secular country where Christianity is the majority religion, clash and how do acts of contradiction help resolve these public conflicts? When do other social values and forms of power supersede religious difference?

- **Angie Heo (University of Chicago, heo@uchicago.edu): Christian-Muslim Coexistence in Comparison**

Understood to be kin traditions “of the book”, Christianity and Islam have enjoyed and endured social relations of proximity and hierarchy for centuries. At the same time, Christians and Muslims in various contemporary contexts attest to the central role that the national and geopolitical frame plays in shaping how religion enters into questions of common belonging. What difference does the specificity of religion (e.g. logics, practices, discourses) make to the study of coexistence? What difference do nation-states, histories of war, and regional economies make for religious interaction and exclusion? To explore these questions with a comparative angle, this paper engages two groups that index the problem of Christian-Muslim coexistence in very different ways: the Copts in Egypt and the Yemeni refugees in South Korea.

- **Devaka Premawardhana (Emory University, devaka.premawardhana@emory.edu): Religious Boundaries and Boundary Crossings among the Makhuwa of Mozambique**

In northern Mozambique, Islam, Roman Catholicism, and (more recently) Pentecostalism have taken turns attracting local Makhuwa-speaking converts. Yet in none of these cases was that which came to be termed “the religion of the ancestors” displaced. It was preserved and brought into interaction with the world religions. The precise nature of that interaction is the topic of this paper. I attend particularly to the multiple religious practices of self-identified Makhuwa Catholics. In broad strokes, one might see the phenomenon of baptized Catholics consulting with diviners, imbibing traditional medicines, and making offerings to ancestors as evidence for the fusion of religious worlds. But the broad strokes miss what is evident up close: that ancestors are rarely brought into the churches and that Catholic saints never appear at ancestral shrines. Among the Makhuwa, rather than fusion, one sees an acceptance of disparate zones, though not without a willingness to tack back and forth between them. Makhuwa religiosity is less a matter of hybridity than of duality; more precisely—as one interlocutor put it—it is a matter of “duality without dualism.”

- **John Dulin (Utah Valley University, john.dulin@uvu.edu): The Syncretic Hierarchies and Boundaried Symmetries of Muslim-Christian relations in Gondar, Ethiopia**

This paper will compare patterns of Muslim-Orthodox Christian interaction at sacred sites and in profane settings in Gondar, Ethiopia, and will unpack the resonances and disconnects in the logic of intergroup relations across these domains. Muslim-Christian interactions in Orthodox ritual settings tend to be defined by ritual value-logics of Orthodoxy. When permitted to participate in rituals, Muslims often assume a subordinate position, and, according to many Muslims, a marginal position within their own communities. Meanwhile, Orthodox Christians, including priests, tend to see Muslim participation as an affirmation of their faith's power, and most would disapprove of Orthodox Christians visiting Muslim sacred sites. In this case, hierarchy and marginality characterize syncretic mixing. By contrast, outside of ritual settings, patterns of interreligious relations have some autonomy from norms prevailing at ritual sites. Indeed, in neighborhood and work settings, Muslim-Christian interactional routines frame Muslim-Christian relations as bounded, but ostensibly symmetrical, as defined by balanced mutual respect. Muslims who engage in these kinds of non-syncretic relations with Christians meet approval from both Christian and Muslim communities, though there is often an undertone of hierarchy, and often religious logics leak into these more 'pluralistic' modalities. This account suggests that an anthropological understanding of religious mixing would do well to avoid taking syncretism as a prototype of peaceful coexistence, and understand syncretism in the context of a larger array of cultural patterns both within and between religious communities.

- **David Henig (Utrecht University, d.henig@uu.nl): Fatwa as/against Tradition: Muslim Holy Sites and the Politics of Pluralism and Anti-pluralism in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

This paper explores politics of pluralism and anti-pluralism surrounding Muslim holy sites in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). I outline the trajectories of transformations and continuities of the sites over the socialist, and postsocialist-cum-postwar period (1945 – present). Historically, in BiH Muslim holy sites and the surrounding spaces have evinced lively social and religious pluralism. However, these spaces have not been void of interventions, regulations, and attacks that have transformed these textures of pluralism. I am concerned with the ongoing attempts to regulate, control, or even wipe out the sites on the part of various national or international actors. This is a process that I characterize as 'anti-pluralism' for its forceful attempts to contain, erase, and silence the tradition of actually existing textures of pluralism around the holy sites. Drawing on archival and ethnographic research, I focus on how various Islamic legal discourses channeled through fatwas and sermons but also through the bureaucratic powers to approve and/or organize the use of particular spaces as 'holy sites', became entwined first with the secular socialist modernization ethos, and the continuities of these discourses in the post-war period, now entwined with the nationalizing ethos. I suggest that even though the political context has changed dramatically, the logic of the discourse has not. Although there is a tendency in the scholarship to treat the socialist / post-socialist transformations as a process of liberation of religious life, the case study presented here offers a window into the continuities of contestation and tensions over religious authority and sovereignty.

4:30-6:00PM ~ Chapel

Rappaport Lecture

Joel Robbins (Cambridge University)

6:00-7:00pm ~ VC 211

SAR Board Meeting

7:30-9:30pm ~ Off-Site (Storm Crow Manor, 580 Church St)

Ethnographic Films

For registration and details see Saliha Chattoo (chattoo.saliha@gmail.com)

May 23

9:00-10:45am ~ VC 206

Anthropologist Walks into an Archive: Writing Lived Religion from Ethnographic and Historical Sources

Organizers/Chairs: Ingie Hovland (University of Georgia) and James S. Bielo (Miami University)

Panel abstract

This panel explores the methodological challenges and opportunities of integrating fieldwork and archival sources to address questions in the anthropology of religion. Panelists draw from extensive ethnographic fieldwork, and reflexively explore how they have sought to engage archival data to advance perspectives earned through ethnography: to historicize claims, to fill lacuna, to follow archival trails identified through fieldwork, and to more richly represent forms of lived religion. In diverse ways and working with diverse archival forms, each panelist has discovered that archival materials pose a rich complement to fieldwork and that ethnographic skills transfer productively to archival sources, though not seamlessly and not without sometimes provoking fumbling feelings of uncertainty and unease. While presenters will address analytical and theoretical questions in their respective projects, they will also highlight concrete methodological processes, decisions, and challenges – moments of excited revelation and frustrated confusion.

Anthropologists (e.g., Ann Stoler, Jean and John Comaroff, and J.D.Y. Peel) have interrogated a series of issues related to anthropological archival work, including how the formation of archives are often entangled with colonial histories, the limitations of historical documents to describe life worlds, and the differences between bounded material collections and open-ended fieldwork. In dialogue with this body of work, this panel examines how ethnographically-grounded engagements with archival sources continue to raise productive questions for anthropological knowledge production. How can ethnographic questions be rephrased in the archive, and in light of archival findings? How might we build relationships with archivists, both professionally trained and locally ratified? How might an ethnographer contribute to creating, expanding, and organizing archival collections without reproducing colonialist histories? How do we select and sort through particular stacks of documents from sometimes infinite-seeming archival shelves? For continuing forms of religious practice and tradition, where do archives meet oral histories and forgotten/remembered materialities? What are the best practices and ethical considerations of copying documents, taking notes, and sharing materials? How do we read archival materials and how is our reading of them informed by our fieldwork? And if we can find a way of reading “ethnographically,” what does that tell us about the religious lives we are studying and their moment(s) in local and globalized histories?

Each panelist will center their presentation around one or a series of archival documents they have worked with, as a way of making methodological questions and processes visible. Contributors address a wide range of case studies, from a scattered archive relating to an evangelical Holy Land replication in Kentucky to the role of colonial memories for a Malagasy-American Christian aid alliance, practices of secrecy in a Papua New Guinea missionary archive, the presence of women’s voices in a Norwegian missionary archive, and indigenous re-mediations of a late 19th/early 20th century missionary diary.

Individual abstracts

- **James S. Bielo (Miami University, bielojs@miamioh.edu): Scattered Archive, Forgotten Place: Tracing Promises of Presence at Kentucky’s Holy Land**

On Palm Sunday, 1958, a Southern Baptist pastor realized a 20-year vision: re-creating Jerusalem’s Garden Tomb on a Kentucky hillside overlooking the city of Cincinnati. Within two years of opening, the “Garden of Hope” was hosting 150,000 annual visitors and hopes of becoming a nationally renowned tourist attraction abounded. In 2017, that number was less than a thousand people. Across six decades of life, the 2.5-acre site has been celebrated, neglected, sold and bought multiple times, restored, vandalized, and visited. In this paper, I ask what we learn by tracing the life course of such a place and what a forgotten destination can teach us about pilgrimage and place-making. I argue that the Garden has accumulated divergent promises of divine presence, inflecting Protestant and Catholic material features, stories of supernatural intervention and stories of human ingenuity, erasures and elisions of alternative claims to authority and authenticity, devotional labor, choreographed rituals, and variously devoted custodians. Tracing the 60-year life course of the Garden included ethnographic work among tour guides and groups, oral histories, and an

attempt to assemble an archive scattered among local libraries, personal collections, and diverse publications.

- **Britt Halvorson (Colby College, britt.halvorson@colby.edu): Stricken: Disappearance and Ethical Legibility in Malagasy Church Archives**

This paper explores the multifaceted role of stories about mysterious late-colonial Malagasy figures in the contemporary ethical practice of a Malagasy-American Christian aid alliance. In 1936, Eugene Rateaver, a Malagasy Lutheran pastor serving a Behara parish, was controversially defrocked or “stricken” from church rolls for immoral conduct. Some believe that Rateaver subsequently disappeared under puzzling circumstances. This event and its aftermath, reworked in multiple ways, strikingly lives on some 80 years later in contemporary American missionary and Malagasy church circles, now reunited through an aid partnership. Moving between a set of previously unexamined church archival records and contemporary stories, this paper considers how the unresolved qualities of Rateaver’s life, as it is now recalled, stand in for a broader present-day process of critically reevaluating relations to a past with, for Americans in particular, hidden, mysterious, and stricken elements. Contemporary retellings and forgettings about Rev. Rateaver’s life (1884-1961) illuminate lingering anxieties about the racial and political inequalities of American-Malagasy relations under French colonialism. For American and Malagasy church leaders attempting more equitable contemporary relations in their aid alliance, Rateaver’s story polyphonically speaks to the possibility of imagining and stabilizing a non-colonial ethical practice. The paper thus examines how unresolved figures can travel across specific historical moments, becoming ideologically-charged formations concerning the social visibility, or invisibility, of an alternative political and cultural order.

- **Courtney Handman (University of Texas at Austin, chandman@austin.utexas.edu): Cargo cults and Communists: The Colonial Imagination of Secrecy in the Field and the Archive**

While the anthropological analysis of “cargo cults” has come in for considerable and well-deserved critique, the term continues to circulate today in places like Papua New Guinea, often as an accusation of ignorance or illegitimate knowledge. One of the common tropes across a number of religious movements that were called cargo cults in the 20th century was in fact the cultists’ own recognition of their ignorance. The anthropological record of cargo narratives is filled with stories of mythical white people tearing out the most important pages of the Bible before bringing Christianity, or tearing out the crucial pages of a text book before starting an educational program. Anyone in Papua New Guinea today claiming access to revealed knowledge that was supposedly kept hidden from colonial forebears may be accused of cargo cultist at some point. Still, it was a surprise to discover how much of the administrative and missionary archives were concerned with keeping information from colonial New Guineans. These colonial actors were not keeping the exact secrets that the New Guineans suspected them of keeping. Rather, in the 1950s administrators and missionaries were trying to keep the “secret” of communism in China, the USSR, or Indonesia from spreading to New Guineans, a population who they thought of as uncommonly susceptible to propaganda. The confluence of fieldwork and archival experience suggests the ways in which recent Melanesian history can be told from the perspective of the control over communicative circulation.

- **Ingie Hovland (University of Georgia, ingiehovland@gmail.com): How Do Anthropologists read? Questions that Arise when Reading a Protestant Woman’s Notes in an Archive**

This paper will start from the methodological question of how ethnographers can read archival material. One archival text will serve as an example: an interpretation of a biblical passage, written by a Lutheran woman in Norway in the early twentieth century. This text was collected in the Mission Archive in Stavanger, Norway, as part of a larger body of texts that document the efforts by women to increase gender equality in Norwegian Christian mission organizations at this time. Scholars from different disciplines would read this text differently. I will discuss what kinds of questions may arise when the text is read by an anthropologist as part of a project that seeks to engage with conversations in the anthropology of religion. For example, how might the interaction in anthropological analysis between “emic” and “etic” categories influence practices of reading? How might “relations” be read in a text? How might social processes of “making” or “becoming” be deduced from a written document? The paper will conclude with a reflection on whether or not we can speak of a method of “ethnographic reading.”

- **Pamela E. Klassen (University of Toronto, p.klassen@utoronto.ca): Remediating the Archive**

In this paper, I consider how an archival document spurred remediation in a doubled sense: a kind of land-based repair and a new form of mediation. An archivist from the Anglican Church in Toronto changed my life

when she gave me a diary written by missionary-journalist Frederick Du Vernet detailing his 1898 visit to the Ojibwe of the Rainy River. Struck by his vivid portrayal of colonial, Christian encroachment on their land, I was also surprised by his frank accounts of Ojibwe women and men who resisted his presence. Taking a copy of the diary back to where it was written, I travelled to the Kay-Nah-Chi-Wah-Nung Historical Centre in 2012. Since then, I have worked with students, elders, and community members to remediate the diary in a website called Kiinawin Kawindomowin Story Nations. My paper reflects on this journey, considering the land-based mediation at the center of the process.

9:00-10:45am ~ VC 211

Mentoring Session 2

Chairs: Michael Lambek (University of Toronto) and Catherine Wanner (Pennsylvania State University)

- This session is open to any graduate students.

Topics to be covered include:

- Grants and Post-Docs: both obvious and unwritten rules in applying for postdocs; marketing yourself for jobs relating to the study of religion (e.g. Anthropology, Religious Studies)
- Managing information (storing, accessing)
- Managing classes of different sizes, from large to small

9:00-10:45am ~ VC 212

Science, Religion, and Modes of (Secular) Knowledge-making

Chair: Deana L. Weibel (Grand Valley State University)

- **Deana L. Weibel (Grand Valley State University, weibeld@gvsu.edu): “Something Beyond What We Understand”: Shifting between Scientific and Religious Models of the Universe in Space Professionals’ Conceptualizations of Outer Space**

Examinations of the relationship between religion and science have often sought to draw distinctions between these two “ways of knowing,” with Frazer’s evolutionary characterization of scientific thought as more advanced than religious thought and Malinowski’s argument that religious and scientific thinking vary depending on context being two early examples. Recent scholarship has reinforced the idea that scientific and religious understandings can be successfully integrated in individuals; for example, research by sociologist Elaine Howard Ecklund has demonstrated that a significant proportion of American scientists consider themselves to be religious. This paper, based primarily on ethnographic research conducted before and during a winter 2019 sabbatical, focuses on the way ostensibly competing scientific and religious models of the universe combine and influence each other among “space professionals,” a category that includes astronauts, astronomers, engineers and others whose work focuses on and advances space exploration. In this early analysis of new data, which draws on ideas of human cognition and mental models as well as ethnographies of science and space travel, I will examine how religious respondents, including NASA astronauts and other employees, people working in private space industry, and Jesuit astronomers at the Vatican Observatory, “code-switch” between and blend together religious and scientific schemas when conceptualizing the cosmos and humanity’s place within it.

- **Ehler Voss (University of Siegen, ehler.voss@uni-siegen.de): Who is Allowed to Fake? The Magic of Skepticism**

The role model of the 90-year-old magician and escape artist James Randi is Harry Houdini – a model he emulated and surpassed. Among other things, he professionalized and institutionalized Houdini’s practice of exposing fraudulent magicians in a way that has made him one of today’s leading stars of what is called the skeptical movement. He achieved his prominence especially in the 1970s with his criticism of Uri Geller, whose public demonstrations of paranormal abilities Randi sought to expose by replicating them with the aid of magic tricks.

During my anthropological fieldwork in California I became part of a group of white middle-class skeptics who follow in the tradition of Randi and try to expose people they consider to be charlatans. They act in the

tradition of the Enlightenment and advocate science and rationality, since they fear political and social damage if fraudulent ideologies and therapies prevail.

In this presentation I will describe and analyze a specific campaign of the group against a famous psychic whom they consider to be a fraud. I will show how, during the skeptics' campaign against the psychic, the skeptics themselves draw on frauds and fakes, and I will show how fake and exposure change positions and entangle. Finally, I will interpret the skeptics' practices of exposure against the background of the mediumistic controversies of the 19th century, which to this day constitute a field in which the boundaries between falsity and truth, believing and knowing, religion and the secular are constantly negotiated and often blur. Thus, I will offer an anthropological perspective on the "politics of religious knowledge and ignorance" that takes into account its own position and involvement in these practices.

- **Andrew Walker-Cornetta (Princeton University, aw13@princeton.edu): "Clouded by God's Hand: The Anthropology of Intellectual Disability in Mid-Twentieth Century American Catholicism"**

This paper explores how mid-twentieth century American Catholics valued and made sense of the forms of human difference captured by labels like "mental retardation" and "mental deficiency." More specifically, it examines the tensions within Catholics' efforts to figure the so-called "exceptional" individual in the postwar era as both a site of knowledge and as an instance of a kind of holy unknowability. Within the broader cultural milieu of enthusiasm for what was often termed "the challenge of the retarded," Catholics elaborated a dance between articulations of cognitive disability as an opportunity to demonstrate this population's capacity for rehabilitation—and thus as an occasion to prove Catholics' "maturity" in American public life—and an insistence upon their position as "signs of contradiction" vis-à-vis the modern world. (Or, more pointedly, as instances of the divine glancingly felt within it.) By way of an historical ethnography of several Catholic schools and programs for the "exceptional," this paper illustrates how Catholics' vernacular anthropology of disability both helped to constitute and *to refuse* "mental retardation's" meanings and meaningfulness within the conditions of a secular age. In attending to these sources, I endeavor to make contributions to ongoing conversations within the anthropology of religion regarding failure, the secular, disability, and "the limits of meaning."

- **Theodora Sutton (University of Oxford, theodora.sutton@mansfield.ox.ac.uk): Dopamine Spirituality: Belief and Pseudo-Science in a New Age, 'Digital Detoxing' Community**

'Digital detoxing' is the temporary removal of digital technology. Despite widespread fears around digital harms, psychologists have not found that screen-time causes depression or addiction. Viewed anthropologically, removal of technology is less evidence-led, and far more shaped by cultural beliefs and values. This paper uses an ethnography of a Californian digital detoxing community who visit the Mendocino forest to disconnect from digital devices. A weekend of hugs, games, meditation, and transformative rituals, this detox is a New Age celebration of detoxers' spiritual oneness with the forest and with each other.

During fieldwork, detoxers often told me that after eight seconds of hugging, oxytocin or 'the happy chemical' is released in the brain. They emphasized 'what real dopamine feels like' as opposed to 'Facebook red dot notification dopamine.' Neurotransmitters like oxytocin and dopamine were just one category of scientific term adopted by detoxers to emphasize the importance of time spent together without technology. Hanegraaff (1996) explains that New Age interweaves psychology and other sciences with spiritual self-actualization, yet 'New Age Science' is not really science at all. Instead, New Agers use fragments of 'new' or 'fringe' science that fit into an intuitive 'philosophy of nature.' This paper examines digital detoxers' use of science towards ultimately religious ends; how they integrate ideas from neuroscience and psychology into their beliefs, how these shape their rituals and norms, and how they use science to contrast pre-digital life with a modern, digital world.

9:00-10:45am ~ VC 215

Knowing and Ignoring in Pilgrimage (Part I)

Organizers/Chairs: Simon Coleman (University of Toronto), John Eade (University of Roehampton/University of Toronto), and Evgenia Mesaritou (University of Cyprus, University of Toronto)

Panel abstract

Pilgrimage involves various types and degrees of ‘religious’ as well as ‘secular’ knowledge and ignorance, which are intentionally and/or unintentionally formed, pursued, drawn upon, embodied and performed by the different groups of people that converge at pilgrimage sites. These types of knowledge and ignorance may help establish, reinforce or subvert hierarchies and power relations within the pilgrimage field, making different actors relevant or irrelevant in its workings. In this panel, we would like to explore the role of these different actors- the religious and heritage specialists, the tourist guides, archaeologists, historians and pilgrims- in producing or/and editing out knowledge and therefore shaping the meaning and experience of pilgrimage. We would like to examine what the different types of knowledge and ignorance involved in ‘religious’ and ‘secular’ pilgrimages are, their gendered character, the media through which they are produced and circulated, as well as when, why, for whom and how they become legitimised, important and/or problematic. Of special interest are the politics or micro-politics of knowing/acknowledging and not knowing/ignoring others - a theme which is particularly relevant in cases of pilgrimage shrines which are shared by adherents of different religions- as well as the risks and stakes associated with different types of knowing and of ignoring in different pilgrimage settings, or in the same pilgrimage setting at different points in time. We are also interested in exploring the impact of conversion, persecution, violent interruption or suppression of religion on pilgrimage, the knowledge and ignorance around its practices and sites, but also the sorts of knowledge that are reinstated, re-invented, re-discovered or edited out when pilgrimages revive. Such an exploration can shed light on the relationship between knowing/ignoring and remembering/forgetting.

Pilgrimage is a particularly productive field for the exploration of the ‘politics of religious knowledge and ignorance,’ the theme of this conference, owing to the fact that it signifies religious engagement without necessarily requiring it. Related to this characteristic of pilgrimage is the fact that the growth in people carrying out pilgrimage is not necessarily associated with people knowing more about formal ritual per se—in fact rather the opposite. With this in mind, we invite people to explore the ways in which different types of knowledge and ignorance related to pilgrimage interact by reinforcing, conflicting and/or complementing one another, but would also like to turn a critical eye on pilgrimage studies, reflecting upon our own occlusions as researchers in the production of knowledge about pilgrimage. What sorts of knowledge about pilgrimage do we as researchers produce and what may we ignore in the process? Has for example a focus on formal ritual obstructed us from exploring and thus producing knowledge about other forms of pilgrims’ ritual engagements which are not conventionally seen as ‘religious’? What sorts of knowledge and/or ignorance are these ritual engagements predicated upon and how do we study them?

Part II of this panel continues during the next session (11:00am-12:45pm ~ VC 215)

Individual abstracts

- **Nadia Caidi (University of Toronto, nadia.caidi@gmail.com): Information Dissonance and Avoidance as part of the Pilgrim’s Toolkit**

Information phenomena and behaviors underlies every aspect of contemporary life, including interpersonal relationships, workplace culture, as well as spiritual/religious experiences. Pilgrimage as an information context provides us with insights into the nature of information and knowledge in the lives of individuals seeking and undergoing such transformational experiences. Pilgrims engage with information resources in varied ways as they prepare for, complete the rituals, and return home. We examine here two specific information practices: information avoidance (IA), and information dissonance (ID), as entry points into a more nuanced understanding of pilgrims’ decisions and meaning making. IA has been defined as “situations in which people prefer ignorance over knowledge” or “any behaviour designed to prevent or delay the acquisition of available but potentially unwanted information” (Sweeny et al., 2010, p. 340). It can be active, passive, temporary or permanent, and selective (or not) depending on the situation (Dali, 2018). Information dissonance refers to the visceral and embodied experience of disruption and confusion created by information encounters within the receiving context (Allard & Caidi, 2018). Although disorienting, these moments of surprise might be considered profound moments of information practice for would-be pilgrims.

Together these concepts articulate in novel ways the processes of negotiating meaning and evaluating information resources in shifting and unknown contexts. Findings based on interviews with twelve Hajj pilgrims suggest that pilgrims' information practices are varied, and transcend both individual (cognitive, affective) as well as social processes (through shared imaginaries and a translocal network of people and resources).

- **Mahshid Zandi (University of Toronto, m.zandi@mail.utoronto.ca): “Welcome to Divinity College”:** **Subjectification in Pilgrimage to the Iran-Iraq War Battlefields in Contemporary Iran**
“Welcome to Divinity College,” reads a board on the tours to the state-sponsored fieldtrips to the Iran-Iraq War battlefields, known as *Rahian-e Noor* (RN). Formally undertaken since 1999, RN tours to the battlefields follow the model of Shia pilgrimage and commemorative rituals. The fact that the trip is delineated as divinity college raises questions about the conceived nature of these tours and the assumed subjectivities of the visitors: In what sense, if at all, are these trips means of disseminating knowledge, and of what? How do these tours subjectify a supposedly “nonreligious” visitor compared to those already acknowledged as “pious”? Anthropologists of different religious traditions have noted that studying the indeterminate positionality of the assumed impious subjects in relation to religious ideals may also “reveal as much about religion itself.” In this vein, I explore the relationship between knowledge and the transformative power of pilgrimage in becoming Muslim of both pious and areligious subjects (Muslims-in-Name-Only).

My fieldwork shows that RN tour visitors are not necessarily exposed to a transcendental and/or alternative knowledge, but rather to an affective space in which they encounter what they have already acquired and known. The Islamic concept of “*din*”, meaning both religion and indebtedness, brings into light a mode of knowledge and ignorance in which “words without deeds”, or religiosity of a nominal Muslim equates with ignorance. I argue that both knowing and ignoring are co-constitutive of transformative power of pilgrimage, where one can no longer ignore what has been already known. The ultimate knowledge is thus to mean putting the already-known- words into deeds; in this case sacrifice for the state, hence “subjectification.”

- **John Eade (University of Roehampton/University of Toronto, J.Eade@roehampton.ac.uk): How the Formal Separation of ‘Sacred’ and ‘Secular Space’ Limits Our Understanding of Pilgrimage: Material Connections at Lourdes, France**

In this presentation I want to respond to the question in the session call: ‘Has ... a focus on formal ritual obstructed us from exploring and thus producing knowledge about other forms of pilgrims’ ritual engagements which are not conventionally seen as “religious”? by reflecting on the ways material objects move around this famous Marian pilgrimage center. The ‘pilgrimage town’, which developed between the old town and the new shrine, is highly developed commercially with many shops selling a wide range of religious artefacts. The widespread criticism of the pilgrimage town and its commoditization reflects a sharp ideological and physical separation between sacred and secular, the sanctuary and the town which has deeply influenced academic studies of Lourdes and pilgrimage more generally. Yet, visitors bring these artefacts into the sanctuary and leave them at various sacred sites, while the sanctuary also sells candles and bottles. Hence, official attempts to maintain a sharp separation between sacred and secular, the religious and commercial, co-exist with the permeation of that boundary through the pursuit of its own interests and the infiltration of the artefacts brought by pilgrims. Lourdes demonstrates, therefore, the need within pilgrimage studies to look beyond the sacred/secular binary towards a relational approach where the flow of material objects and bodies reveals subversion, ambivalence and the porosity of ideological and physical boundaries.

- **Barbara Hazelton (University of Toronto, barbara.hazelton@utoronto.ca): Gendered Pilgrimage Landscapes: The Great Female Adepts of Tibetan Buddhism and the Hidden Treasure Tradition**
Pilgrimage in Tibet is a highly significant example of Buddhist embodied religious practice. Important sacred pilgrimage sites in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition are often connected to the (*gterma*) treasure tradition, with these sacred treasure sites dotting the landscape and forming pathways of pilgrimage routes. Terma are forms of hidden teachings and secret lands esoterically hidden by the great Indian tantric Master Padmasambhava, founder of Buddhism in Tibet and his consort Yeshe Tsogyal for later discovery at an auspicious time when they would be most useful. This process acts as a conduit for ongoing religious innovation, inspiration and expansion of the textual and commentarial corpus of tantric teachings and practice. Of particular interest in this system is the prevalence of female treasure discoverers in an

otherwise extremely patriarchal system of religious power. My presentation will explore the discovery of hidden treasures by great female practitioners (*gter ton ma*) through examples drawn from the biographies of a few of these highly realized female Buddhist yoginis such as Yeshe Tsogyal, Sera Khandro and Tare Lhamo. These few but remarkable women's lives stretch from the advent of Buddhism in Tibet (Yeshe Tsogyal) up to the modern day (Tare Lhamo). The paper focuses specifically on this rare anomaly of female power within Tibetan Buddhist, its religious importance and its impact on pathways of pilgrimage.

11:00am-12:45pm ~ VC 206

Religious Knowledge across Boundaries of Difference

Chair: Timothy Y. Loh (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)

- **Timothy Y. Loh (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, timloh@mit.edu): “Faith unites us”:
Discourses of Religion in a Jordanian Deaf School**
In this paper, I explore four competing discourses of Muslim-Christian relations at the Holy Land Institute for the Deaf (HLID) in Salt, Jordan, which was founded by the Anglican Church in 1964. As a Christian institution in a Muslim country, the HLID is a productive site to examine discourses over how Christians and Muslims should relate to each other and opens an interesting window into interreligious relations more broadly in Jordan. Using ethnographic evidence collected at the school in the summer of 2014, I map the contours of these four discourses—which I call “Christians and Muslims united,” “Christians inferior to Muslims,” “extremist elements, real or imagined,” and “it’s not about religion at all”—in their struggle for legitimacy within the HLID. I find that the discourse of Christians and Muslims united was the one that had the most traction and coherence among students, volunteers, and staff. Although this is also the vision of Muslim-Christian relations that is promulgated by the Jordanian state, I argue that, rather than state power, it is the condition of deafness that unites Muslim students and staff with Christian volunteers at the HLID. Religious differences between the two groups are pragmatically subsumed under deafness as a shared sensorial experience of the world and sign language as a common medium to access it. This vision of a deaf community united by faith is realized through faith-based ritual practices, such as night-time prayers and meal-time prayers, that both deaf Muslims and Christians participate in at the school.
- **Abdul Majeed Ottakandathil (McGill University, abdul.ottakandathilputhenpeedika@mail.mcgill.ca):
The Language of Reform: Islamic Preachers’ Encounter with Protestant Missionaries in South India**
In this paper, I will look at the implications of Islamic preachers’ encounter with Protestant missionaries for the epistemological premises of Islam in South India. The Protestant missionaries in colonial South India standardized the vernacular language of Malayalam in order to publish the Bible and polemical tracts. This standardization of Malayalam ushered in a public sphere that enabled Muslims and Christians to communicate to the *outside* of their respective communities. Prior to the emergence of the standard Malayalam, religious discourses were held in community-specific *Malayalams* that were inaccessible to the people from outside a given religious community. The standardization divested the communities of their linguistic particularities. In addition, it suffused the public sphere with certain semiotic ideologies. In this paper, I will examine one such ideology: emphasis on the denotational properties of language instead of its performative dimensions. To do so, I will analyze the work of Sanaula Makthi Thangal (1847 - 1912), an Islamic preacher who, engaging with the Protestant missionaries, exhorted Muslims in the region to reconfigure their language learning methods to equip them to counter the mission. I will take Thangal’s essays on language and education and his biography of Muhammad to show how these marked a rupture, as this writing was profoundly shaped by Protestant ideas on language and formation of selves. I will argue that this reconfiguration of approach to language that was a result of the encounter with the Protestant missionaries would later form the substratum of the nationalist and colonialist projects of political and social reform of the Muslim community in the region.
- **Shlomo Guzman-Carmeli (Bar-Ilan University, shlomoguzmen@gmail.com): Eating the Haredi Other:
On Crossing Boundaries and Boundary Work in Culinary Encounters between Secular and Ultra-Orthodox Jews**

The religious schism and division in Israeli society between secular and religious Jews, and especially between secular and ultra-Orthodox Jews, is described in research as one of the main focal points of tension in Israeli society. In this paper, I will describe a new culinary scene that enables, and even generates, encounters between ultra-Orthodox and secular Jews in Israel. This culinary encounter takes place on Thursday nights on the main streets of Bnei Brak, one of Israel's largest ultra-Orthodox cities, when traditional Eastern European Shabbat dishes are sold to the general public. The traditional foodstuffs, which were preserved in the Israeli ultra-Orthodox kitchen over the years, attract many visitors who are not part of the ultra-Orthodox society but regard the traditional dishes with great nostalgia and even longing. In my paper, based on fieldwork documenting the Thursday-night 'happenings,' I will discuss the encounters between individuals who do not usually meet and are even hostile to one another. Nevertheless, I show how symbolic boundaries are crossed (Harris 1985; Douglas 1975), and inclusion circles are created around the culinary encounter. Also, I examine how obvious "Eating the other" (Hooks, 1992) practices and boundary-work still exist (Gieryn 1983; Lamont, 2002) in the course of these chance meetings.

- **Justin Haruyama (University of California, Davis, jharuyama@ucdavis.edu): Threatening Knowledges: Mandarin Language Acquisition by Zambian Jehovah's Witnesses and its Effects on Relations with Chinese Expatriates**

For most Zambian Christians, the utter lack of knowledge regarding Christianity and the Bible that members of the country's rapidly expanding Chinese expatriate community evince is a well-known trope. But while members of most Christian groups in Zambia simply throw up their hands and dismiss Chinese expatriates as a lost evangelical cause, Jehovah's Witnesses in Zambia vigorously pursue proselytization with the Chinese community. In doing so, Zambian Witnesses must confront and overcome their own lack of knowledge: namely, of the Chinese language(s) necessary to communicate knowledge of the truth of the Bible with Chinese expatriates, who themselves are generally not proficient in English or any other Zambian language. Thus, several groups of Zambian Witnesses have begun conducting their meetings entirely in Mandarin Chinese and individually attaining high levels of proficiency in Mandarin, activities pursued in the name of sharing knowledge of the Bible which no other groups of Zambian Christians are willing to contemplate. But the high level of Mandarin competency attained by many Zambian Witnesses also has its pitfalls, as it is frequently viewed with distrust and suspicion by the very object of its effects: Chinese expatriates themselves, who tend to doubt the motives behind such unusual knowledge acquisition. Thus, this paper problematizes conventional associations of ignorance with ethnocentrism and xenophobia and of knowledge with the capacity to build bridges and forge connections, instead highlighting an ethnographic case in which knowledge acquisition itself can become a source of friction and animosity between different religious and social communities.

- **Sarina Annis (University of Toronto, sarina.annis@alum.utoronto.ca): Anthropology, Christianity, and a Vanishing Race on the Nass River**

Marius Barbeau was an early twentieth-century Canadian ethnographer known for his work among the First Nations people of the North Pacific coast, who spent decades documenting and collecting their material culture. He joined the National Museum of Canada early in his career: the massive totem poles in the Royal Ontario Museum staircases were purchased and transported by Barbeau himself, despite protestations from the presiding Nisga'a chief. Like other anthropologists of the time, his relationship with organized Christianity was marked by distrust and resentment, as he zealously rushed to capture what "died out as soon as the missionaries had a chance to preach their doctrines" (Nowry 1995).

Following the work of Pauline Wakeham (2004), my paper examines Barbeau's *salvage ethnography* by looking at his photographic fieldwork on the Nass River in British Columbia. Barbeau believed that Christianity's influence was culturally devastating in its capacity for essential and complete transformation and, paradoxically, this is a version of what the Christian missionaries believed, too. Indeed Christianity and anthropology, as others have noted, are more closely related than is often acknowledged. I will examine the tensions and overlaps in and between anthropological and Christian knowledge production in order to highlight the ways that they have informed each other in a specifically Canadian context. In his efforts to outrun what he saw as unstoppable cultural decline, Barbeau—like the missionaries he despised—contributed to the production of the *vanishing race* category, relegating the First Nations he studied to the past.

11:00am-12:45pm ~ VC 211

'I Learned it from the Internet': Online Knowledge Consumption and Embodiment

Organizers/chairs: Suzanne van Geuns (University of Toronto) and Saliha Chattoo (University of Toronto)

Panel abstract

To the dismay of many and the delight of even more, the Internet is a place where people learn. This panel will consider the Internet as a central link in chains of instruction and embodied absorption of (religious) knowledges. Where did our interlocutors learn what they know? What happens when this knowledge moves from the Internet to the body and then back again, as people mediate themselves online? We take the back-and-forth of online mediation and its ties to religious skills, competencies, and truths as a productive starting point for ethnographic reflection. This panel also seeks to contribute to the anthropological discourse on notions of authenticity and sincerity as they relate to truth and truthfulness, where notions of “fake news,” and “alternative facts” render such topics particularly urgent. In a political moment where being ‘in the know’ can equal living ‘in a different world’ altogether, these dynamics must be met with ethnographic attention. Panelists will explore these avenues using a rich variety of ethnographic contexts: Sikh social entrepreneurs in Canada, transhumanist and radical life-extensionist communities in the United States, the conservative evangelical blogger industry, and Pentecostal performance competitions in Texas. This panel will especially reflect on ethnographic methodologies regarding the interplay between learning from the Internet and subsequently embodying that knowledge. For example, how can interlocutors’ online lives and knowledges be accounted for ethnographically with the fullness that they merit? These methodological considerations will, it is hoped, encourage thinking about the implications of centering this interplay for fieldwork epistemologies: from the medium of the Internet to the body and in turn to scholarly media and academic bodies, we ask what it would mean to situate ethnographic knowledges in this continued movement as well.

Individual abstracts

- **Suzanne van Geuns (University of Toronto, scmvangeuns@gmail.com): Religious Instruction and Affiliate Links: Understanding Evangelical Women’s Blogs as Infrastructures of Monetized Aspiration**

Conservative Evangelical women’s blogs present the site visitor with a prompt to sign up for the mailing list first, before they offer smiling photos and Bible quotes. Underneath visual elements like pop-ups and advertisements for scented candles, bloggers layer affiliate links and trackers collecting visitors' data - all of which generate revenue. Setting aside actual revenue amounts, this paper uncovers the monetization infrastructures supporting bloggers' religious pursuits, showing what becomes visible when ethnographic knowledge is intertwined with code, and vice versa.

The question of who the blog reaches is urgent for Evangelical bloggers, whose 'about' pages purport that the aim of their blog is to share encouragement with others in the pursuit of a biblical life. Research on online engagement shows that comments, links, and visitor counts rarely accurately index a website's status in the circulation of biblical truth. Monetization, however, offers material proof of one’s position in that circulation - proof that the anthropology of Christianity shows is especially welcome when networked engagement indexes spiritual efficacy. If the interpretation of code is aided by anthropology, examining coded infrastructures shifts ethnographic attention. Rather than authenticity or hypocrisy, for example, it is through instruction (including guides to blog monetization itself) that encouragement takes shape across blog networks. Taking instruction as the modality that knits together jewelry businesses, biblical life-skills, and Jesus, this paper demonstrates how a closer look at code shows aspiration that exceeds the online realm.

- **Saliha Chattoo (University of Toronto, saliha.chattoo@mail.utoronto.ca): Ethnography and the Internet: Online Spaces and the Creation of a Pentecostal Performance Microcosm**

For almost 70,000 youth attending Assemblies of God churches throughout the U.S.A., each school year holds a new chance to take part in a national competition known as Fine Arts. Hosting over 65 musical, theatrical, and creative categories, students from grades 6-12 participate to enhance their skills in ministry and compete for university scholarships. One of the largest and most popular categories of Fine Arts is entitled “Human Video,” which can be colloquially described as a live movement piece that intervenes upon sociopolitical issues while preaching the redemptive power of Christ. Drawing on 15 months of fieldwork in the U.S.A, this paper will discuss how Human Video, a unique and unconventional concept within the Fine

Arts microcosm, uses the sharing of videos via websites such as Youtube and Vimeo, as well as Apps such as MarcoPolo, to create and disseminate a unique code of communication of movement and performance. Unlike many other performance-based ministry events, Fine Arts is not meant for public audiences, but rather, is directed towards parents, youth, and other individuals under the Assemblies of God umbrella. Most attendees of the competitions—both at the district and national level—have attended for years, and any outsider would have to learn to “speak Human Video” if they are to understand the narrative behind these carefully choreographed pieces. This paper will illustrate the ways in which the creation and ongoing evolution of Human Video language, movement, and general culture is mediated by online spaces. This paper will also discuss how the Internet—especially sites such as Facebook, Snapchat, and Instagram—are important sites of ideological experimentation and play, and what it might mean for the ethnographer to consider these online spaces in tandem with traditional live performance and rehearsal spaces.

- **Jeremy Cohen (McMaster University, cohenj10@mcmaster.ca): How to Live Forever: Competing Discourses and Practices Within Radical Life-Extension Communities**

Stemming from interviews and participant observation fieldwork with transhumanist and radical life-extensionist communities in the United States, this presentation explores how the use of digital technology has become part of larger technologies of the self. Adherents to ideologies of immortality are encouraged by community leaders to be active in the pursuit of “ageless” selves. Many rely on online networks in order to learn about cutting-edge longevity techniques, enroll in out-of-country clinical trials, and market or purchase supplements as part of immortality health regimens. The internet is a primary means of knowledge production and dissemination for many of these individuals, thereby informing the offline embodied practices of their communities.

Individuals within radical life-extension and transhumanist communities want to live long enough in their biological bodies to see technologically-aided immortality become a reality. This paper traces narratives of self-care, distrust of authority, and self-management necessary to achieve immortality, and outlines how these discourses – nurtured online and in person – often challenge traditional models of care. This paper is informed by methodological considerations that de-center the digital as part of digital research, and investigate how the use of technology becomes part of wider configurations outside of digital activities themselves. This methodology serves as a lens to explore how the production of knowledge online is used by my interlocutors in the everyday formation of selves and within larger contested discourses of authority.

- **Zabeen Khamisa (University of Waterloo, zabeen.khamisa@uwaterloo.ca): Engaging the Sikh Digital Industry as an Instagram User and Researcher**

In this presentation I make the case that the use of digital ethnographic methods is significant, and almost necessary, to understand contemporary Sikh expressions. I draw from original research on the lived experiences of millennial Sikh social entrepreneurs in Canada and demonstrate how I have used Instagram as a search tool to uncover the development of a new Sikh industry. From selling printed turbans and donating proceeds to local charity, to expressing support for broader social movements such as Black Lives Matter, as well as demonstrating allegiance to the Jagmeet Singh and NDP party, Instagram has functioned as a means for millennial Sikh social entrepreneurs in Canada to translate and transmit their understandings of Sikh values such as *seva* (community service) and *sarbat da Bhalla* (the well-being of others), as well as their progressive moral positions in the public sphere. Establishing creative collaborative networks, spiritual-political coalitions, marketing strategies, and online stores, Instagram becomes a site of Sikh knowledge production and transmission. I present a digital tour of my findings, including identifying popular and public user accounts of individuals that are the face of this new Sikh industry and outline the need for scholars of religion to regard (and decenter) social media platforms as noteworthy sources of inquiry. Finally, I discuss the politics of being a scholar of religion online through my own experience as an Instagram user and researcher and interacting with Sikh activists on the platform.

- **Jon Bialecki (University of Edinburgh, jon.bialecki@gmail.com): Discussant**

11:00am-12:45pm ~ VC 212

Religion, Politics, and Secular Order

Chair: Catherine Wanner (Pennsylvania State University)

- **Catherine Wanner (Pennsylvania State University, cew10@psu.edu): Vernacular Religion and Ways of Knowing in Ukraine**

The Soviet regime embraced an ideology that promoted atheism through coercion by executing clergy and dynamiting religious buildings as well as by fighting “superstition” through the creation of a hierarchy of knowledge that placed scientific means of knowing on top and mystical discredited ones on the bottom. Such initiatives produced not atheism, but unintentionally produced ignorance of religious doctrines, rituals, and symbolism. High levels of belief in supernatural forces persisted and found expression in a plethora of vernacular religious rituals and practices.

The 2018 creation of a Ukrainian national church that is canonically and internationally recognized mandates a split from the Russian Orthodox Church after over 330 years of unification. This has been called the greatest schism in Christianity since the Protestant Reformation. This new national church will be closely allied with the Ukrainian state, as is common in Orthodox Eastern Europe. The spheres where the new Church can influence state policies must contend with prominent vernacular religious practices that do not necessarily correlate with official religious rites and doctrines. This national church is forming during a time of war and national consolidation, raising the tensions between popular and official ways of knowing and shaping how the new national church can influence social policies. A military chaplaincy and moral education in schools are two initiatives that find broad support among “atheists with traditions,” as non-religious Orthodox are called, and among clergy and state officials.

- **Cleonardo Mauricio Junior (Federal University of Pernambuco, cleonardobarros@gmail.com): Talking religion or talking politics? Brazilian Pentecostalism and Ethical Self-constitution in Relation with Politics**

Clashes pitting leaders of Pentecostal churches or parliamentarians linked to these churches against social movements that demand sexual and reproductive rights have been recurrent in the contemporary Brazilian political landscape. One of the most vocal opponents of LGBT and feminist demands is the televangelist and pastor of a megachurch, Silas Malafaia. In one of the clashes that has had larger repercussions - and that took place in a public session of the Chamber of Deputies - Malafaia defended the promulgation of a law which restricted the concept of the family to heterosexual couples and their offspring, and debated against the President of the National Association of LGBTs. In addition to leading the fight against what he calls “moral trash” at the national level, Pastor Silas Malafaia has been urging evangelicals to take a stand against liberal ideas. Repeating that believers should not shut up, since they are citizens, he attempts to link conservative political activism to the construction of the Pentecostal person.

But how have ordinary believers reacted to this exhortation? How have they been presenting their political positions in everyday relationships? Considering that a new moral code has been impinged on believers, pushing them on talking politics in their everyday lives, how are they committing and/or negotiating over this new demand? Drawing on my fieldwork among the youth of Malafaia’s megachurch, I intend to show how they have faced this challenge by taking a stand on issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage at their universities. My aim is also to show how self confidence in discussion over political issues has increased among Pentecostal believers since a far right government strongly attached to Pentecostal churches won the last presidential elections.

- **Mohamed Medhat (The American University in Cairo, mmedhat@eipr.org): Conflict and Resistance Over Islamic Tradition in Egyptian Courts: Religious Defamation Cases in Egypt as a Case Study**

While freedom of expression constitutes a main pillar of religious freedom, the authority of the state manifests itself as a limitation to this freedom in order to prevent the disruption of “public order”. The problematic aspects in the relationship between state and religion in Egypt, a nation that adopts Islam as its official religion and Sharia as the main source of its legislation, are evident in the contrast between the constitution and the laws. Whereas the constitution guarantees the absolute right to freedom of belief and religion, it leaves the regulation of practicing this freedom in the form of rituals and expression to the legislation. Post-revolutionary Egypt has witnessed a notable increase in cases raised before the courts related to the criminalization of freedom of expression with regards to religion in what is publicly known as

“religious defamation” cases. In such cases, religious minorities as well as activists, secular journalists and researchers like Fatma Naoot and Islam al-Beheiry have been implicated.

My main idea is to tackle the secularism propositions through focusing on the religious defamation court cases in Egypt. The paper will try to show how the secularism proposition that people of different religions and beliefs are equal before the law is controversial, and how the religious majority can express its hegemony through the legal (secular) language by using one of the most controversial concepts in law, which is “public order” and its relation to national identity. It will also show how Egypt’s religious institution (Al-Azhar) plays its role in defining and preserving the Islamic tradition, which is one of the main components of the Egyptian national identity, through law, in that sense challenging the strict separation between the state and religious institutions

- **Nicola Mooney (University of the Fraser Valley, Nicola.Mooney@ufv.ca): “Knowing Sikhism through Praxis: The Union of Religious and Political in Langar”**

One of the hallmarks of modern Western knowledge about religion, however much at odds with anthropological paradigms, is that it is - and presumably should be - separable from other social domains such as politics (as well as magic and science). While secularism is everywhere open to debate, it is particularly at issue in Sikhism, in which the central doctrine of *miri-piri* asserts the conjoint nature of spiritual and temporal domains, raising questions about how religion is classified as well as its ongoing role ‘beyond the religious’. Focusing on the Sikh tradition of langar (the communal kitchen and commensal meal prepared and shared by Sikhs gathered for religious purposes), which expresses Sikhism’s lived ethos of *seva* (voluntary and selfless social service), this paper explores langar at the nexus of the religious and the political, with particular emphasis on how langar integrates ritual, ethical, and social meanings amid changing contemporary praxes. I suggest that while langar articulates a worldview that can be known in the West via such terms as social justice, it also mobilizes an alternate vision of society so as to constitute an “enchanted universe” (Oberoi 1994) to which such translations are inapt. At the same time, I ask whether the richness and fullness of langar’s potential is possible in postcolonial and transnational circumstances, so that what is and can be known of langar in the present day is a question for Sikhs and ethnographers alike.

- **Nazlı Ozkan (University of Arkansas, nozkan@uark.edu): “Is Alevism a Sect, Culture, or Religion:” Embodied Knowledge and Religious Diversity in Turkey**

Turkey’s secular law is based on a Muslim–non-Muslim binary that recognizes only Sunni Muslims, Christians, and Jews as legal communities. This legal binary marginalizes Alevi, a religious community that has strong ties with Islam—through its affinities with Shia Islam—and yet observes practices that cannot be exhausted under Shia or Sunni Islam, such as the communal *cem* ceremony. With the expansion of privatized media technologies in the 1990s, there emerged a debate about how to define Alevism in relation to Islam both among Alevi and in the larger public sphere. Some suggested that Alevism is an Islamic *sect*, others defined it as a separate non-Islamic *religion* while others described it as a *culture* without any religious qualities. My paper examines the role of Turkey’s secular law in imposing these categories of sect, culture, or religion to make sense of Alevism by focusing on a less-circulated description: Alevism as embodied knowledge. Based on ethnographic fieldwork with Alevi who suggest that Alevism is an embodied faith as exemplified by the practices and life styles of certain people (such as their grandmothers), I argue that these alternative explanations both expose and move beyond the limiting role of secular frameworks in the reproduction of religious knowledge. As state secularism in Turkey reduces religious diversity into the categories of culture, sect, or religion, embodied knowledge becomes a way for marginalized groups to reproduce their faith by creating an inter-generational continuity.

11:00am-12:45pm ~ VC 215

Knowing and Ignoring in Pilgrimage (Part II)

Organizers/Chairs: Simon Coleman (University of Toronto), John Eade (University of Roehampton/University of Toronto), and Evgenia Mesaritou (University of Cyprus, University of Toronto)

Panel abstract

Pilgrimage involves various types and degrees of ‘religious’ as well as ‘secular’ knowledge and ignorance, which are intentionally and/or unintentionally formed, pursued, drawn upon, embodied and performed by the different groups of people that converge at pilgrimage sites. These types of knowledge and ignorance may help

establish, reinforce or subvert hierarchies and power relations within the pilgrimage field, making different actors relevant or irrelevant in its workings. In this panel, we would like to explore the role of these different actors- the religious and heritage specialists, the tourist guides, archaeologists, historians and pilgrims- in producing or/and editing out knowledge and therefore shaping the meaning and experience of pilgrimage. We would like to examine what the different types of knowledge and ignorance involved in 'religious' and 'secular' pilgrimages are, their gendered character, the media through which they are produced and circulated, as well as when, why, for whom and how they become legitimised, important and/or problematic. Of special interest are the politics or micro-politics of knowing/acknowledging and not knowing/ignoring others - a theme which is particularly relevant in cases of pilgrimage shrines which are shared by adherents of different religions- as well as the risks and stakes associated with different types of knowing and of ignoring in different pilgrimage settings, or in the same pilgrimage setting at different points in time. We are also interested in exploring the impact of conversion, persecution, violent interruption or suppression of religion on pilgrimage, the knowledge and ignorance around its practices and sites, but also the sorts of knowledge that are reinstated, re-invented, re-discovered or edited out when pilgrimages revive. Such an exploration can shed light on the relationship between knowing/ignoring and remembering/forgetting.

Pilgrimage is a particularly productive field for the exploration of the 'politics of religious knowledge and ignorance,' the theme of this conference, owing to the fact that it signifies religious engagement without necessarily requiring it. Related to this characteristic of pilgrimage is the fact that the growth in people carrying out pilgrimage is not necessarily associated with people knowing more about formal ritual per se—in fact rather the opposite. With this in mind, we invite people to explore the ways in which different types of knowledge and ignorance related to pilgrimage interact by reinforcing, conflicting and/or complementing one another, but would also like to turn a critical eye on pilgrimage studies, reflecting upon our own occlusions as researchers in the production of knowledge about pilgrimage. What sorts of knowledge about pilgrimage do we as researchers produce and what may we ignore in the process? Has for example a focus on formal ritual obstructed us from exploring and thus producing knowledge about other forms of pilgrims' ritual engagements which are not conventionally seen as 'religious'? What sorts of knowledge and/or ignorance are these ritual engagements predicated upon and how do we study them?

Part I of this panel happened during the previous session (9:00am-10:45am ~ VC 215)

Individual abstracts

- **Nimrod Luz (Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee, luznimrod@mx.kinneret.ac.il): Materiality as an Agency of Knowledge: Competing Forms of Knowledge at the Tomb of Rachel in Tiberias**
Materiality has become a compelling register wherein to examine religious manifestations and matters of belief which account for and interact with various structures of social life. There is a mounting awareness among scholars, not only of the tangible aspects of religion but also of the way material objects are never neutral and devoid of social context or personal subjectivities. Following these theoretical observations, I argue that materiality may serve as an agency for (a certain) knowledge to become conventional and accepted as true in social circles. This emerging materiality communicates in concrete form and hence codifies a certain version of knowledge. However, this validation through matter is often challenged and categorized as fake or, in everyday parlance, mythical. To illustrate my argument, I explore the newly emerging site of the Tomb of Rachel in Tiberias and the competing versions of truth surrounding it. The argument is made that its new materiality, as evolved in recent years, has served as a way of validation of the new mythology of the site. However, among locals who are familiar with the previous materiality of the site this new knowledge is pejoratively labeled as fake or mythical.
- **Jackie Feldman (Ben Gurion University of the Negev, jfeldman@bgu.ac.il): Reading, Touching, Walking: Paths of Knowledge on Holy Land Pilgrimages**
Maurice Halbwachs' *Sacred Topography of the Gospels* situated Holy Land pilgrimage as a prototype for the social construction of memory and space. The textually and liturgically embodied sacred text was transported by pilgrims and clergy from churches throughout the world to the Holy Land; there it was imposed on the surface of Israel/Palestine to shape a Holy Land in the Christian image. The sacralized sites then serve as material proof of the veracity of the text, so that pilgrims sense they are "walking on the pages of the Bible" (Engberg 2016) or re-enacting the Ur-drama of the final passion of Christ.

I am interested in how differing learning practices among pilgrims – such as liturgies, attitudes to material objects and Bible recitations – correspond to patterns of movement through space, ways of viewing, and contact with others. In what ways do the use of material objects such as candles, Bibles, rosaries or I-pads affect pilgrim movement and interaction? Does the co-presence of others in liturgies or at holy sites influence pilgrims' experience of divine presence or the ways they express belonging to sacred place? How are equality, hierarchy or exclusion among pilgrims manifested through movement and ritual performance?

Through reading contemporary itineraries and guidebooks written for Protestant and Catholic pilgrims, and observing Christian pilgrims' movement through space, I reflect on how differing embodied practices privilege certain kinds of knowledge and commonality while excluding certain others.

- **Alejandro I. Paz (University of Toronto, alejandro.paz@utoronto.ca): Walking the City of David: An Israeli Settler Theology of Land in Occupied East Jerusalem**
Since the mid-eighties, an Israeli settler organization called El-Ad has settled religious Jews in an occupied East Jerusalem neighborhood, Silwan, that lies just south of the Temple Mount/Noble Sanctuary. Central to El-Ad's efforts is developing tourism and nationalist pilgrimage to the City of David archaeological site in Silwan. This paper will discuss knowledge production and ignorance in the pilgrimages that El-Ad seeks to promote for Jewish audiences in general, but in particular for its religious Zionist supporters. For El-Ad's closest supporters, touring the City of David site goes beyond simply producing a biblical narrative about the founding of the first Jewish state under King David. It also involves disseminating a pious practice to constitute a supportive public that will recognize Israeli nationalist claims to East Jerusalem, while ignoring the Palestinian population and its histories. Recent work on piety, influenced by Asad, has examined the kind of disciplinary practices that form subjects capable of perceiving alternate realities, re-structuring public spheres, and more generally constituting transformed imaginaries. Drawing on such work, this paper considers the training sessions given by an experienced rabbi and guide to El-Ad's guides in 1998-1999. In particular, I consider how the rabbi seeks to integrate *yedi'at ha'arets* (knowing the country), archaeology, and reading of the Bible *in situ* as part of a theology for personal and collective redemption. Crucially, in this settler theology, knowing the Bible requires walking where the events happened.
- **Evgenia Mesaritou (Marie Skłodowska-Curie IF, University of Cyprus, University of Toronto, evgenia.mesaritou@utoronto.ca): Non 'Religious' Knowing and Ignoring in Pilgrimages to Sacred Sites: Greek Cypriot's 'Returns' to the Monastery of Apostolos Andreas**
Even though pilgrimages may often be directed towards what can conventionally be seen as 'religious' sacred sites, religious and ritual forms of knowledge and ignorance may not necessarily be the only or even the most prominent ones in their workings. Focusing on the returns 'home' of Greek Cypriots as they revisit the Christian-Orthodox monastery of Apostolos Andreas in conditions of Cyprus's ongoing division, in this paper I will explore two things: (a) non 'religious' forms of knowing and ignoring salient to pilgrimages to sacred religious sites, the conditions under which they become relevant and the risks associated with them, and (b) the stakes involved in our ignoring of them for pilgrimage studies and the anthropology of religion more generally. Showing how pilgrimages to the monastery of Apostolos Andreas are situated within a larger framework of seeing 'our places,' I will argue that remembering and knowing these places is the type of knowledge most commonly sought out by pilgrims, while also exploring what the stakes of not knowing/forgetting them may be felt to be. An exclusive focus on 'religious' forms of knowledge and ignorance would obscure the ways in which pilgrimage is often embedded in everyday social and political concerns.