Borders and Boundaries: ‘Religion’ on the Periphery

Joint Conference between the British Association for the Study of Religions and the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions

3–5 September 2018, Queen’s University, Belfast

Held in Association with the Religious Studies Research Forum and the School of History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics.

DELEGATE INFORMATION BOOK

Keynote Speakers

Gladys Ganiel (Queen’s University, Belfast)
Naomi Goldenberg (University of Ottawa)

See https://basr.ac.uk/ and/or https://isasr.wordpress.com/ for more information and updates.

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British Association for the Study of Religions
ISASR
Queen’s University Belfast
CONFERENCE VENUE

The conference will be based in The Lanyon Building (Canada Room/Council Chamber and Black and White Room) – Building #1 on this map and pictured below – and in the Peter Frosgat Centre (PFC) – Building #2. All rooms are wheelchair accessible. Evening socializing and accommodation are in locations not on this map – please see later in this booklet for more information.
# CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

## Monday 3 September

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.00-13.00</td>
<td>BASR Committee Meeting</td>
<td>PFC/02/011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00-13.00</td>
<td>ISASR Committee Meeting</td>
<td>PFC/02/013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00-13.15</td>
<td>Registration and Buffet Lunch (Registration desk open throughout conference)</td>
<td>Canada Room/Council Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.15-14.00</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.00-15.30</td>
<td>Panels 1 (pages 10-16)</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boundaries of Religion, Science and Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiating Religion in Secularised Societies</td>
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<td>Religions at the Centre and Periphery</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theoretical and Conceptual Boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.30-15.50</td>
<td>Tea &amp; Coffee</td>
<td>Canada Room/Council Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.50-17.20</td>
<td>Panels 2 (pages 17-19)</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Borders and Boundaries in Contemporary Islam</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Religion and Nation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Individuals Crossing Boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.30-19.00</td>
<td>Gladys Ganiel Keynote</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.00-19.30</td>
<td>Drinks Reception</td>
<td>Black and White Hall/Quad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.30-20.30</td>
<td>Buffet Dinner</td>
<td>Canada Room/Council Chamber</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.30-21.30</td>
<td>RSP Xmas Special Recording</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.30-</td>
<td>Social Time</td>
<td>The Woodworkers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Tuesday 4 September

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00-10.30</td>
<td>Panels 3 (pages 20-26)</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Slam</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>American Apocalypses</td>
<td>PFC/02/011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community Boundaries</td>
<td>PFC/02/013</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Boundaries of the Human Subject</td>
<td>PFC/03/006A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30-11.00</td>
<td>Tea &amp; Coffee</td>
<td>Canada Room/Council Chamber</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.00-12.30</td>
<td>Panels 4 (pages 27-31)</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transgressing the Dominant Order</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activism</td>
<td>PFC/02/011</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethics Roundtable</td>
<td>PFC/02/013</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proselytizing: Past and Present</td>
<td>PFC/03/006A</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.30-13.30</td>
<td>Buffet Lunch</td>
<td>Canada Room/Council Chamber</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.30-15.00</td>
<td>BASR AGM</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.30-15.00</td>
<td>ISASR AGM</td>
<td>PFC/02/011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00-15.15</td>
<td>Tea &amp; Coffee</td>
<td>PFC Foyer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Wednesday 5 September

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00-10.30</td>
<td>Panels 6 (pages 41-46)</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Insider-Outsider Debate</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Body</td>
<td>PFC/02/011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spatial Contestations 2</td>
<td>PFC/02/013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09.30-10.30</td>
<td>Marginalized Communities</td>
<td>PFC/03/006A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30-11.00</td>
<td>Tea &amp; Coffee</td>
<td>Canada Room/Council Chamber</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.30-11.30</td>
<td>Panels 7 (pages 47-52)</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenging Definitional Boundaries</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pilgrimage</td>
<td>PFC/02/011</td>
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<td>Paganism to Christianity and Back Again</td>
<td>PFC/02/013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postmodernism and Religion</td>
<td>PFC/03/006A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30-13.30</td>
<td>Plenary Session on REF, and Farewells</td>
<td>PFC/02/026</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.30-14.00</td>
<td>Buffet Lunch</td>
<td>Canada Room/Council Chamber</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.00-</td>
<td>Optional Tours (at delegates’ discretion)</td>
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Jenny Butler (ISASR Secretary & Conference Team)

Chris Cotter (BASR Treasurer & Conference Team)

Lawrence Cox
(ISASR Website Officer)

Stephen Gregg
(BASR Secretary)

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(Conference Team)

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Benjamin Huskinson
(Conference Assistant)
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Stuart Mathieson (Conference Assistant)
Brendan McNamara (ISASR Treasurer)
Suzanne Owen (JBASR Editor)
David Robertson (BASR Bulletin Editor)
Bettina Schmidt (BASR President-Elect)
Matthew Stanton (Conference Assistant)
Steven Sutcliffe (BASR President)
MONDAY’S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Power from the Periphery? ‘Extra-Institutional Religion’ and the Prospects for Change

Dr Gladys Ganiel, Queen’s University Belfast

In my most recent book, Transforming Post-Catholic Ireland (Oxford, 2016), I developed the concept of ‘extra-institutional religion’. I defined extra-institutional religion as the practice of religion outside or in addition to the Catholic Church, Ireland’s historically dominant religious institution. I described how people who practice extra-institutional religion are continually operating on the borders and boundaries between historically-dominant religious institutions and new expressions of faith. I explored how people either found or created extra-institutional spaces in order to pursue personal and collective transformation through religion, primarily because they were dissatisfied with so-called ‘institutional’ religion. I claimed that extra-institutional religion provided insights into one way religion functions even in secularising societies, adding nuance to debates about secularisation and religious individualisation. I argued that the concept, while provisional, could be tested and refined in other European contexts.

In this lecture, I focus more on the theoretical potential of extra-institutional religion than I did in the book, emphasizing the strategic advantages of extra-institutional religion’s position on the peripheries of religious markets. I argue that extra-institutional religion may be well-placed to contribute to wider religious, social or political change by balancing two structural strengths: its position on the margins, and its continued links with institutional religion. Moving beyond the examples profiled in Transforming Post-Catholic Ireland, I draw on findings from my ongoing research for a biography of Fr Gerry Reynolds, a Redemptorist priest based in Belfast’s Clonard Monastery during the Troubles. I explore how he created extra-institutional spaces and negotiated multiple boundaries in his ecumenical and peacebuilding work: boundaries with the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the leadership of his Redemptorist order, and between Catholics and Protestants. Fr Reynolds’ strategies, struggles and triumphs provide insights into how power for change may emerge from religious peripheries. This provides some – admittedly limited – empirical confirmation of the theoretical potential of extra-institutional religion, and particularly about the importance of remaining engaged with wider, mainstream religious institutions. I conclude by reflecting on the possibility of further research to challenge or confirm the utility of the concept, in Ireland and other European contexts.

Gladys Ganiel is a Research Fellow in the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen’s University, Belfast, working in the disciplines of sociology and politics. Her main areas of research are the Northern Ireland conflict, evangelicalism, Christianity in Ireland, the emerging church, and charismatic Christianity in Zimbabwe and South Africa.
TUESDAY’S KEYNOTE ADDRESS

‘Religion’ and its Limits: Reflections on Discursive Borders and Boundaries

Professor Naomi Goldenberg, University of Ottawa

The paper contributes to the sub-field of Religious Studies sometimes called “critical religion” by arguing that religion is a modern discursive construction that warrants strategic disassembling. Thus, the understanding of “religion” as a bounded concept with defined borders will be challenged.

In contrast, religion will be described as a mutable category in the technology of governance that is employed to manage displaced or otherwise marginalized polities. As “vestigial states”, religions both compete with and/or support the dominant sovereignties that authorize and contain them. Examples will be drawn from Greek myth, Jewish history and contemporary politics to support the argument. Relevance to current debates about gender, law and equality rights will be discussed.

Naomi Goldenberg is Professor of Religious Studies in the Department of Classics and Religious Studies at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Her specialties are in religion and popular culture, religion and gender, religion and psychoanalysis, and the construction of the category of religion and its relationship to other categories such as the secular and politics.

WEDNESDAY’S PLENARY REF SESSION

Professor Gordon Lynch, University of Kent

Professor Bettina Schmidt, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

(Chair: Dr Steven Sutcliffe, University of Edinburgh)

This session will include a short overview talk by Gordon Lynch, the REF sub-panel chair for Theology and Religious Studies, about current developments with the REF2021 exercise and give BASR-ISASR members the opportunity to raise questions and comments, including any feedback they wish to give on the draft guidelines for the REF exercise that were published for consultation in July. Bettina Schmidt – BASR president (elect) and REF sub-panel member will also participate. Copies of those consultation documents can be downloaded from:

DRINKS RECEPTIONS

Monday evening’s drinks reception has been kindly sponsored by the Religious Studies Research Form, Institute of Theology, Queen’s University Belfast.

RSP SPECIAL

https://religiousstudiesproject.com/

From 20.30 to 21.30 on Monday 3 September, the Religious Studies Project will be recording their annual “festive” special, in the main lecture hall (PFC/02/026). All are warmly invited to be part of the “studio audience”. This year, it’s a version of “the Chase” a.k.a. "The Deadline". A star-studded line-up of contestants face a barrage of multiple choice questions and must take on a special mystery guest – the indomitable Chaser! All are welcome... there may be wine...

SOCIAL TIME

The Woodworkers, 20-22 Bradbury Pl, Belfast BT7 1RS

At the close of play each evening, delegates are invited to make their way to The Woodworkers tap room – a six-minute walk towards the city centre along University Road. We do not have a reservation, but there should be ample room this early in the week, outside of term time. If you don’t know where to go, find one of the ‘key people’ who will be happy to guide you.

PUBLISHERS’ STALLS

Bloomsbury, Brill and Equinox will be maintaining staffed stalls in the Canada Room/Council Chamber throughout the conference. Springer will also have an unstaffed stall, and Routledge are providing special deals for conference delegates. Please pop along and say hello, browse and buy products, and talk about that next publishing contract!

TOURS

Unfortunately we are now unable to offer a free walking tour of churches and historical sites at close of play on Wednesday.

However, delegates may wish to take one of Paddy Campbell’s Famous Black Cab Tours of Belfast. The itinerary can include political murals and the ‘peace line’, Crumlin Road Jail and Court House, the City Hall, the Albert Memorial Clock, the Crown Liquor Saloon, and the Titanic Quarter. To book, and more information, see here: http://belfastblackcabtours.co.uk/

Sightseeing Bus Tours also operate every 30–60 minutes, and delegates can hope on at any designated bus stop, including on University Road, right by the conference venue: https://irishtourtickets.com/belfast-city-sightseeing-bus-tour/
PARALLEL SESSIONS

Panels 1: Monday 3 September, 14.00-15.30

Boundaries of Religion, Science and Knowledge (PFC/02/026)

Chair: Isaac M. Alderman, The Catholic University of America

- **On the Boundary of Indigenous Knowledge: Knowledge as Property versus Knowledge as Enlightenment**
  
  James Cox, Adjunct Professor in the Religion and Society Research Cluster, Western Sydney University, Australia and Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies, University of Edinburgh

  This paper explores the boundary between Indigenous people’s claims to be owners of local knowledge and the global academic aim to pursue knowledge for its own sake. Since the beginning of research on Indigenous societies in the late nineteenth century, researchers from many fields have engaged in so-called scientific surveys of what initially were considered ‘primitive’ or ‘savage’ peoples partly to serve colonial interests, but later to meet academic concerns to provide details of less developed societies in support of scholarly theories. As research methods became more sophisticated, the justification for such intrusions into Indigenous cultures centred around understandings of knowledge as enlightenment based on the assumption that knowledge possesses intrinsic value and should be shared widely. Currently, around the world, contemporary Indigenous leaders are engaged in a recovery of knowledge that had been taken from them and used for Western academic purposes. This includes a renewed claim to ownership of Indigenous knowledge based on the concept of Indigenous agency. If Indigenous people regard knowledge of their traditions as their own property, Western academics are challenged with issues involving returning stolen property to its rightful owners and engaging with Indigenous leaders in a process of negotiating continued research projects.

- **Intelligent design, quantum mysticism, and climate change denial: pseudoscience as a religious response to scientific consensus**
  
  Stuart Mathieson, Queen’s University Belfast

  Intelligent Design (ID) is a well-known phenomenon at the interface between science and religious belief. While ID has been relatively well-studied, it has mostly been examined in terms of its theological commitments; indeed, ID is often misconstrued as an extension of, or another variety of, creationism. Rather less attention has been paid to the sociological and epistemological rationales behind ID. However, ID has typically manifested alongside other pseudoscientific phenomena, with which it shares some characteristics. Typically, these include an obvious opponent, a conspiracy, a sense of shared, revealed knowledge, and the appropriation of contemporary scientific terminology.

  This paper treats ID as a response to scientific consensus. It historicises ID, comparing it to other anti-evolutionary beliefs, and demonstrates how these coincide with other responses to scientific consensus. These other responses, such as quantum mysticism, flat earth belief, and climate change denial, inhabit a liminal area just outside the boundaries of scientific orthodoxy. Within this grey area, there is room to challenge consensus by attacking
unanswered questions, and by using lay explanations to commandeer the narrative by applying these interpretations to social, psychological, or biological phenomena.

- “Living Well together” – a discussion of the border between the medical profession and religious practitioners in Brazil
  Bettina E. Schmidt, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

  Wellbeing, happiness and life satisfaction are perceived to depend on a range of factors, from income, social position, gender, age and cultural context. The spiritual dimension is also mentioned but usually just as an aspect of the cultural context. In Latin America wellbeing is perceived in the sense of "living well together", hence as relational (whether it is the relation with other people or the relation to the divine or place), and is usually perceived with a spiritual or religious connotation. But while this move to see “relationality” at the core of the concept of wellbeing is increasingly discussed among scholars, the practical application is still uncertain.

  This paper will focus on Brazil and show that despite of an awareness of the spirituality dimension of wellbeing, the border between medical professionals and religious practitioners seems to be unchanged. The paper will give first glimpse into interviews carried out in Brazil in the summer of 2018 with leaders of religious communities as well as medical professionals.

- ‘Clear Body, Clear Mind’: An Analysis of the Church of Scientology’s Purification Rundown
  Aled Thomas, The Open University

  The practices of Church of Scientology are primarily concerned with assisting its members in transcending the physical world through realising the true nature of their spiritual selves. While focusing on liberating the spiritual self from the physical universe, Scientologists also work on the physical body through the Purification Rundown (the ‘Purif’). Consisting of a series of exercises, diets, and vitamin consumption, the Purif is predominantly concerned with the removal of harmful drugs from the body, and is additionally believed to treat severe illnesses and diseases. Despite its focus on the treatment of the physical self, the Purif is considered to be the first stage of spiritual development in the Church, and is believed to prepare the body for advanced Scientology practices.

  Drawing from my fieldwork with the Church of Scientology, this paper will explore the Purif’s blurred boundaries between spiritual praxis and physical treatment. Through examining the Purif as a spiritual process in the Church, and a purely physical detox in Narconon (a non-religious drug rehabilitation programme associated with the Church), I will argue that the Purification Rundown straddles the hybrid social environment of Scientology in which the sacred and the profane are not mutually exclusive but deeply entwined.

Negotiating Religion in Secularised Societies: Japanese Religions at Home and Abroad (PFC/02/011)

Chair: Aura Di Febo, University of Manchester

Recent scholarly contributions fostered a redefinition of secularization as a historically and culturally bound negotiation embedded in relationships of power. Similar themes were discussed also in relation to Japanese religions, as several authors recently tackled the process through which the category of religion (shūkyō) was constructed in Japan, highlighting the “boundary-making exercise” that formally separated it from other social spheres. This process, far from resulting in a univocal understanding of
‘religion’, produced a multi-layered fragmentation of the conceptual field of shūkyō, as shown by the contested ways in which religion is presently experienced in secularised contexts.

The panel aims to unpack the multivocality of this boundary-making process, discussing how “making religion” unfolds as a multidirectional negotiation involving a variety of actors, animated by diverse interests and goals. Drawing from ethnographic research and textual sources, the papers will investigate how political actors, religious institutions and practitioners contribute to the discussion of what constitutes ‘religion’, by actively engaging with institutional and perceived boundaries that separate religion from contiguous semantic domains such as culture, ethics, education. In particular, the papers will examine strategies through which religious practices and notions are narrated and redefined to pursue missionary, organisational or political aims.

- **“Negotiating Religiosity at the Grassroots Level: Risshō Kōseikai in the secularised space of social care provision”**
  Aura Di Febo, University of Manchester

  The renewed vitality recently experienced by the debate on religion and secularity in modern societies rekindled interest toward these issues in Japan as well. In the last years, several scholarly contributions examined the process through which religion was constructed as a category vis-à-vis other semantic spheres, and formally excluded from the public domain. The outcomes of this process not only contributed to shape the public perception of “religion”, but had also a significant impact on the ways in which religious practitioners and institutions experience and articulate their religiosity vis-à-vis society. Religious actors, however, are not passively subjected to these dynamics, but can contribute to shape them with their choices and practices. Moving from social care activities carried on by members of the lay-Buddhist organisation Risshō Kōseikai within their local communities, the paper intends to showcase how religious practitioners operating in secularised domains creatively engage with the boundaries separating religion from other social spheres, negotiating religious values and identities and developing strategies to reconcile their religious aims with the constraints informing the public domain. The analysis aims to draw attention on the multivocality of the dialogical process through which religion is “made”, as involving both institutional and individual actors.

- **“Culture is in the eye of the beholder”: Social construction of religio-cultural boundary in the cultural activities of Tenrikyō in France**
  Masato Kato, SOAS University of London

  Recent scholarship on the construction of “religion” as it relates to Japanese religions has foregrounded the discursive process in which what are commonly classified as “religions” can be conceptualised and presented as “cultural” or “non-religious” to serve the interests of religious and non-religious actors involved therein. Whilst the “cultural” or “non-religious” representations of religions that self-identify as a Shinto tradition have received some attention, little has been discussed as to how a religious group that has self-consciously dissociated from Shinto makes sense of the cultural expression they employ as a form of representation in the public. By strategically focusing on Tenrikyō—a Japanese new religion that has shed its Shinto identity in post-WWII era, this paper aims to analyse how the religious group and its leaders draw and redraw the conceptual boundary demarcating the “religion” (i.e., Tenrikyō) and the “culture” (i.e., Japanese culture) as they promote what they call “cultural activities” in France. The analysis of the process in which the two conterminous conceptual categories converge, diverge and at times overlap in the discourse of the religious
actors will illuminate various ways in which “culture” can be interpreted in relation to the rather “acultural” doctrinal identity of the religious tradition.

- “Surely, this is the cradle of Japan”: Faith-talk in the political rhetoric of Abe Shinzō
  Ernils Larsson, Uppsala University

  In their work on religious rhetoric in American politics, featured prominently in The God Strategy (2008), David Domke and Kevin Coe use the concepts of “God-talk” and “Faith-talk” to distinguish between explicit and implicit references to religion in political discourse. Although “God-talk” is perhaps more common in nations where allusions to religion are common in political language, “Faith-talk” – speaking to adherents through the use of “cues” that are often imperceptible to outsiders – is likely a more widely used strategy for politicians in various contexts across the world.

  This paper is an attempt to analyze “Faith-talk” as a rhetorical strategy in the political discourse of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzō Abe. Throughout his political career, Abe has fostered his image as a self-proclaimed nationalist as well as a devoted Shintoist, and he retains close ties to many of the organizations that together form the postwar “Shinto establishment”. Although Abe is rarely as explicit as his colleagues in the United States, through his words and deeds he partakes in the making of Japan as a “Shinto” nation. The current analysis will focus on Abe’s relationship to Ise Shrine, “Divine Capital” (shinto) of prewar Japan and, according to Abe, “the cradle of Japan.”

Religions at the Centre and Periphery (PFC/02/013)

Chair: Brendan McNamara, University College Cork

- ‘Liminal’ Orthodoxies on the Margins of Empire: Twentieth Century ‘home-grown’ religious movements in the Republic of Moldova
  James A. Kapalo, University College Cork

  This article will explore the ‘liminal’ character of Moldovan identities through the prism of Moldova’s ‘home-grown’ religious movements of the twentieth century. For several hundred years the historical Principality of Moldavia nestled precariously between empires and cultural spheres. Moldavia’s powerful neighbor Russia eventually partitioned the territory with today’s Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova each incorporating parts of historical Moldavia. In terms of the Republic of Moldova’s religious culture (the main focus of this paper), the Russian Orthodox Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Soviet atheist state each pursued “civilizing” and “nationalizing” missions that attempted to transform Moldovans into loyal and trustworthy subjects and integrate them into new structures (Dumitru and Negura, 2014). These processes were resisted at a grass-roots level by charismatic leaders that ‘played’ with boundaries the hidden and the revealed, innovation and tradition, and human and divine, succeeding in transforming the subject positions of whole segments of Moldovan peasant society. The resulting forms of ‘liminal’ Orthodoxy that defy resolution and perpetually critique and transgress canonical norms from the margins of the Church have proved enduring and continue to subvert the discourses and narratives that seek to ‘harmonise’ identities and consolidate Nation, State and Church in the Republic of Moldova.
• **The European churches and the European Union: A culturally and historically specific relationship**  
  Helene Kirstein, Roskilde University

Religion as a modern category is established through constitutional documents like The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. In the treaty, the European churches are made partners in a dialogue with the institutions of the European Union thereby positioning the churches in a way specific for the member states. Through this dialogue, the European Union is at one and the same time separating and uniting the churches as ‘religious’ and the European Union as ‘political’. The position of the churches is characterized by being excluded from ‘state’ and ‘society’ while simultaneously their contribution is understood as universal. The churches are expected on the one hand to contribute with their own unique perspectives and spirituality; on the other hand, the churches are understood as sharing the same common values as the politicians. My research will show how a given notion of religion is meaningful inside the borders of a territory exemplified by the European Union: how the European Union by creating a dialogue with the European churches has established a historically specific notion of religion. And how the Treaty has established a specific position through the categories of ‘religion’ and ‘politics’.

• **Marginalized center: Wana people and the geography of power**  
  Giorgio Scalici, Durham University

Nowadays, the Indonesian government, world religions and the communities in the area marginalize the Wana of Morowali (Indonesia) but, according to the myth, they are not the periphery of the world, but the real centre of it. Wana believe their land was the first placed on the primordial waters and it was full of power, a power that abandoned the Wana to reach the edge of the world.

Following the myth, Wana categorize the space in centre and periphery, where the centre (the village) is powerless and the Wana must explore the periphery to obtain power and knowledge. The periphery is the place of spirits and mythical beings, a world divided by the daily life of Wana not only by the distance but also by another state of reality: the spiritual one. The shamans, called tau walia (human-spirit), are the only one that can travel between these spaces and cross the boundaries between them.

In this paper, we will see how Wana use religion, rituality and gender to control, lead and shape the power within the community and cope with the marginalization by the government, the world religions and the other community in the area.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Boundaries (PFC/03/006A)**

Chair: Suzanne Owen, Leeds Trinity University

• **The Idea of Social Science in the Study of Religion**  
  Jonathan Tuckett, Unseen University

This paper presents a summary and discussion of my new book The Idea of Social Science and Proper Phenomenology. I will discuss some of the debates relevant to current religious studies to highlight some the misguided presuppositions which have strongly influenced scholars in the field. Specifically, I will focus on the presupposition of the Weberian Ideal regarding the institutional place of science in universities and a failure to properly consider the epistemic
status of knowledge produced for its own sake. Properly understood, a genuine social science is a hobby whose aims run counter to the currently ethos of government funded universities.

- **Pagan, Christian or Natural Theology? The Divided Reception of Neo-Platonism**  
  Ludwig Maisel, Humboldt University of Berlin

  That E. B. Tylor’s three-stage evolutionist model of the history of religions is obsolete can be read in any handbook of Religious Studies. Yet its rigid categories of “polytheism” and “monotheism” remain part of the vocabulary of the History of Western Philosophy and Religion. There have been various attempts to make up for their limitations, often by incorporating Max Müller’s “henotheism” or adding an “inclusive/exclusive” axis. But this proliferation of terminology has not called into question their essential adequacy as descriptive terms, as if they were problematic only at their edges.

  On the contrary, I argue that they are useful as emic categories only—data, not analytical tools for the scientific study of religions. This will be exemplified by tracing the reception of Neo-Platonism, originally a school of pagan Greek philosophy opposed to Christianity, appropriated alternately as the foundation or the foil of monotheistic theology. From antiquity onward, presuppositions about what God/a god is were constantly, and usually tacitly, remolded to determine whose philosophical systems were beyond the pale. It is my contention that the field of academic Neo-Platonic Studies has never subjected this polyvalent normative inheritance to a critical reflection, the results of which should inform any investigation of “theism”

- **Conceptual borders: rethinking matter, mind and body for the study of religions**  
  Alexandra Grieser, Trinity College Dublin

  The logics of borders and boundaries in cultural life are intrinsically connected with human ways of perceiving and orientating in the world, and with basic cognitive and aesthetic conditions. This is true for any cultural manifestation of borders, but also for the ways we think and create concepts, also in academic work. Recent material and aesthetic approaches to the study of religion offered not only to integrate new topics and objects into research; they also allowed for rethinking the concepts we use when studying religions, and they critically discussed dichotomies such as body and mind, the role of materiality, or an agency of things. Taking stock of this debate, the paper brings it in conversation with comparable discussions in Science and Technology Studies and the wider philosophy of science. Drawing on a concept of an “aesthetics of knowledge”, it is asked how the welcomed intention of “overcoming dichotomies” goes together with making distinctions for critical analysis. The boundary work between “religion and science” will serve as example.
Panels 2: Monday 3 September, 15.50-17.20

Borders and Boundaries in Contemporary Islam (PFC/02/026)

Chair: Stephen Gregg, University of Wolverhampton

- A ‘multi-local’ analysis of Islam across the borders of homeland, diaspora and holy places
  Seán McLoughlin, University of Leeds

  This paper will explore the study of migration, diaspora and transnationalism in relation to the study of religion and especially Islam. Drawing upon two decades of intermittent, multi-sited research among mainly South Asian heritage Muslims now settled in the UK, I argue that we should pay attention to the ongoing “awareness of multi-locality” (Vertovec 2000: 147) in migrant and post-migrant communities. Illuminating scales ‘below’, as well as ‘above’ and ‘across’, the nation-state, this more devolved and multi-centred approach, problematizes a default ‘methodological nationalism’ in migration studies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2011). A ‘multi-local’ analysis can be further explored too in terms of Thomas Tweed’s (1997: 93-5, 139; cf. 2006) three-fold cartography of diasporic religion (which for my own purposes I re-order thus):

  i. the locative (religion is closely “associated with a homeland”);
  ii. the translocative (religion is “moving symbolically [and in other ways] between the homeland and the new land”);
  iii. the supralocative (“the significance of both the homeland and the adopted land in religious life” is diminished or denied).

  I will briefly elaborate on this schema in light of the wider literature and a discussion of the ways in which Muslim-ness is transformed across three interconnected locations of a particular ‘multi-local’ network: a) the ethnic homeland of Mirpur district in Pakistani-administered Kashmir; b) the Pakistani/Kashmiri diaspora of northern England; and c) the pilgrimage destinations of Mecca and Madinah.

- Leadership and inclusivity in progressive Muslim initiatives in Germany and the UK
  Stefanie Sinclair, The Open University

  This paper will explore notions of leadership and inclusivity within a range of progressive Muslim initiatives and mosques in Germany and the UK, including the Ibn-Rushd-Goethe-Moschee (founded in Berlin in 2017), the Liberal-Islamische Bund (founded in Cologne in 2010) as well as the Inclusive Mosque Initiative (IMI) (founded in London in 2012). These initiatives have both female and male imams and welcome a particularly diverse range of people to attend mixed prayers. This paper explores aims and practices of these initiatives as well as their relationship with each other and with other religious groups. It will consider and compare the specific historical, political and cultural contexts of the foundation of these initiatives and of the ways in which they operate in Germany and the UK. It will also explore public reactions in both countries to these initiatives since their foundation.

- A First Exploration of the Use of a Sacred Language for Prayer in Muslim believers
  Bene Bassetti, University of Warwick & Jean-Marc Dewaele, Birkbeck, University of London

  The use of a sacred language for prayer has received surprisingly little attention. This qualitative project used semi-structured interviews to investigate the use of Quranic Arabic
Quranic Arabic is the language of formal prayer, and its use gives esthetic and religious pleasure to believers. Yet, praying in a language in which one is not fully proficient has consequences for religious practice. Difficulties with pronunciation may result in limited prayer repertoires, or a fear of leading public prayer. The inability to understand meaning may result in difficulties in focussing during prayer, a limited understanding of holy texts, and the need to rely on the interpretation provided by religious authorities. Respondents’ solutions were varied and creative. The ability to understand Quranic Arabic was more important among younger believers, those with higher language proficiency, and those with a stronger desire to understand their religion. For the latter group, the sacred language can even be a tool to free themselves from distrusted religious authorities. It is argued that the role of language in prayer should be receive more interest in both the fields of religious studies and applied linguistics.

Religion and Nation (PFC/02/011)
Chair: Bettina Schmidt, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

- The Construction of Nationalism in Ch’ŏndogyo
  Yeonju Lee, SOAS, University of London

  Both nationalism and religion have complex implications of identity, history, and modernity. This paper examines how nationalism was constructed and manifested by Ch’ŏndogyo, the first organised new religion in Korea. Founded originally as Tonghak (“Eastern Studies”) in 1860, the movement was consolidated into a modern religious order called Ch’ŏndogyo (“Religion of the Heavenly Way”) in 1905. While the religious movement prospered and had significant social and political influence in Korean society towards the end of Chosŏn period and throughout the colonial era, it rapidly declined after 1945 liberation despite the efforts to establish its political influence. I analyse the nature of Ch’ŏndogyo nationalism through two themes: political ideals of a new Korean nation and pronounced advocacy of Korea’s unification. The analysis is primarily based on my examination of how the movement’s internal interpretations of its religious doctrines are expressed as nationalist political vision after liberation. As a new religious movement that originated with a strong social revolutionary character, Ch’ŏndogyo displays a manifestly political form of nationalism that incorporates cultural and ethnic elements as well. It is argued that the distinctly this-worldly characteristics of Ch’ŏndogyo doctrines and fluid conceptions of deity accommodated the religion’s secular involvement through political nationalism.

- Heritage and Partnership: Roles and Representations of Scottish Christians in the Literature of Interfaith Scotland
  Liam Sutherland, University of Edinburgh

  In this paper I will examine the formative role played by the major Christian churches and individual Christian activists in the development of the Scottish interfaith movement, culminating in the establishment of the Scottish Inter Faith Council (now Interfaith Scotland) in 1999. It is the continuing role of Christians within this organisation and their representation within its extensive public-facing literature which will form the analytical focus of this paper. I will argue that Christian involvement in the Scottish interfaith movement has depended on the predominance of an ecumenical form of Christianity representing the major Protestant churches in the country as well as the Scottish Roman Catholic Church. This ecumenicism has
been necessary to allow Christian groups to more comfortably inhabit a shared Scottish Christian identity which has facilitated the institutionalisation of a structured and limited religious pluralism based on world religions category and the selective inclusion of non-Christian minority groups. This ecumenical and interfaith Christian identity though has been used to police the boundaries of Christianity: marginalising alternative forms of Christianity such as Mormonism. The world religions paradigm was also mobilised to attempt to police interfaith relations at the national level, by unsuccessfully attempting to exclude groups such as Pagans from the interfaith movement. Increasingly, religious pluralism and the interfaith movement has been a means of defending the established public role of Christian churches, especially the Church of Scotland but in doing so ironically promote a form of secularism whereby national and public space is increasingly differentiated from any particular form of religious identification.

- **Ex-Centric Religious Practice in the Colombian Andes: A peripheral point of view on modernity, neo-colonialism and Catholicism**
  Daniel Rubio-Rosas, Pontifical Xavierian University

This paper follows the pivotal analysis of a larger research work on religious practices and popular religiosity in the community of Chíquiza, in Colombia’s eastern Andes, from the disciplinary edge of ‘literary studies’. After five centuries of systematic marginalization and colonial abuse, the community still preserves vestiges of ‘indigenous’ practices and knowledges among a catholic tradition. However, the arrival of capitalism and modernization has lead to political struggle with neighbouring communities over the administrative control of the territory. Religious ex-centric (out of the centres) practice is a justification to push Chíquiza further to the periphery and invalidate their political claims. Local knowledge and beliefs, regarding spirits, witchcraft and the devil, reinforce the idea of an ‘underdeveloped’ and ‘superstitious’ community, unable to govern themselves, as they contrast with modern rationality and the economic interests of local authorities. Based on the perspectives of the collective Latin American project “Modernity/Coloniality”, this paper aims to question steady notions such as ‘development’, ‘truth’, ‘canon’ and ‘orthodoxy’ from the peripheral point of view of Chíquiza and a ‘literary study’ of religion.

**Individuals Crossing Boundaries (PFC/02/013)**

Chair: James Murphy, Canterbury Christ Church University

- **Breaking the boundaries? ‘Mixed Marriages’ in (the Republic of) Ireland in the twenty-first century**
  Malcolm P.A. Macourt

At the personal level ‘the crossing of thresholds ... between different realms’ is most apparent among those who marry someone from another religious group. How far a small minority religious group maintains its identity in a society with a dominant religious community? How far participants in ‘mixed marriages’ maintain connections with both ‘realms’?

This published data and (additionally) data made available by the Census Office appears to show that half of those from the long-standing minority religious groups marry outside their own group, and that this proportion has changed little in the last 30 years; whereas less than one in ten of those of most recent minority religious groups marry ‘out’. This paper details this apparent analysis and seeks to place it in its social and historical context.

- **Negotiating Intersectional Identity: Being a young Gujarati Hindu in London and Lisbon**
  Priyesh Patel, University College London

Identity and belonging in the Hindu Gujarati diaspora in Western Europe tends to focus on those who experienced British colonial rule and migrated through Africa to settle in the English-speaking West (Kurien 2005, Raman 2015, Almeida 2017). However, the equivalent diaspora in subcontinental Europe is remarkably understudied, thus ignoring crucial nuances and homogenising what is actually a very diverse community.

This paper offers a comparative approach to understanding identity between young Gujarati Hindus living in London and their counterparts in Lisbon. This is particularly interesting because the predecessors of both diasporas experienced different colonial rulers and therefore migrated to different parts of Africa, thereby shaping their current experiences. After conducting participant observation and fieldwork for three months in both locations, I argue that young people in both diasporas see identity as fluid and negotiable rather than fixed and clearly demarcated. Rather than ‘fitting in’ to a particular identity label such as ‘British’, ‘Portuguese’, ‘Hindu’, or ‘Indian’, they prefer to negotiate their expressions of identity between sacred, cultural and secular spheres, often in resistance to previous generations. I contend the idea that belonging can be determined by labels or Tebbit Test-style thinking, which is not only simplistic but also divisive. I emphasise the complexities involved in experiencing, constructing and articulating identities and the strategies and aspirations that inform everyday life as a young Gujarati Hindu.

- **Hyphens, religious converts, and life-stage transition**
  Grace Milton, University of Birmingham

This paper reflects upon hyphens; those connecting borders between religious and cultural identities, for religious converts during times of life stage transition. The discussion will emerge from the initial findings of The Hyphen Project, a two-year, qualitative research project exploring the experiences of UK-based minority ethnic converts to Christianity. It will be argued that the experience of progressing through a life stage transition, can magnify conflicting expectations between individuals, families and religious organisations. In part, because their associated rituals often involve multiple layers which compel reflection and categorisation between the ‘cultural’ and the ‘religious’. In other words, that which is considered compatible with the new faith and that which is considered incompatible. Combining social science, anthropology and practical theology, this paper considers the conflicts that can arise for converts who straddle religious and cultural borders during a life stage transition, and argues that life stage transition narratives offer researchers a greater insight into identity negotiation and syncretism than, more typically used, conversion narratives. For more information on The Hyphen Project: cultural conflict to religious transition, please visit the project website:

https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/research/projects/hyphen.aspx
Panels 3: Tuesday 4 September, 09.00-10.30

Research Slam (PFC/02/026)

Chair: Jenny Butler, University College Cork

- **Given by Guru, Comprehended by Me: The Thoughts of the Aspirant within the Mystical Experience**  
  Kush Depala

  The term ‘Mysticism’ is a constructed category – fluid and encompassing a wide semantic range. However, within this range, there are certain preconceived notions about its contents and their characteristics. Its roots in European enlightenment ideals can be problematic and restrictive. The framework of ineffability, noetic quality, transiency and passivity argued by William Jones, as well as some of his implicit assertions (intangibility, some degree of spirituality), are central to the definition of the category. This framework appears to be broken when one considers the experience with the manifest form of Brahman within the Swaminarayan tradition as a mystical experience. This research slam paper utilises the notion of the Brahmāvārūpa Guru (the manifest form of Brahman) and the concept of divyabhāv (seeing the guru as wholly divine) to challenge the Eurocentric, enlightenment definition of the ‘mystical experience’ and its partialities in light of other non-European religious traditions.

- **Teorainneacha na nAislingí (in Oideas) / The Limits of Visions (in Teaching)**  
  Ambrose Hogan, University College London

  The paper is the result of 5 years’ doctoral research by an established academic and teacher educator, an individual who is both Irish and British (being born in England of an Irish mother and a ‘London-Irish’ father). The project started with a hypothesis that psychodynamic processes observed in clinical interactions in consulting rooms were at play in teaching and learning relationships in ordinary classrooms—in what way, and to what degree?

  When a school teacher is recreated in the imaginations of their pupils as a character in the internal psychodrama of the child or adolescent, or becomes active in the symbolic processes of healing in that child’s internal life (and the teacher becomes aware of this rôle), what is the correct, professional, ethical response? In the process of the inquiry, the intensity of the research process generated a couple of instances of ‘momentary psychosis’ (Orbach, 2003: 5), one of which was in a religious context, during a church service. This paper will thus offer extracts from autoethnographic material which trouble two boundaries that will be of interest to this conference—the one between creating knowledge and clinical psychodynamic phenomena, and that between religion and research (and possibly religion and madness).

- **“Mapping” Religious Communities in the UK: Borders, Boundaries and Big Data**  
  Jeremy Kidwell, University of Birmingham

  Shockingly, there is no non-commercial database of places of worship in the UK. For this presentation, I will introduce preliminary results of a large-scale participatory research project which combined big-data methods with participatory geography to address this gap in data available to researchers. Begun in earnest in 2016, we have completed initial “seeding” of the dataset and now have over 40k geocoded places of worship hosted on a free geospatial platform. For this brief presentation I will highlight 3 key problems with geospatial data on
places of worship (with a critical gaze towards Ordnance Survey and Google Maps), introduce our platform, and will offer 3 key research questions facing our team as we seek to ready this project for public (scholarly) consumption.

- **Making of the Enemy: anti-communism and Islamophobia of the Protestant Right in South Korea**
  Yeonju Lee, SOAS, University of London

  This study explores the ideology and actions of the Protestant Right in South Korea, focusing on anti-communism and its relation to Islamophobia, which predominantly exists as a discourse constructed and maintained by the Protestant Right. In South Korea, where a remarkable growth and success of evangelicalism took place in the twentieth century, the Protestant Right has emerged as a powerful social and political force, characterised by its incorporation of conservative evangelical faith into right-wing political agendas. By taking a sociological approach, the analysis examines the interplay of historical, theological, and sociological factors. In particular, construction of the ‘us’ and ‘enemy’ framework is highlighted regarding the theological contextualisation that connects anti-communism and Islamophobia, and ‘institutional interest’ perspective is explored to explain the continuum of motives underlying the ideology and discourse.

- **‘Swimming Against the Tide’ – Hindu Youth of the Neasden Temple**
  Tilak Parekh, University of Oxford

  A study by St Mary’s University showed that 70% of youth in Britain identify as ‘not religious’. Stephen Bullivant, who authored the report, writes, ‘The new default setting is “no religion”, and the few who are religious see themselves as swimming against the tide.’ This paper studies those who are ‘swimming against the tide’. In particular, my study focuses on the youths who attend the Neasden Temple in London, a place of worship described by John Zavos as ‘representative of the [British] Hindu community’. Using the temple’s ‘grey literature’ and ethnography, I will analyse the complex motivations behind the uncommon religiosity of these young people. The paper explores how ‘group identity’ provided by the temple shapes the ‘personal identity’ of the youth, and how this affects their religious commitments, making way for a much-needed conversation on identity formation, the nature of diasporic religion, and the religiosity of British Hindu youth.

- **Teaching about Hallowe’en in schools**
  Mark Plater, Bishop Grosseteste University

  Hallowe’en is a time of liminality, when religion, festival, frivolity and commercialism meet, causing fear and fun in equal measure. Most people have a vague sense that this is a time of past religious significance, but few have any understanding of either the meaning of the word or of what the festival really represents. Past research indicates that English schools and teachers are fearful of the topic and avoid its inclusion in the curriculum, although that may now be changing. However, teachers and parents have few resources, and little guidance on how to handle the sensitive issues which the festival highlights: night-time, ghosts, witches, death, public mayhem, and threatening demands. I will argue that this is the perfect time for children to explore a festival where religion meets with archetypal fears and broken societal norms to produce a burst of colour in an otherwise dreary seasonal landscape.
• The Itako – “blind” female shamans – a vanishing tradition: how are these mediums adapting to modern Japan?
Illaria Vecchi, Leeds Trinity University

Japan has a rich and diverse tradition of shamans, especially in the Tohoku region. In the last decades, this rural part of the country has increasingly depopulated affecting the composition of its communities. Within this context, also traditions well established such as the blind female shamans named Itako are going through a process of adaptation. In the attempt to understand and document the change of these shamans over the past decades, I approached some Itako shamans to record their stories.

In analysing this process, I blend different methodologies such as visual methodology and digital ethnography (Pink 2001, 2013, 2015 and Rose 2012) and the critical religion approach proposed by Fitzgerald (2000) in this unique interdisciplinary research. Therefore, I consider these women not only as the representatives of a Japanese shamanic practice but by contextualising them to their environment, I regard them as culture subject. This work will provide details about their intimate life, the changing relationship with the community, and with the environment.

American Apocalypses (PFC/02/011)
Chair: From Panel

• The Antichrist’s Climate Change: Conspiracism and Geopolitics in American Evangelical Millennialism
Tom Albrecht, Queen’s University Belfast

In recent decades, narratives emerged in the American evangelical dispensationalist community which merge elements of American far-right conspiracism, such as the alleged New World Order conspiracy, with biblical apocalypticism. The narrative flexibility of evangelical millennialism allows dispensationalists to interpret global climate protection policies, such as the Paris Climate Accord, as part of the Antichrist’s global conspiracy to control the world and thereby, as a threat to the freedom and lives of American Christians. Those conspiracist-dispensationalist narratives reflect not only apocalyptic anxieties about an expected loss of control, but also anti-elitism, science scepticism, libertarianist and nationalist ideologies. Hence, this millennial counter-epistemic knowledge production concerning climate change needs to be understood as a (geo)-political practice which attacks those political and scientific institutions who promote climate protection policies. Foreign and intergovernmental institutions as the United Nations or European Union in particular are often accused to advance the Antichrist’s agenda and the devilish religion of environmentalism. An academic engagement with such narratives is important because dispensationalist narratives can influence American geopolitical practices through political networks of power and furthermore, they have the ability to influence the political world view and environmentally relevant behaviour of American evangelical Christians.

• God’s Just Gaza War
Tristan Sturm, Queen’s University Belfast

Beginning after the evacuation of the Gush Katif settlement of the Gaza Strip and intensifying with the 2008-2009 Gaza War, the border town of Sderot and its surrounding landscape became, for American Christian Zionists, a pilgrimage landscape and therefore a religious site
as it was performed as an event portending the apocalypse. Christian Zionist interpreted the war and the landscape it took place on as a mise-en-scène of a hoped for apocalypse. This Gazan landscape became a constitutive practice of religious and a hybrid American-Israeli national identity. Watching the war from pilgrimage landscapes overlooking the Gaza Strip, American Christian Zionists attempted to discursively dispossess the Gazans of their land through the legal colonial practice of terra nullius in four ways: 1) by denying the Palestinians’ ability to reason; 2) by denying that “Palestinians” existed as a legitimate national identity; 3) by arguing that Palestinians historically had no state and therefore no sovereignty over the land; and 4) by a religiously sanctioned inevitability and harbinger of worse wars to come as God’s wrath grows and the world teeters on the apocalypse. Gaza was therefore interpreted as God’s land and the demise of the Palestinians of Gaza was made inevitable. I will also review the 2014 Operation Strong Cliff and May 2018 shooting of Gazan protestors.

- **Make America Christian Again: Postmillennialism in the Pacific Northwest**  
  Crawford Gribben, Queen’s University Belfast

  This presentation examines the rise of postmillennialism among evangelicals in the Pacific Northwest states associated with James Wesley Rawles’ controversial proposal for an American Redoubt. Inspired by the theology of Christian Reconstruction, with its expectation of a revival of evangelical Protestantism with dramatic social, cultural and legislative consequences, large numbers of evangelicals are migrating to towns like Moscow, Idaho, to gather in several varieties of intentional community, where they expect to sit out the impending crisis in American politics and then to build a new world. Their strategy has been markedly successful on a local level. Around ten per cent of the population of Moscow is associated with two churches that promote this worldview. But these communities remain at best ambivalent about the election of Donald Trump. Sceptical of politics, and sometimes of democracy itself, they work to restore America one county at a time.

- **The Internationalisation of American Millennial Conspiracism in Sweden’s Red Ice Radio**  
  David G Robertson, The Open University

  Sweden’s Red Ice Radio podcast is a fascinating microcosm of several aspects of the contemporary millennial milieu. First, it exemplifies an interpretive drift from a predominantly “spiritual” discourse to a predominantly right-wing, nationalist one, demonstrating how common discursive units such as alternative healthcare and whole foods act as common fulcrums in a broader alternative milieu. Secondly, it shows how these concerns become entangled in larger conspiratorial narratives, where for example “big pharma” leads to “New World Order” leads to open antisemitism. Finally, it shows how narratives we tend to think of as particular to the US are exported worldwide and then reimported, showing the globalisation of American Millennial Conspiracism today.

**Community Boundaries (PFC/02/013)**

Chair: Marion Bowman, The Open University

- **“Are you there, Google? It’s me, Margaret”**  
  Benjamin Huskinson, Queen’s University Belfast

  Much of the literature currently addressing automation tends to focus on industry and transportation. There is, however, another growing trend in the automation of religion. Scholars of secularisation have noted that where religion has, for millennia, reinforced social
cohesion, the decline of religion in countries with current or previously high levels of religiosity erodes at that social cohesion, as nothing steps in to replace religion’s social function. This paper will argue that the rise of artificial intelligence further complicates matters by accelerating secularisation through the instant access to religious information (and misinformation), which often bypasses traditional clergy roles. The relatively recent rise of the religious “chat bot” offers a glimpse at a future where interactions with traditional faith leaders may be seen as superfluous by young people raised in a digital age. And finally, the quest for artificial general intelligence may one day offer a query experience that many may prefer over traditional prayers in seeking answers.

- **Not the What, but the Who: how a social network analysis of congregational memberships reveals the pivotal role of kinship in the intersection of congregation and community**
  Adrian Stringer, University College Cork

When considering how congregations and the wider community interact, the key factor is commonly understood to be that of culture. Their rise and fall is seen as directly corresponding to how closely or not the congregation relates to the contemporary society in its widest societal, or smaller local, manifestations.

This paper presents the results of social network analysis (SNA) into two contrasting congregations in Northern Ireland. Shared will be SNA findings which include sociograms, Eigenvector Centrality Scores, K-Core Analysis and assessment of the validity of the results using QAP. These reveal that the key unit for congregational memberships is that of household kin. It also shows how these units differ between the two contrasting congregations in their connections to their respective congregations and the wider community.

Consequently, this paper depicts a congregational dynamic wherein the cultural dimension is but one facet carried by members’ social connectivity – particularly, and above all else, that of kinship relations.

- **“Don’t disrupt the connection” Affective Bonds and Boundaries in British Muslim Community Identity**
  George Rawlinson, University of Manchester

This paper will outline and explore how notions of Muslim community identity are affectively constructed and affirmed in a contemporary British context in a manner which subverts and transcends ethnic, institutional and sectarian parameters. Past conceptualisations of Muslim community identity have emphasised the significance of ethnicity, sect and institution, producing typologies reflective of this. Through exploring how affective notions of “spirituality”, connection and felt-brotherhood cultivate community in the context of the majlis, the devotional gathering, this paper will demonstrate the situational malleability of Muslim community identity as something done and felt. Building upon this, it will assess the extent to which current methods of classification accurately reflect this dynamic fluidity and will propose an alternative which better encompasses the way in which Muslim community identity is done and felt. Ultimately, it will be argued that Muslim community identity is affectively evoked situationally in the context of the majlis in a way which subverts and transcends more static classifications of ethnicity, sect and institution. This will be further substantiated and explored through drawing on data acquired in multiple Sufi-Sunni mosques.
in and around Manchester, all of which hold devotional gatherings which are most illustrative of this point.

**Boundaries of the Human Subject (PFC/03/006A)**

Chair: Vivianne Crowley, Nottingham Trent University

- **Religion as phenomenologically abnormal**  
  Jonathan Tuckett, Unseen University

  In a number of articles I have now pointed to an idea of understanding religion in the context of Edmund Husserl’s notion of the natural attitude. Where much “phenomenology of religion” has really only made "use" of Ideas I and Husserl’s earlier texts, this work has drawn off the later Crisis works as well as material which was posthumously published. In this paper I further develop and expand on the idea of understanding “religion” through the intersubjectivity of the Alien or alienisation. Not the same as Marxian alienation, the phenomenology of the Alien provides a framework in which to consider the way a boundary is established around “religion” and the “religious” in the context of Husserl’s consideration of normality and abnormality. I will argue that such an understanding of “religion” as abnormal is not a definition (or theory) controlled by scholars. However, if not careful, scholars can contribute to its continued propagation and the consequences that might ensue.

- **“The Animal at Unease with Itself;” Death anxiety and the animal-human boundary in Genesis 2-3**  
  Isaac M. Alderman, The Catholic University of America

  The literature on Genesis 2-3 (Creation and life in the garden) tends to treat the issues of life, knowledge of mortality, nakedness, and the interaction of human beings with animals atomistically. But when reading these texts in light of Terror Management Theory (TMT), which demonstrates that death anxiety influences the human-animal boundary, one can better draw together these seemingly separate strands.

  Studies on TMT have demonstrated that the death-related thoughts lead humans to symbolically separate themselves from the rest of the animal world. To oversimplify: if one is reminded of death, one more forcefully negates human creatureliness by emphasizing the uniqueness of human beings; if one is reminded of the similarities between humans and other animals, death thoughts become more accessible.

  In Genesis 2-3, we see a text that is artfully crafted to deal with the stress of human awareness of its own creatureliness and mortality by creating a great gulf between themselves and the rest of the animal world. The humans are separated from the animals, and this boundary is hardened as they move from being at ease with their nakedness to being, as Derrida puts it, “an animal that is at unease with itself.”

- **Esoteric Traces in the Formation of the Freudian Psychoanalytic Subject**  
  John Boyle, University of Essex.

  This paper argues that traces of the Western esoteric traditions can be found within Freudian psychoanalysis and proposes that the significance of such traces in the development of a specifically psychoanalytic understanding of the human subject has been thus far largely neglected. The paper begins by introducing Western esotericism as an academic discipline prior to turning its attention to the conceptual metaphor of 'trace’ as a useful means for
articulating the nature of relations between esotericism and psychoanalysis at the latter's inception. The paper then outlines the complex conceptual matrix that conjoins Freudian psychoanalysis to occultism, psychical research, telepathy and the Jewish Kabbalah. The paper concludes by drawing attention to the persistence of esoteric traces in contemporary psychoanalysis and reflects on their potential implications with respect to the formation of psychoanalytic theory in the future.
Panels 4: Tuesday 4 September, 11.00-12.30

Transgressing the Dominant Order (PFC/02/026)

Chair: Jenny Butler, University College Cork

- **Folk Magic: Underground Religious Practices in Italy**  
  Angela Puca, Leeds Trinity University

  From the Janare in Campania to the Masche in Piemonte, the Italian regions have a long history of local healers and folk witches, also known as Segnatori. Shrouded in folklore and secrecy, these traditions are still very much alive and practised across the country, specifically in the countryside.

  Data collected during almost two years of fieldwork between 2016 and 2018 suggest that the sole way to engage with these local healers is through either being part of the community or their family. There is also a firm reticence on the part of both the witches and their community members to talk about the practice and the rituals involved.

  By analysing how folk magic has been concealed within and reshaped by the boundaries dictated by the dominant religious system and the contemporary culture, I will argue that this religious practice is still ingrained in the life of local Italian communities, somehow framing the way people conceptualise the Self and Reality.

  The matter of syncretism will also be addressed as a key element to confirm the resilience of these traditions in the cultural fabric and how the alteration of said amalgamating elements over time shows an enduring core.

- **Witchcraft in Japan as a Contact Zone for Western and Japanese traditions**  
  Eriko Kawanishi, Kyoto University

  In this paper, I examine the borders and boundaries of witchcraft traditions, focusing on Japanese witches. This paper is based on fieldwork in the UK and in Japan.

  The adaptation of non-Western traditions by Westerners, especially the traditions of Native Americans, Aboriginal Australians and Maori in New Zealand, has sometimes been a sensitive issue. Many Pagans borrow religious elements from ancient and indigenous cultures, and are aware of the issue of cultural appropriation. Then how do non-Western witches adapt modern Western witchcraft?

  Japanese witches who practise modern Western witchcraft are deeply influenced by Wicca, Western magic and Celtic traditions. At the same time, some witches like to adopt and combine Japanese religious traditions (e.g. Shinto), the ancient Jomon culture of Japan, and the cultures of Japan’s indigenous peoples. Therefore Japanese witchcraft is a contact zone for Western tradition and Japanese traditions. I would like to discuss the range of local and global resources they use and how they combine them, and their attitude to cultural “borrowing”.

  In this context, I would like to examine Shinto practitioners in the UK. For example, how do they regard the practice of Shinto and what do Japanese witches think about the British who practise Shinto?
The Dark Goddess as Both “Self” and “Other”: Narrating Boundaries Between Self and Deity

Áine Warren, University of Edinburgh

“The Dark Goddess” is a term which has come into increasing parlance in contemporary Paganism since its inception in this context the 1990s. Such “Dark” components of the Goddess—themes of death, destruction, and of literal darkness and night—have been present in her image throughout the development of contemporary Paganism. The concept of the Dark Goddess as a discrete archetype or entity has developed in published and online texts since the 1990s. Initially, she was primarily constructed in psychological terms: as a metaphor for repressed and subjugated aspects of womanhood; and associated with women’s healing and empowerment.

Discourse on the Dark Goddess has continued to portray the Dark Goddess as contained within, or representing part of, the psyche. However, she is simultaneously portrayed as an external agent who brings about changes and challenges for the individual. The Dark Goddess thealogy contains a complex interplay between descriptions of her as “self” and as “other”—an external, independently agential form of divinity. The Dark Goddess thus complicates and expands the boundaries of the self, particularly with regard to the relationship between devotee and deity. In analysis of this discourse, the Dark Goddess emerges as an experience or narrative, through which the individual explores her

Activism (PFC/02/011)

Chair: Liam Sutherland, University of Edinburgh

Engaged Buddhism: Methods of interpretation

Paul Fuller, Cardiff University

The term ‘engaged Buddhism was coined by Thich Nhat Hanh in 1962. It describes a new movement in Buddhism which addresses social and political issues as well as more traditional Buddhist ideas. This paper will offer an interpretation of engaged Buddhism under five headings: views and belief, metaphysics, politics and engagement, the adaptation of doctrine and practice, and religious diversity. These themes will be used to suggest the complexity of engaged Buddhism as it confronts the causes of suffering.

A key idea of engaged Buddhism is its mending of a perceived dichotomy between worldly and religious activity. In attempting this engaged Buddhist theory allows a meditative and contemplative tradition to tackle issues that it has not historically been interested in. Though these issues are primarily political this paper will argue that engaged Buddhism is more diverse than is often supposed and offer new insights in the nature of this new Buddhist movement.

From Debt and Austerity to Indebtedness: Some Fragments from the Philippines

Paul-François Tremlett, The Open University

The financial crisis of 2007-2008 released a great deal of creative, cultural energy: by 2011, anti-capitalist protest movements were organising themselves globally using social media, and engaging in a series of inter-linked experiments in horizontal forms of political organizing and decision-making, premised upon a need for new forms of sovereignty to authorize what might be called a re-valuation of values. However, the official solution to the immediate crisis was found, by national political elites, elsewhere, in the use of public money to bail out the stricken banks. The ‘solution’ effectively meant that the pursuit of private profit by global
banks and other financial institutions would henceforth be implicitly underwritten by national publics.

In Britain the post-crisis settlement was and still is defined by an ideology of austerity, which reduced the global crisis to an instance of national profligacy that could only be addressed through collective belt-tightening. As the protests fizzled out and austerity began to bite, a discourse on debt as a moral failing and as a social bad coalesced around lived conceptions and common-sense experiences of household budgets, to push home the idea of ‘living within one’s means’. As well as masking just whose belts were doing the tightening, the discourse on debt also required some impressive intellectual gymnastics: the stagnant wage growth that followed austerity dampened consumption and, as a consequence, threatened economic growth. The government’s commitment to slashing welfare provision including so-called tax credits, meant that top-ups to low wages would have to come from elsewhere. Into the breach stepped a host of new, predatory credit providers and new avenues of access to credit meant the creation of more debt. But, most intriguingly of all, the discourse on debt also pointed, however obliquely, to a figure from an Ayn Rand novel, standing on her or his own two feet, a paragon of creative, entrepreneurial energy, in debt to no one and decisively free. If the financial crisis enabled the release of creative energy directed towards putting an idea of a public good at the centre of the economy, the discourse on debt given life by austerity presumed to authorize an alternative source of creativity in the heroic individual untrammeled by suffocating externalities such as other people.

In this essay I sketch a supplement to David Graeber’s history of debt (2012), drawing together historical and ethnographic accounts of lowland Filipino religious cultures to shift the debate about debt to one about indebtedness. I suggest that indebtedness emerges, from these sources of evidence, as occasions for solidarity with others that can be understood, perhaps provocatively, as a social good. I develop this point drawing from my own research with Filipino theologians and NGOs to suggest that indebtedness extends not just among people but among people and the wider non-human world, as a means of developing an imaginary of debt as a site not for economic or political exploitation but instead, for solidarity forged in the midst of collective action and experience.

• ‘Binds, Bonds or Bridges’: women working in ‘Religiously-Inspired Charitable Organisations’ (RICOs) and their search for meaning in contemporary China
Hollie Gowan, University of Leeds

In October 2017, the ‘Chinese Dream’ was reiterated at the 19th People’s Congress, as a vision of national rejuvenation and prosperity, with a continued focus on the ‘the people’s ever-growing needs for a better life’ (Xinhua, 2017; Feng, M. 2015). The Core Socialist Values of the Chinese Dream present a certain vision of China at national, societal and citizenship levels (Gow, M., 2017), and this paper seeks to explore how key values within this rhetoric – harmony, happiness, freedom and dedication – are being negotiated by contemporary Chinese women. This will be done through an examination of Religiously-Inspired Charitable Organisations (RICOs) and the unique spaces they are creating for their workforce, who are predominantly female. This paper will explore how women view their lives in relation to 1) self; 2) environment; 3) beliefs/practices; and 4) others, and the possible implications these may have on our understanding on the intersection between gender and religion. In doing so, this paper hopes to present insights into the unique role RICOs will play in the future of the
‘Chinese Dream’; as well as in the dreams of the women working for them as they search for meaning in contemporary China.

**Roundtable: How to do research in the 21st century? Good Practice regulations within the study of religions (PFC/02/013)**

Roundtable organised by Dr George Chryssides and Prof Bettina Schmidt, with Dr Lidia Guzy, Dr James Kapalo, and Dr Suzanne Owen

Since the Association of University Departments of Theology and Religious Studies (AUDTRS) decided to develop a code of conduct for research in our wider area, the research environment has changed dramatically. Social media, emails, Skype and other technological developments has changed the way we interact. It is now possible to research online, while staying at home or in the office. At the same time universities and research councils have imposed increasingly strict procedures for ethical approval of research project. We are proposing to develop a new Code of Conduct that reflects the technological changes but also the realities of doing research within study of religions in the 21st century. This (open) round table will offer a discussion of proposals for a new Code of Conduct that reflects the needs of today’s research environment.

**Proselytizing: Past and Present (PFC/03/006A)**

Chair: Brad Anderson, Dublin City University

- **Left of the Church: Memorialised Activism and the Politics of Greenbelt in 50 Talks**
  Maria Nita, Bath Spa University

  The Greenbelt festival in Kettering UK is a Christian arts and performance festival that began as a small village event in the early 1970s, in the context of the transatlantic festival culture. Greenbelt represents a community of choice for a liberal, left-oriented faction of the Christian Church, a faction that does not feel completely at home in the more conservative Anglican Church. Greenbelt is a home for justice campaigns around the world, women’s leadership, LGBTQ Christians, environmentalism and interfaith dialogue, thus many issues that are either neglected or controversial inside the Church, as an institution. The politics of Greenbelt evidences deeper political divides in UK, which have surfaced more powerfully with the Remainers and Leavers of the Brexit referendum. These are the new lines of division inside the Church. My presentation offers an examination of selected Greenbelt Talks from the past eight years. It discusses the politics of Greenbelt, drawing on my own ethnographic research, which consisted of interviews and participant observation during a longitudinal study of this festival, between 2009 and 2018. I will also explore how this festival displays the memorialised activism of the early festival culture as well as the reasons for this internalisation of the protest experience.

- **John Cennick, 1718-1755: Protean preacher - sharing the vision, mobilizing the margins**
  Robert Cotter, Queen’s University Belfast

  In his tercentenary year I consider his impact on the eighteenth-century Revival. Often overlooked in an age replete with well-known and influential religious figures: George Whitefield, John and Charles Wesley, Count Zinzendorf, he becomes a respected colleague. His journey from failed apprentice to master preacher, is one of dedication and zeal, of self-
discovery and self-realization. It is also one of opportunities seized, of initiation into a movement of religious ferment which stretched from Moravia to Massachusetts, from London to Londonderry. Born in Reading, brought up as an Anglican, he emerges to seek a role in the Revival which his mentors have been nurturing both at the centre and on the margins. In the sprawling metropolis of London myriad religious groups from the continent pass through, seeking passage to the New World. Prominent among these earnest new arrivals are those later known as Moravians, catalysts of Revival, role models for Methodists, disciples of Count Zinzendorf. Cennick learns from all, reaches out to all, making his mark amongst the new industrial proletariat around Bristol, as well as the urban Irish in Dublin, galvanising the rural Irish in County Antrim and adjacent counties.

**The Appropriation of Information and Communication Technologies by the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church**
Steve Knowles, University of Chester

Little is known about the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church outside the confines of their tightly bounded connexional communities which are subject to a strictly held principle of separation. Information that does tend to filter out is usually negative in nature and found in the form of ex-members’ experiences or focussed upon what is thought to generate good copy for journalists: usually that deemed to be controversial in nature. Probably one of the more well-known, yet little understood, aspects of the Brethren is their caution regarding the use of new information and communications technologies (ICTs). This paper first considers the key theological reasons for Brethren antipathy toward ICTs—the roots for the rejection of technology—before examining why there has been a seeming change of attitude toward it. I argue that the adoption and adaptation of technology, despite claims by critics that such an endorsement of ICTs is contrary to Brethren teaching, has been necessary and fundamental to maintaining the integrity of the core belief in separation from the world: to be ‘in the world but not of it’ as one member put it to me.

**Charisma and Controversy: Benjamin Keach (1640-1704) and the Debate About Congregational Song**
Matthew Stanton, Queen’s University Belfast

In considering the boundaries between religious communities and the distinctions therein drawn between the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’, the scholar must engage with the complexity of symbolic divides associated with identity, belief and belonging. These realities become most evident with regards to the public worship of a congregation. The weight of Christian theology is found not only on its doctrinal content but on the mode of its deliverance. One such mode which divided and isolated religious groups throughout much of the seventeenth-century was public singing. The content and performance of song in public worship was a major dividing factor and identifier within religious groups. The appropriation of hymns, for example, gave way to a lengthy debate amongst Particular Baptists in the 1690s. The hymn-singing controversy entered the forefront of Baptist church worship with the works and labours of Baptist pastor and theologian Benjamin Keach (1640-1704). Keach not only introduced hymn-singing at his own church in Horselydown, but also wrote extensively on the nature of Christian worship with regards to the duty of singing. This paper will look at the polemic debate over congregational song with a particular focus on Keach’s position for hymn-singing.
Panels 5: Tuesday 4 September, 15.15-17.15

Unbelief Across Borders (PFC/02/026)

Chair: Chris Cotter, University of Edinburgh

In recent years, scholars have highlighted the need to understand religious ‘unbelief’, nonreligion and secularity in settings beyond the boundaries of the region that generated these concepts and discourses, namely, the West. Yet there is also a wider need to understand how ‘unbelieves’ and experiences of ‘unbelieving’ are regionally contingent, within the West as well as beyond. Atheism, and other forms of so-called unbelief in the West itself vary intra-nationally by region, as well as by country. As noted in the call for papers for this conference, the negotiation between different religious lifeworlds, worldviews, constructs and dogmas takes place across perceived borders, whether real or imagined. Thus, the content, style and social experience of ‘unbelieving’ is likely to vary according to context. It might vary, for example, according to the prevalence and prominence of inherited systems of supernatural belief in the local context, which might impact the integrity of the ‘sacred canopy’; or according to the nature of the local religious tradition(s) (whether Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox Christian; Sunni or Shi’a Muslim, or combination of traditions, etc.). The social experience of being an atheist or agnostic in rural Poland (with a relatively homogeneous and politicised Catholic culture) is likely to be different to that in Poland’s urban centres, as well as from an unbeliever in, say, the Netherlands (with its mixed, Catholic-Protestant heritage, advanced secularisation, history of pillarization etc.). This double panel explores the regional contingencies of being and articulating ‘unbelief’ of various kinds. It also investigates the potential of comparative approaches to generate new knowledge and (much needed) new theory in the study of unbelief, nonreligion and secularity, and provides an opportunity to explore the limits and margins, centres and peripheries of ‘unbelief’ in comparative local and international perspective.

- Approaching ‘Unbelief’ beyond the city in Scotland and Northern Ireland
  Chris Cotter, University of Edinburgh

Scotland and Northern Ireland are constituent regions of the UK that are closely linked by centuries of migration across the North Channel; by problematic entanglements between various forms of Christianity and the state; and by their peripheral position in relation to the locus of UK power. This marginalized position is reflected in the sociological study of religion with many ‘assuming that ‘British society’ is a meaningful and cohesive unity, when, strictly speaking, it has never been that’ (McCrone 2017). Each polity is distinct and multifaceted, yet their historical, social, cultural and religious links, and their shared ‘Celtic fringe’ status, combine to build a strong case for treating them as fruitful sites for the comparative study of ‘unbelief’ — ‘used in a wide sense, implying a generalized lack of belief in a God or gods’ (Lee and Bullivant 2016). In this paper, I introduce my current project which conceptualizes ‘unbelief’ as both discursive and political and includes fieldwork in four sites: a village and provincial town in each region. I will focus upon the methodological hurdles involved in approaching ‘unbelief’ beyond metropolitan centres and argue that contestations surrounding ‘sacred’ values (Knott 2013) can be productive sites for the empirical study of ‘un/belief’.
• Understanding the intra-regionality of children’s unbeliefs
Anna Sthrhan and Rachael Shillitoe, University of York

This paper presents preliminary findings from an ethnographic project exploring how, when, where, and with whom children learn to be unbelieving, and how they experience and work out their unbeliefs across everyday school and family life. Drawing on comparative fieldwork across three contrasting geographical ‘microclimates’ of religion and nonreligion in the UK, our project explores the everyday lived realities of children’s unbelief, and how these are experienced, performed and negotiated across different geographical settings. Our paper will focus particular attention on the extent to which regional contingencies shape children’s unbeliefs, values, and worldviews across the project’s three field sites located in urban, suburban and rural areas of the south west, north and north-west of England. Reflecting on the relative clustering of religious and nonreligious groups in these contrasting parts of UK while also attentive to the significance of gender, social class, and ethnicity in these locations, this paper will consider how these intraregional differences distinctively contribute to children’s formation as unbelieving.

• Between belief and unbelief: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the lived experiences of five British Hindus
James Murphy, Canterbury Christ Church University

This study examines the relationship between the religious experiences and existential meaning systems of five British Hindus. Semi-structured interviews with the participants were analyzed inductively and iteratively using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to produce a rich and idiographic understanding of their beliefs and experiences. The participants’ accounts suggested that they neither fully believed nor disbelieved in many aspects of the religious tradition with which they continued to identify. They described complex entanglements of personal beliefs, practices and unbeliefs that were inclusive but had a distinctly Hindu influence. Their existential beliefs were primarily agnostic and subjectivist. The participants were comfortable with their lack of certainty about transcendental questions and their lives had an anthropocentric focus that emphasized living a good life in this world. By exploring the lived experience of a group that exists on the boundary of belief and unbelief, and that has previously received insufficient attention from psychologists of religion and scholars of secularization, this study demonstrates the complexity of lived (non)religious experience and practice. It supports the utility of Lee’s conceptual framework of overlapping ‘existential cultures’ and provides a reminder of the problematic nature of labels when studying (non)religion and culture.

• Moralised Unbelief in Contemporary Dublin
Hugh Turpin, Queen’s University Belfast

This paper will draw on a nationally representative survey of baptised Catholics and a year-long period of fieldwork in two Dublin parishes to describe contemporary Irish ex-Catholicism, focussing in particular on its moral dimension. Free-list data generated as part of the survey demonstrated that for ex-Catholics, the Catholic Church is primarily associated with basic immorality and unpalatable conservativism. Ethnographic fieldwork and interviews suggested that this moral stance is best understood as a reaction to the intertwining forces of religious scandal, the institutional Church’s residual influence in certain key areas, and ‘cultural Catholicism’, a ‘passive’ and ‘complicit’ force perceived to perpetuate this influence. For some ex-Catholics, cultural Catholics – those who do not hold to Catholic dogmas in any form but
who retain a Catholic affiliation - are thus people who ought to be ‘woken’ into disaffiliation so that the project of full institutional secularisation can be more swiftly achieved. This ambition, however, is complicated by the existence of unbelieving cultural Catholic micro-cultures predicated on an ethic of harmony which prioritises local bonds while privatising personal unbelief. The presentation will examine the tensions between these two stances and the particular inflection they lend unbelief in a contemporary Irish context.

• Reaching for a New Sense of Connection? The Diversity of Unbelief in Northern and Central Europe — An Early Analysis
David Herbert and Josh Bullock, University of Kingston, London

Surveys shows that unbelievers have a distinctive profile compared to the general population on several indicators related to sociality, collective identity and cultural transmission. For example, they tend to rank family as less important, to identify less with people for whom tradition is important, and to be less willing to fight for their country; but more likely to rate friendship as very important. This evidence suggests a distinctive, less (or differently) embedded, sociality, and lower social conformity, compared to believers.

This paper presents early analysis from our Templeton funded Understanding Unbelief project. Reaching for a New Sense of Connection contributes to mapping the diversity of unbelief in Northern and Central Europe by using survey, social media and interview data across six countries (UK, Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Norway, and Romania). These countries offer diverse (non-) religious backgrounds including post-Communist societies, (eastern Germany, Poland, Romania), environments with strong pressures to religious conformity, (both in the majority culture and minority subcultures); in strong welfare state environments and in less secure contexts; in mixed Christian heritage environments, and with different majority religious heritages (Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox). The sample includes environments which have experienced rapid (Netherlands) and gradual (UK) secularization, in cosmopolitan and parochial environments (big cities and small towns), and in environments that have high and low levels of unbelief.

Religion and Popular Culture (PFC/02/011)

Chair: Vivian Asimos, Durham University

Popular Culture and Religion are frequently considered as completely separate elements of life with a strong boundary between them. One is considered play, while the other serious; one profane, the other sacred; one material, the other spiritual. But research into the connections between religion and popular culture has revealed that the boundary separating religion from popular culture is much more amorphous, and perhaps not even in existence. Beyond this, researchers often find themselves in a middle ground where typically a boundary exists. Experience of the field does not end at the finalization of fieldwork, as we are constantly surrounded by the source of our research. This strange placement of the researcher in the field sometimes calls essential elements of academic research to question. The Religion and Popular Culture Panel seeks to address the multitude of experiences of the researchers of popular culture: from their research itself which exploring the boundaries between these two experiences, to their own placement on the boundaries of the source and communities they study.
• Post-lineage yoga: adventures in social media engagement
Theodora Wildcroft, The Open University

The positionality of the researcher has long been of debate. Within ethnographic research into cultural practices, a world of nuance arises in the possible relationships of researcher and researched. We are engaged in complex processes of reconciliation between the under-represented communities whose stories we aim to tell (Shaw 1999: 108; Orsi 2013: 5), and the power an academic position confers to “define reality for others” (Hufford 1999: 298). The resulting implications for the researcher are further complicated and enriched when public interest in our work is mediated in online environments. As scholars we are often ill-equipped to ride fast-moving flows of misinformation and meme, rumour and trolling.

Towards the end of my doctoral research, an academic term from my thesis became caught up in the increasingly heated spaces of yoga-related social media. In this paper, I step back from the situation to share a snapshot of what happens when academics go viral, and to deconstruct the little-understood processes of subcultural evolution at work. I ask: what can we learn from these encounters about the nature of boundaries between scholar and practitioner, researcher and researched, professional and personal, in the online environment?

• The Story of My Elf Gelf: My Dividual Research-Self
Lucinda Murphy, Durham University

At the heart of the concept and praxis of ‘social science’ is the perennial dance across the tightrope dividing the respective endeavours of science and art. A perplexed phenomenological preoccupation over how objective knowledge of the Other might be constituted has for some time now challenged and complicated the very epistemological foundations upon which any such science must rest (Davies 2008). This undoubtedly came to a head in the twists and ‘turns’ of the 1970s/80s paradigm wars; the postmodern victors of which seemed to reach something of a stalemate solution in their declaration of defeat over the epistemological boundary, succeeding only in submerging their fragmented ‘selves’ behind an arguably even more tantalisingly frustrating veil of reflexive subjectivities and corresponding fixations over textual form (Clifford & Marcus 1986). Taking its cue from more recent trends calling attention to the dynamic and interactive performativity of the research process itself (Denzin & Lincoln 2018; Castañeda 2006), this paper will discuss my experiences of performing and integrating the story of My Elf Gelf into my own fieldwork investigating emotion, memory, identity and meaning-making in the context of contemporary British Christmas traditions. Exploring her mediation of and through a complex multi-sited terrain of inter-related ‘webs of significance’ (Marcus 1998; 2007; Geertz 1973), I will draw upon the concept of dividual personhood (Marriott 1976) to consider the multiple ways in which this publically engaged elf shaped ‘meta-commentary’ (Geertz 1973; Leavy 2015) has come to evoke ‘the field’, and indeed the academy, beyond its traditionally bounded limits.

• The Slender Man’s Face: the religious foundation of an online mythology
Vivian Asimos, Durham University

In 2009, the forums on the comedy website Something Awful gave birth to a new online-based mythology centred on a strange horrific creature known as the Slender Man. The mythos began with one user’s images which was honoured with continual communally re-creation in multiple other forum posts, which subsequently spread over the next several years to include
web-videos and even video games. The process of communal re-creation, essentially to both the birth and continued existence of the mythos, led to an important question of authenticity in the narratives: what made a Slender Man narrative authentic? Was any Slender Man creation an authentic creation? The forum’s response to the question of authenticity was to disregard the possibility of creating a canon in favour of individual creativity and representation. The result was a view of the Slender Man that could be constantly changing and shifting – essentially canonically allowing for each individual narrative to be considered authentic. This decision had a joint result which made the Slender Man become an incredible supernatural figure, with a belief system which mirrored apophatic theology which comes to life with a Western understanding of the esoteric Buddhist concept of Tulips. The reliance on religious literacy and understanding allowed for every created narrative to be automatically considered authentic, and paved the way for the mythos’s continual existence in the digital environment.

- **Identifying with the Gorgon: Medusa’s Hair and Black Female Identity**
  Gina Bevan, Cardiff University

  This paper shall focus on the ambivalent classical figure Medusa and her adoption by African American and Afro-British artists as a symbol of their black female identity. Black women have often felt alienated because of their hair which does not adhere to western beauty standards. For poets such as Dorothea Smartt, the Gorgon’s hair, which is so similar in appearance to dreadlocks, is a representation of black female experience.

  The alignment of the black female with the Gorgon as an empowering figure is almost ubiquitous in popular culture and can be found in the poetry of Colleen McElroy (1976), the art of Diamond Antoinette Stingily and even the pop star Rihanna who features as the Gorgon in a provocative image on the front cover of GQ magazine (2013). Through a comparative study of Medusa in Ovid’s Metamorphoses and in popular culture, I argue that Medusa, as a beheaded rape victim in the ancient text, represents the silenced black woman yet her potent snake-hair is a symbol of pride and black female identity in the modern day. Stepping away from Sigmund Freud’s Gorgon and adhering more to the work of the French feminist Hélène Cixous, this Medusa is a subversive figure.

**Spatial Contestations 1 (PFC/02/013)**

Chair: Alexandra Grieser, Trinity College Dublin

- **Boundless Community: Daesh’s Caliphate at the Intersection of the Actual and the Virtual**
  Miriam M. Müller, Hamburg Institute for Social Research

  Over the past decades, feelings of marginalization, or merely disorientation, among Muslims in the Western world have fueled the identification with Daesh’s “virtual umma 2.0.” A modification of the Muslim ummah, as it had emerged in reaction to foreign rule of Muslim lands and the formation of modern nation states in the Middle East, the “virtual ummah 2.0” is both a political and a religious community. Consequently, it serves as a mediator of a transnational, collective identity, defying not only time but especially place and providing “feeling of belonging” at the intersection of the virtual and the actual.

  This paper firstly introduces the two “waves of its virtualization” of the concept of the Muslim ummah in the 19th and 21st century to illuminate their relationship with the revolutionary agenda of the godfathers of global Jihādī-Salafism. Secondly, and building on these findings,
the role of the “virtual ummah 2.0” as a spatially independent community for the territorial, expansionist project of Daesh’s Caliphate is explored along the demarcation line of its actual and virtual inside/outside. In conclusion, the successful merger of a “virtual and digital ummah 2.0” and “traditional ummah” is identified as one of Daesh’s most powerful sources of internal and external identity formation to unify its highly heterogeneous membership and mobilize diverse local constituencies across a vast territory – a necessary precondition not only to acquire and consolidate both social and territorial control within the borders of its self-declared Caliphate, but also to potentially survive the current loss of its actual territory in Iraq and Syria.

- **The Soundscape of War and Displacement in Northern Uganda**
  Rosalind I.J. Hackett

The emerging fields of sound studies and sensory history have led to new research on the sounds of war, past and present, in a range of historical and geographic contexts. Using listening as a methodology can give us access to the ways in which people “infuse the aural environment with meaning” (Kutzler 2104). Sonic cues and memories can activate myths and beliefs about spiritual agency and shape behavioral response. Using the recent (1986-2006) war in northern Uganda between the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Ugandan government as a case study, and accounts of survivors, I investigate memories of the war through sound and silence. I discuss how the Acholi made tactical use of vocal sounds as resistance and listening as survival, drawing on local knowledge to avoid (nocturnal) attacks or abduction by rebel or government soldiers, whether in their homesteads or IDP camps. I consider how the sounds of war delineated and disrupted communities. Even in the post-war context, sounds perceived as emanating from improper burial sites sustain a climate of (spiritual) insecurity and interfere with urban development. Scholars of religion and culture in Africa would be well served to be more attentive to the interplay of aurality and spatiality in any number of settings.

- **Changing the Border: what ‘might have been’ in the 1920s**
  Malcolm P.A. Macourt

The physical border between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland has played a crucial part in relationships across the island, in the current Brexit negotiations its place in international relations has become even more important.

Under the Anglo-Irish Treaty (1921) a Boundary Commission was established which sought to revise the border, its final report involved significant areas (with 40,000 population) being moved from one jurisdiction to the other. With the agreement of all sides, the major source of data was the answers to the question on religion in the 1911 Census, although only summary data by townland was made available to the Commission (Hand 1969, Macardle 1937).

Focussing on areas to be transferred from the Free State to the North, this paper uses 1911 Census forms to make detailed examination of the population concerned. It addresses the outcomes of the Commission’s work and its attempts to make the border more acceptable to those living on either side of it.

[At the very last moment the nominee of the Free State Government was persuaded to withdraw from the Commission: so the Commission could not produce a unanimous report and therefore its (draft) report remained secret for over 40 years.]
Dethrone & Rewrite: Authoritarianism, Border Security, and Spiritual Warfare
S. Jonathon O’Donnell, University College Dublin

Over eighty percent of white evangelicals voted for Donald Trump, but amongst the most fervent evangelical early adopters of his platform were neo-charismatics. Drawing on a cross-section of public materials (books, blog posts, sermons) published during and since the 2016 election campaign, the paper traces intersections between Trump’s “America First” emphasis on national sovereignty and security and neo-charismatic concepts of “spiritual warfare,” which envision the world as a site of unseen struggle between good and evil, angels and demons, over hegemonic perceptions of reality. It unpacks how Trump’s attempts to define the borders of “Real America” by asserting truth-claims over reality and undermining his opponents’ reflect and reinforce neo-charismatic spiritual warfare practices, which deploy discourses of (divine) truth and (demonic) lies to delineate spatial boundaries and stake sovereignty claims over the nature of the world, expropriating and reinscribing the archives of those spaces. In doing so, this paper elucidates some of the dynamics of religion and politics in Trump’s America.

Gurdjieff and the Work: Peripheral or Central to the Study of Religion/s? (PFC/03/006A)

Chair: Steven Sutcliffe, University of Edinburgh

This panel presents four fresh papers from the new wave of academic studies of Gurdjieff, his collaborators and descendents. Each contribution focuses on a specific aspect intrinsically interesting in itself but which also addresses a core issue or debate in the Study of Religion/s. The aim of the panel is therefore to continue to develop the academic study of Gurdjieff and the Work in close connection with larger theoretical and methodological questions, so that the study of a ‘new religion’ or ‘new religious movement’ like the Gurdjieff phenomenon can be seen to generate questions of theoretical importance for the comparative study of religion/s more widely.

The Fourth Way and the Internet: Esotericism, Secrecy, and Hiddenness in Plain Sight
Carole M. Cusack, University of Sydney

G. I. Gurdjieff and his principal pupils P. D. Ouspensky, John G. Bennett, and Jeanne de Salzmann wished the Fourth Way (or the Work) to remain esoteric or hidden from sight, and thus their mode of instruction was in the form of an oral tradition, passed from teacher to pupil, in classroom environments. For them, becoming exoteric or popular was not only undesired but undesirable. I argue that this intimate, initiatory teacher-pupil relationship and oral tradition was under threat from the beginning, as Ouspensky (and others) made notes of Gurdjieff’s lectures and question and answer sessions, which were supplemented by choreographies for Movements and the musical scores of Thomas de Hartmann. Journalists also chronicled Gurdjieff’s career from the start. Gurdjieff later approved the publication of Ouspensky’s posthumous In Search of the Miraculous: Fragments of an Unknown Teaching (1949), which became the “go-to” text for seekers interested in the Work. Gurdjieff’s own texts were published, Peter Brook’s Meetings With Remarkable Men (1979) was well-received in non-Work circles, and the internet proved a game-changer. The fate of the Work online is not unique; in the three decades since the Web debuted, “secret” teachings of many religions (prominent examples being Scientology and Mormonism) and esoteric spiritual teachings have been “published” online, becoming effectively public and available to any interested
person. This paper investigates the impact on initiatory groups of the free provision of information and spiritual services online.

• **Gurdjieff as a ‘Western Guru’: the role of the Memoir in the maintenance of Charismatic Authority**  
  Steven J. Sutcliffe, University of Edinburgh

Andrew Rawlinson (1997) presents a pioneering model of the ‘western guru’ as a figure of authority based in a prototype derived from ‘eastern’ religions and translated for ‘western’ audiences. By including a substantial section on Gurdjieff and his associates, Rawlinson’s study was amongst the first to locate Gurdjieff as an example of a wider phenomenon or type, rather than constituting a sui generis genealogy. In this paper I extend Rawlinson’s account by exploring the construction of the authority of Gurdjieff as a ‘western guru’ through the large sub-field of memoirs and recollections of Gurdjieff which have engaged in an ongoing process of mediating and disseminating his charismatic authority. I suggest that these memoirs are ‘devotional’ texts designed as substitutes for the experience of personal contact with the guru, thus promising continuing access to his presence. The representation of this presence via memoir and recollection supports the ‘myth’ of Gurdjieff (Moore 1991) and may play a comparative role in extending the authority of other ‘western gurus’.

• **The Influence of Gurdjieff on Samael Aun Weor and the Universal Gnostic Movement**  
  David Robertson, The Open University

Samael Aun Weor’s Universal Gnostic Movement is a numerically significant but under-researched South American 20th century religious movement. Though its connection to the Ordo Templi Orientis is well established, the influence of Gurdjieff’s teachings are much less so. This paper will sketch out this influence, drawing on recent fieldwork, PierLuigi Zoccatelli’s historical work and Johanna Petsche’s work on the sexual component in Gurdjieffian teaching. This significantly broadens our understanding of Gurdjieff’s influence on the history of New Religions, particularly outside of the sanctioned ‘official’ lineage.

• **A most unexpected discovery: the new Maurice Nicoll Archive at Edinburgh University**  
  John P. Willmett, University of Edinburgh

During my time researching the life and work of Maurice Nicoll (1884-1953), the friend and pupil of P. D. Ouspensky, a large cache of original papers by Nicoll was discovered in the home in London of Camilla Connell, the daughter of Nicoll’s second biographer, Sam Copely. These papers came to light because I had given a talk about Nicoll, a rare enough event, which was attended by members of the Scottish branch of the International Gurdjieff Society, and they introduced me to the then current custodians. These papers have now been secured for Edinburgh University Library. The find turned out to contain: the ‘manuscript’ copies of most of Nicoll’s published works; records of meetings of Nicoll’s groups such as at found in his Psychological Commentaries, but stretching back far farther than those noted in that work; miscellaneous essays and notes; but most intriguingly a series of diaries, stretching from 1913-1922, and then from 1939 to 1953. These diaries, however, are not ordinary diaries, but specifically labelled 'Dream Diaries'. They offer a vivid and intimate view into Nicoll’s inner life in the two periods concerned. My paper will survey the general state of archival sources for Nicoll’s work; I shall describe this latest find in more detail; I shall finish by discussing one or two specific entries in the Dream Diaries to show how progress might be made in illuminating Nicoll’s personal dealings with those around him in the early 1920s when he was
leaving behind Jung's Analytical Psychology movement, the English section of which it had been expected he would lead, and finding his way to Gurdjieff.
Panels 6: Wednesday 5 September, 09.00-10.30

The Insider-Outsider Debate: Theory, Practice and New Directions (PFC/02/026)

Chair: Stephen Gregg, University of Wolverhampton

This panel builds on a recent project, presently in press with Equinox, which aims to extend Religious Studies discourse on Insider/Outsider issues beyond traditional binary paradigms of belonging/non-belonging. Using as its starting point a relational-continuum model of religious identity and belonging, rather than binary notions, the panel aims to explore three related issues: (1) A reflection on the history of the emic/etic distinction and its lessons for the Study of Religion/s, focusing on the debate between linguist Kenneth Pike and anthropologist Marvin Harris in 1990; (2) A case-study of religious belonging exploring Japanese cultural use of Christian wedding practices and (3) An examination of essentialism in public discourse on religious belonging, and the impact this has on the Academy, which uses examples of abusive, illegal or controversial conduct by religious actors to critique cultural assumptions which position ‘religious’ acts and actors as benign, often in contrast to the complex everyday lived reality of such experiences.

- The Emic/Etic Distinction and its Application in the Study of Religion/s
  Steven Sutcliffe, University of Edinburgh

  J. Z. Smith argued in 2001 that ‘the cognitive power of any translation, model, map, generalization or redescription – as for example in the imagination of ‘religion’ – is, by this understanding, a result of its difference from the subject matter in question and not its congruence’. I will argue that an approach to the study of religion/s which generates both ‘emic’ and ‘etic’ knowledge – which are precisely ‘different’ rather than ‘congruent’ - constitutes a theoretically stronger research tool than continuing to employ the unhelpfully ontologised and spatialized tropes of ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’. I will argue that the emic/etic distinction can yield more transparent knowledge about the status of religious representations, due to its broadly cognitive and specifically epistemic status in spotlighting the how rather than the by whom of the object of knowledge. I will provide brief examples which operationalise this distinction from my own research.

- Insiders or outsiders? A case study of Christian Japanese weddings
  George Chryssides, York St John University

  The aim of this case study is to explore the boundaries between “insider” and “outsider” positioning, drawing on the recent work that Stephen Gregg and I have done on the Insider/Outsider debate. From the 1990s, the popularity of Christian-style weddings has increased markedly in Japan, overtaking traditional Shinto wedding ceremonies in uptake. Dedicated chapels have been built throughout Japan, simulating traditional Christian – mainly Protestant – churches in design, and are used exclusively for the conduct of such weddings. The wedding ceremony follows the traditional rite, as defined in the Book of Common Prayer, and is conducted by a fully robed officiant; hence it is visually and aurally indistinguishable from an authentic Christian ceremony. Because practising Christians only account for between 1% and 1.5% of Japan’s population, there are insufficient accredited Christian clergy to officiate, and hence officiants include men (not women) who have obtained spurious online accreditation, or simply people such as hotel staff who are able to read the service fluently
and confidently. The phenomenon raises the question of the extent to which participants in these weddings are in any sense “insiders” of the Christian faith. We have previously argued that the categories of “insider” and “outsider” are not binaries, but that exists a complex pattern of commitment and lack of commitment to forms of religious life. The presentation argues that the categories of “insider” and “outsider” as spatial metaphors which, as such, have limitations. Such categories operate as Weberian “ideal types”, even given the more complex model of insider/outsider status that Gregg and I have devised, and hence themselves encounter boundaries in their applicability, as exemplified in this case study.

- **Nasty Religion: Transgressive Actions and Unsettling Belonging in Lived Religion**
  Stephen E. Gregg, University of Wolverhampton

This paper aims to examine troubling and upsetting (and often illegal) actions by religious actors within a Lived/Everyday Religion paradigm. In so doing, I wish to highlight the problematic essentialism of public discourse on religion and the impact this has upon scholarly paradigms of religious belonging and identity. Focusing on two particular strands – ‘inappropriate’ touch by religious actors, and political/community discourse on religious violence - I will argue that such actions must be seen as legitimate forms of religious conduct, rather than being ‘explained away’ theologically as deviant or incomplete reflections of a particular worldview. In so doing, I will link this to relational models of religious identity and belonging, arguing that religious actors are concurrently both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ to varieties of religious identity in diverse settings, often contrastingly so from the viewpoint of scholars and community practitioners. The paper builds on my recent conference papers on public discourse on religion and the impact of this on Religious Studies, utilises new theoretical approaches from Gregg & Chryssides’ Insider/Outsider volume, and explores embodied examples of complex everyday religious practices.

**The Body (PFC/02/011)**

Chair: Theodora Wildcroft, The Open University

- **Crossing multifarious realms by forcing the body: the strenuous austerities of Indian ascetics**
  Daniela Bevilacqua, SOAS, University of London

Tapasvins are called those Indian ascetics who perform particularly strenuous austerities (tapasyā) that cross the limits of human physical resistance (like the ūrdhvabāhu tapasyā in which the ascetic keeps his arm permanently held up, or the khaṛēśvarī tapasyā in which he remains standing up for several years). From the ascetic’s point of view, the practice may have several purposes: to reach a superior control of the body, to obtain special powers, to burn personal karma and, therefore, to avoid rebirth. However, when these practices are publicly shown they acquire further ends: to increase the faith of lay people and their involvement in religious practices, but also to provide ‘welfare for the society’ and support for the “existence” of the world.

Focusing on ethnographic data, in this paper I will analyse some of the austerities most commonly practised by Indian ascetics to show how through them multiple realms are crossed. From one side there is the crossing of the physical realm of the body to reach an over-human-spiritual realm, from the other, the practices cross the limit of the individual gain and reach the realm of the earthly and social world.
• **Porosity, penetration, and possession: Conceptualising possession through the shared embodied schemas of MSM and women**  
Samuel A.G.W. Ward, Queen’s University Belfast

Possession is a belief and practice, in which a supernatural being is believed to enter into the body of an individual, and assume temporary agency over them. Possession is culturally alien to Western notions of bodily autonomy and the “buffered self”, and threatening the boundary between self and other. It has been noted that religions which practice possession have a disproportionate number of female and male homosexual members. A number of hypotheses have been presented as to why this is, the most prominent being that these religions allow marginalised individuals to gain a certain authority through claims of direct communion with supramundane beings. This paper will attempt to articulate a complimentary line of reasoning: that possession, which relies on metaphors of an external agent entering an individual, is easier to conceptualise and take part in if one has experienced the act of being sexually penetrated oneself – spirit possession being reliant upon metaphors of physical, intimate entry into one’s body by an external agent. A number of cognitive scientists have made the argument that bodily metaphors make potentially difficult concepts easier to understand (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003; Slingerland, 2008) including complex magico-religious concepts (Sørensen, 2007), potentially making the experience and perception of possession easier for women and homosexual men to conceptualise, if articulated as a metaphor of physical entry. This paper will examine this hypothesis in the context of practitioners of religion of Vodou in New Orleans, Louisiana – a possession religion that continues to be dominated by MSM and women, despite the relative economic security of the practitioners.

• **Bodies and Boundaries: Touch and the Role of the Researcher**  
Sammy Bishop, University of Edinburgh

The sense of touch can be seen as that which most directly addresses the boundaries between the self and other, inner and outer, one body and another. A focus on touch in anthropological work can highlight themes of identity formation and selfhood, as well as bringing social conventions and norms to the fore. However, the sense of touch also raises a broad range of issues in the area of research methods and ethics. Contemporary Tantra, as part of the holistic milieu, and with its body- and touch-focused practices, provides a fruitful setting for exploring these ideas. How can touch blur the boundaries between insider and outsider, personal and professional, researcher and practitioner – and how can this affect anthropological research methods? Building on the recent interest in the body and senses in contemporary studies of religion, this paper aims to further discuss how touch can play a key role in fieldwork. It will explore the position of the researcher in this context, and how the researcher touching (and being touched by) others can play a productive role in ethnography.
Spatial Contestations 2 (PFC/02/013)

Chair: Gašper Mithans, Science and Research Centre Koper

- ‘The Church is our home’: Middle Eastern Christian Diaspora Narratives on the ‘exclusive’ temporal space of spiritual buildings
  Fiona McCallum, University of St Andrews

  This paper explores the boundary-making role played by places of worship in a diaspora context. A place of worship has both inclusive and exclusive features. By attending and participating, its members ‘belong’ to a specific group with its own identity, rules and processes. Yet simultaneously, an ‘outsider’ can enter the place of worship and observe/participate in activities. In a diaspora context, a place of worship often acts as the hub of the community providing a space to (re-)create familiar sights, sounds and smells of the homeland as well as socializing with group members. This paper uses the case study of Middle Eastern Christians in the UK to explore the extent to which the community church both acts as a boundary-maker between the group and wider society and also defines group identity in relation to religion, ethnicity and nationality. Focus is given to narratives on the role of the church building in creating a sense of belonging and its subsequent effect upon interactions with other societal groups. The data comes from participant observation and interviews conducted in London and Scotland between 2014 and 2015 as part of a collaborative EU-funded project entitled ‘Defining and Identifying Middle Eastern Christian Communities in Europe’.

- No crossing the Irish border: ecclesiastical geography, the Troubles and the 1979 papal visit
  Daithí Ó Corráin, Dublin City University

  The political division of Ireland in 1920 did not occasion ecclesiastical partition. Although the main Christian Churches were obliged to operate in two different political jurisdictions, their confessional frame of reference remained an all-Ireland one. This paper focuses on the case of the Roman Catholic Church. It will contextualise how, as an all-Ireland body, it coped with the political reality of operating on a partitioned island. The onset of the Northern Ireland Troubles heightened that challenge at a time when the Church’s influence was waning. Drawing on new archival material in Dublin and London, the 1979 papal visit and events immediately preceding it (such as the appointment of a new Catholic archbishop of Armagh) are used as a lens to examine how the delicate equilibrium of recognising the Irish border politically but not ecclesiastically was maintained.

- ‘The Absolute Other’ and architecture of inclusive borders
  Krzysztof Nawratek, University of Sheffield

  The existence of the wall (border) separates people, but exactly because of this separation, people are free to engage in different activities. The wall (border) is not a problem, if there are doors and windows (if the border is permeable). The border (wall) could create an inclusive mechanism helping to protect diverse, separated, urban subjects and help them to co-exist and co-operate.

  This paper discusses ontology of contemporary architecture, shaped by the fundamental tension between spatial hierarchy and emancipatory and egalitarian ambitions. This paper discusses a tension between autonomy of a building and never precisely defined, spatial and non-spatial, context. The paper refers to Rudolf Otto’s notion of the numinous in order to
define the context as a continuum between controlled and known architectural situation (particular temporal and spatial moment of existence of a building) and ‘the Absolute Other’. The paper attempts to spatialise Nancy Fraser’s discussion on two axis of injustice in order to define tools to diminish hierarchical and exclusive forces defining spatial relations. It also refers to theological discussion on Usus moderatus (usus facti) in order to investigate an emancipatory position of dependency and weakness.

Marginalized Communities (PFC/03/006A)

Chair: Anna Strhan, University of York

- The Dissolution of Community Boundaries: Changes in the Baha’i Community
  Moojan Momen
  This paper attempts to describe a major change that has occurred in the Baha’i community worldwide in the last two decades. The Universal House of Justice, the elected international governing council of the Baha’i world, describes this change as a “change of culture”. There are several aspects to this change but the one that will be focussed on in this paper is the change in the boundaries of the community. Prior to this change, the Baha’i community was one that had a strong sense of identity and a sharp boundary, within which there was a shared worldview, collective norms, and a hierarchy of values. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the community has been evolving a new “culture”. One of the features of this new culture is a movement towards having a more permeable and “fuzzy” boundary. The world is no longer divided into Baha’i and non-Baha’i but rather there is a nebulous area in between where there exists a “community of interest”, individuals who share elements of the worldview, collective norms and hierarchy of values of the Baha’i community, participate in many of the Baha’i community activities but do not formally identify themselves as Baha’is.

- The Marginality of ‘Irish Mormonism’: Confronting Imagined Boundaries
  Hazel O’Brien, University of Exeter
  This paper explores Irish Mormons’ experiences of their religious identity as a dialectical negotiation between the majority society and their minority religious community. This paper is informed by work which examines the nature of tradition and collective memory in shaping modern religion (Hervieu-Légér 2000, Davie 2000, Sakaranaho 2006, 2015). Building on this previous scholarship, I will argue that as the majority of Mormons in Ireland are white Irish, they view themselves and are viewed by others, as both insiders and outsiders within their own country.

  Research which examines the position of minority religions in Ireland reveals that stigma, stereotyping, and discrimination towards religious minorities is commonplace (Cosgrove 2013), often interacting with concepts of ethnic and national identity (Ugba 2006; Carr 2011; Maguire & Murphy 2012). As most Mormons in Ireland are white Irish, their differences from the majority are not readily apparent.

  I demonstrate that Mormons in Ireland conceal their religious identities to avoid confronting the majority’s assumption that those who are white and Irish in Ireland, are Catholic. Encounters which make visible these borders of belonging are fraught with complexity and force Mormons in Ireland to confront their own understandings of what it means to be Mormon in modern Ireland.
The African Hebrew Israelite Community and the Theology of Marginalisation
Michael T Miller, Liverpool Hope University / University of Chester

The African Hebrew Israelites are an expatriate black American group who have lived in Israel since 1969, when their spiritual leader Ben Ammi received a revelation from the angel Gabriel to take his people back to the Promised Land. Drawing on a long tradition in the black American church that self-identified as the biblical Israelites, the Hebrew Israelites are a doubly or triply marginalised group: having been Americans who were not fully American, they believe themselves to be Judeans, who are not Jews, and in the 40 year struggle with the state of Israel prior to the granting of citizenship they were Israelis who were not Israelis. Crossing the physical and conceptual borders in the search for identity and the right to define themselves, the Hebrews help to demonstrate the inherent theology of marginalisation which has been a part of the construction of both Judaism and early Christianity in competition with hostile majorities. This paper will look at the way the Hebrew Israelites have utilised this narrative of marginalisation in their own quest for identity and self-determination.
Panels 7: Wednesday 5 September, 11.00-12.30

Challenging Definitional Boundaries (PFC/02/026)

Chair: David Robertson, The Open University

- Is it a Cult or is it a Real Religion?
  Eileen Barker, London School of Economics / INFORM

  This paper examines some of the many reasons why the question in the title has been so frequently asked. What are the distinctions underlying the question? How are the various boundaries delineating ‘cult’ and ‘religion’ drawn? How clear, how negotiable, how manipulable are the boundaries? How important are they in communicating and determining patterns of belief and behaviour? Here John Hosper’s distinction between reportive and stipulative definitions will be drawn upon, the former being what the people the scholar of religion actually studies and the latter being those s/he decides to use in his or her research. Also of relevance will be Mary Douglas’ ideas as laid out in both Purity and Danger and Natural Symbols. An argument will be made that the reported boundaries between cult and religion indicate clearly what is, to use Douglas’ definition of ‘dirt’, ‘matter out of place’. It will argue, moreover, that the closer a ‘cult’ is to the questioner’s ‘religion’, the more clearly the boundary will be drawn, and the more fiercely it will be guarded.

- Constructing Borders and Boundaries in Religious Education syllabi: A case against the “world religion” paradigm
  Céline Benoit, Aston University

  In 2015, a series of reports on Religious Education (RE) were published, stating that RE was not fit for purpose anymore, as it failed to “reflect the real religion and belief landscape” of the UK, and instead reproduced one that is imagined by the majority (Dinham and Shaw, 2015). As places for learning, schools can legitimise particular discourses, and contribute to their reproduction. In this paper, I will analyse which particular (re)constructions of religion(s) are (re)produced in daily educational discourses, by attending to both the everyday lived reality of school life, and the policies that are intended to inform such practice. Drawing on data collected in five primary community schools across the West Midlands, the voices of teachers and pupils, traditionally silenced in research, will be foregrounded. I will conclude that religion(s) in RE tend(s) to be constructed as rigid, impermeable monolithic wholes, thus reproducing essentialist hegemonic discourses, and Othering religious communities, and argue that the “world religion” paradigm should be rejected in favour of a more dialogical approach to RE, where children can safely talk about religion(s) and their lived experiences.

- Druidry as a Serious Religion
  Suzanne Owen, Leeds Trinity University

  Druidry has often been subjected to ridicule in mainstream media or maligned as a dangerous cult that once engaged in human sacrifice (Owen & Taira 2015). Such depictions have hampered efforts by Druids to gain public acceptance as a serious or genuine ‘religion’. This paper will discuss whether the charity registration (in England and Wales) of The Druid Network as a religion in 2010 has altered public perceptions of Druidry more widely. Anecdotal evidence from Druids suggests that in the past they had experienced prejudice but have found greater acceptance since 2010. While acknowledging that other factors may have contributed
to this perceived change, this presentation will include initial results of an on-line survey of Druids alongside an analysis of selected mainstream news items about Druidry before and after 2010. To conclude, I will address implications of the notion that for something to be regarded as a religion it must be ‘serious’.

Pilgrimage (PFC/02/011)

Chair: James Kapaló, University College Cork

Pilgrimage routes, as sites of historical and contemporary transnational mobility and encounter across Europe and beyond, are spaces in which borders are crossed or conceptually transcended and simultaneously where the boundaries around identities are re-stated. Largely inspired by the success of the Camino (Way) of Santiago de Compostela, pilgrimage is currently being rediscovered, re-framed and re-presented in several European countries. Pilgrimages encompass formal religious affiliations and practices, as well as local traditions and extra-institutional religiosity that draws from an array of forms of spiritual seeking. There is the ongoing process of ‘heritagisation’ of religion and the cultural impact of the Camino has led to new ‘Caminoised’ pilgrim paths around Europe. Thus, pilgrimage routes and sites in Northern Europe are currently (re-)emerging as multiply framed public spaces capable of accommodating and integrating diverse participants and worldviews. The papers in this panel explore rapidly developing new pilgrimage routes, and associated folklore and narrative traditions, in order to provide insights into their socio-cultural significance. In these restored and ‘re-storied’ spaces, we analyse and detail the narrative formation of routes and sites that manage to translate local pasts, and traditional and historical boundaries, into multi-layered, trans-national heritage.

- Caminoisation and a Tale of Two Pilgrim Routes: St Cuthbert’s Way and The Fife Pilgrim Way
  Marion Bowman, The Open University/ University of Oslo

This paper focuses on two routes with different stories: St Cuthbert’s Way and the Fife Pilgrim Way. Crossing the Scotland/England border, the waymarked St Cuthbert’s Way (established 1996, since 1999 part of the E2 European Long Distance Footpath) since c.2010 has become increasingly popular as a pilgrimage route, attracting growing numbers of UK and international (predominantly Scandinavian) pilgrims. The second route, the Fife Pilgrim Way, launches officially in 2019, the result of multi-agency endeavour, including support from Scottish Pilgrim Routes Forum, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The 113km path has two historically significant starting points (North Queensferry and Culross) and ends in St Andrews, designed with ‘gateways’ to facilitate one day walking pilgrimages. The route leads through both significant religious heritage sites and post-industrial landscapes of the declining coal industry. New ‘Caminoised’ pilgrimage is developing and being instrumentalised against a backdrop of falling institutional religious affiliation, growing cultural and spiritual diversity, the spiritualization of walking, pressing needs for economic regeneration and community building, and (particularly in Scotland) deep discomfort over ‘Brexit’. In this context, pilgrimage has become a vehicle for re-appraising the past and expressing complex new European identities.
• 'One Hundred Kilometres, Hundred Times Hundred Prayers for Estonia': A Pilgrimage Dedicated to Estonia’s 100th Anniversary  
Tiina Sepp, University of Tartu

To mark the 100th anniversary of the Republic of Estonia (on 24 February 2018), a myriad of all kind of events have been organised throughout the year. This paper will look at one of them – the pilgrimage organised by the Estonian Association of Friends of Camino de Santiago. Mainly due to the nearly 50 years of Soviet occupation, Estonia is now considered to be one of the least religious countries in the world. However, pilgrim culture in post-Soviet Estonia is rather lively and ambiguous, characterised by the trend towards Protestant pilgrimage (fuelled by people who have walked the Camino de Santiago in Spain). The Estonian Association of Friends of Camino de Santiago organise annual 3-day pilgrim reunions and pilgrimages, starting on the weekend closest to St James’ Day on July 25. The pilgrimage they organised in July 2018, however, lasted 6 days and was called 'Estonia 100 Pilgrimage. One hundred kilometres, hundred times hundred prayers for Estonia'. Drawing on interviews with the pilgrims as well as organisers, and looking at various aspects of vernacular culture and religion that are involved in the renegotiation of pilgrimage, I will try to find out how this particular pilgrimage was different from the other pilgrimages organised by the Estonian Association of friends of Camino de Santiago. I will also look into the evangelical ‘conversion’ of pilgrimage, where pilgrimage is used as a bridge between the Church and people.

• Goddesses, Saints and Fairies: Re-Storying and Symbolic Boundaries of Ireland’s Sacred Landscapes  
Jenny Butler, University College Cork

New forms of pilgrimage are on the rise in Ireland, often focusing on the same landscapes that were deemed special in the past. While some stories of sites’ sacredness are re-told, such as those of early Irish literature, new stories and ideas have been attributed more recently. Focusing on the utilisation of two sites–Croagh Patrick Mountain in County Mayo and Brigid’s Way in County Kildare–symbolic boundaries between different religious worldviews are explored. Croagh Patrick, ‘the holiest mountain in Ireland’, and site of a traditional Roman Catholic pilgrimage annually on the last Sunday in July likely was Pagan in origin as a celebration of Lughnasadh (Harvest festival). Associations with the mythic Christianisation of Ireland has resulted in contested claims on the mountain by contemporary Christians and Pagans. Brigid’s Way, a nine-day pilgrimage from Brigid’s well near Dundalk and ending in Kildare, focuses on the Brigid figure, which as ancient goddess or Christianised saint holds different significances for Celtic Christians, contemporary Pagans, and others. The landscape associated with Brigid has particularised meanings, some of which are shared across different groups and create an integrative religious framework, and others which are unique to certain groups’ expressive traditions. This paper explores the construction and maintenance of boundaries of worldview and tradition by way of an examination of these areas of landscape and their associated pilgrimages and sacred status.
Religions are not monolithic constructions with the same features and structures throughout their geographic and temporal reaches. Nonetheless, occasional major shifts can bring about seismic change, be that from polytheism to monotheism during the early Medieval Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England and Scandinavia, or the rejection of centralised authority inherent in modern constructions of Germanic mythology and paganism. Typically these changes are slow and unidirectional, occurring when “one religion” replaces another, and rarely do scholars have the opportunity to observe the same changes in reverse. This session aims to bring together historians and sociologists of religion working on two related but distinct fields – late Germanic pre-Christian religions and modern (re)constructions of those paganisms – to discuss their research on liminal religions. We hope that the partially-shared empirical roots of these fields, together with the liminal position of these religions between more mainstream paganism and Christianity, will allow for fruitful discussion of long-term and large-scale changes in religion in North-Western Europe, including the (de)centralisation of authority and the (de)construction of ethnocentric identities.

- **From Beheaded Bulls to Broken Bread: Changing Forms of Anglo-Saxon Sacrifice**
  Luke John Murphy, University of Leicester

  Due to the lack of detailed written accounts of Anglo-Saxon pagan praxis, the study of sacrifice in Anglo-Saxon England has to date largely been the province of archaeologists. This has led to little explicit consideration of the commonalities and continuities between pre-Christian sacrifice and the Christian Eucharist, one of the primary sacraments of the medieval Catholic church, and traditionally the domain of historians and theologians. This paper draws on a combination of comparative archaeological, textual, and philological evidence to bridge this temporal and disciplinary gap, comparing and contrasting Anglo-Saxon constructions of sacrifice both before and after the twin missions of the Irish and Roman churches in the seventh century. It argues that the early Christian sacrament of the Eucharist was explicitly presented as a form of sacrifice during the Christianisation of Anglo-Saxon England, and thus contributed to the construction of a distinct articulation of “Germanic Christianity”, allowing missionaries to gently ease the Anglo-Saxons into the wider world of Christian Europe.

- **True to Tradition: Ideological Continuity in a Time of Change During the Conversion of Pagan Iceland**
  Liv Aurdal, University of Iceland

  Current historical writings date the Christianisation of pagan Iceland to 999/1000 AD, a claim largely based on information found within the narratives of younger Icelandic medieval writings. This paper seeks to challenge this preconception and rather underline how this stage in history is a phase of adaptation and continuity. With the arrival of Christianity in the late 10th century a vast number of church buildings was erected across Iceland. This claim is accepted by both historians and archaeologists alike. However, what is not agreed upon is what function these earliest church buildings had and how we are to understand this ideological and religious space in their own time. This paper aims to underline the Icelandic social context, rooted in tradition and a shared cultural Norse memory that existed during the time of conversion in the late 10th and 11th century. It seeks to present the religious and ideological structures which existed in younger Iron- and Viking Age Scandinavia and Iceland, as they are expressed archaeologically. With this backdrop, a closer look at the archaeology
of the area of Skagafjörður in northern Iceland will exemplify this time of transition amongst
the Icelanders. As a result, this analysis will argue for a strong sense of ideological continuity
in a time of religious conversion from a pagan past towards a Christian future.

- **Tropic Thunder: Germanic neo-paganism in a new global context**
  Ross Downing, University of Gothenburg

Ethnographic and sociological fieldwork on Contemporary Pagan movements have been
contextualised by the discourse of Völkisch ideology inherent in their affinity with claimed
heritage. Studies of Germanic neopaganism have focussed on European and Anglosphere
cases, thereby reproducing similar data. My ongoing research analyzes emerging Heathen
communities in new geographic and ethno-cultural contexts such as Israel, Tunisia, Azerbaijan, Central and South America. By examining material culture, social narratives and
ritual structure, I highlight the challenges, innovations, and worldviews unique to these hot-
climate Heathens who associate with Nordic mythology. Using religious market theory it is
argued that globalisation, commodification, and mediatisation are triggering these new
demographics which contribute both consumers and producers of religious content. Due to
growing investment from these new sources, the language of ethnic ancestry within the
international Heathen community is increasingly irrelevant.

**Postmodernism and Religion (PFC/03/006A)**

Chair: Paul-François Tremlett, The Open University

Postmodernism remains a much maligned and arguably misunderstood body of theory, composed of
competing currents from the textualism of Derrida, the vitalism of Deleuze to the ironics
of Baudrillard. In this panel we offer less a history of postmodern entanglements in Religious Studies than critical
demonstrations of postmodern currents and their ability to pose new questions to the field.

- **Dividual religioning beyond nature-supernature dualism**
  Graham Harvey, The Open University

Inspired by new materialist currents, in this presentation I use a new experimental animist
ritual complex (the Bear Feast) to explore the performance of relationality and thus of persons
in the world. The argument is not that participants in this group are unique but that they
exemplify tendencies that underlie Bruno Latour’s assertion that “we have never been
modern”. This arose from asking some challenging questions about the nature of persons and
of the world. Impacted by studies of Amazonian and other Indigenous ontologies, Latour
strengthened his argument (arising from Science Studies) that “nature” and “culture” — and,
equally, “matter” and “actants” — do not refer to opposites but to hybrids. If “we” (putative,
committed or recovering Moderns) act as if objects and other non-humans animate our lives,
perhaps we are more “dividual” than “individual” after all. Marilyn Strathern employed
“dividual” provocatively to contrast a Western project of individuation with a Melanesian
practice of relationality. Questions raised more recently have been to do with re-viewing
“Moderns”, including those who do religion, as similarly relational.
• **Sovereignties and disruptions: Deleuze and religious change**  
  Paul-François Tremlett, The Open University

The objective of this paper is to mark a break from theories of secularization and their variants on the one hand, and theories of lived religion on the other, neither of which – it is argued – offer a realistic account of religious and social change. Both privilege the ideational as proper realm of change and as the means of measuring change, on the one hand by calculating the failure in transmission of institutional religious beliefs and on the other, by demonstrating the improvised nature of beliefs, constructed from a variety of hybrid sources. In this paper, I approach religious and social change by applying Deleuze and Guattari’s interests in assemblages. I begin by identifying four Filipino assemblages: the church-plaza assemblage, the platform-church assemblage, the Banahaw assemblage and the indigeneity assemblage. The suggestion is that each of these assemblages is a transformation of the other, and that, as instances of social and religious change, they point not to the presence of any agentive, human thinking subject but to other, distributed forms of cognition and agency. In short, Deleuze and Guattari enable an account of religious and social change that dispenses with the human subject and engages fully with the non-human.

• **The social significance of the postmodern self: where lies the power?**  
  Claire Wanless, The Open University

Some forms of Secularisation Theory base themselves on the supposed inability of individualised forms of religion to sustain themselves over time or to exert social significance. Such an analysis is rooted in notions of individuals as rational atomised beings and in a view that socially engaged religion depends on the holding and transmission of key beliefs as internally accepted objective truth. Postmodernism problematises both these roots, tending to argue that knowledge and identity are co-constructed through various forms of relational dialogue, and also consequently for some level of shared or distributed agency. While this approach is attractive, there are a number of potential issues to overcome, notably charges of relativism and determinism. The radical deprioritisation of the individual as a site of agency is problematic in that it can lead to a denial of individual agency or to the privileging of power relations predicated on competition for domination over social space. This paper utilises the work of various authors to propose an approach based on the re-imagination of the notion of the individual not as an atomised being but as a fuzzy-boundaried, dynamic and contingent assemblage within a universe of assemblages existing at various levels. This model allows for a hybridisation of individual agency, distributed agency and shared agency and treats each in similar ways. This can potentially give a richer understanding of relationality and power within a social-constructionist context, and provide a postmodernist imaginary of the subject as both relationally co-constructed and potentially socially significant.

**NOTE TO CHAIRS AND SPEAKERS**

Speakers - please note that if there are 3 papers in a 90-minute panel, you should aim for 20 minutes speaking time. If there are 4 papers in a 90-minute panel, then aim for 17. The only exception to this is the Tuesday afternoon session which is 2 hours. Here, 4 papers = 20 minutes each, and the speakers in the Unbelief panel should aim for 17. Chairs – please keep speakers to time, and ensure there is some time for discussion of each paper.
ACCOMMODATION

Queen’s Accommodation, Elms Village
Queen’s University Belfast
78 Malone Road, Belfast
BT9 5BW
Tel. No. 0044 (0) 2890 974525

For those who have booked accommodation, this is in the Queen’s Elms Student Village, BT9. Delegates can check in from 2pm on the day of their arrival. Reception is open 24 hours. It should be okay for most delegates to check in if they arrive before 2pm they arrive. There maybe one or two rooms that won’t be ready, however, we will be able to store luggage at reception for the those few.

Accommodation is in single en suite rooms which are simply furnished with a single bed, hanging space for clothes, a desk and desk chair. The en suite bathroom has a shower. Rooms are arranged in blocks which are three floors high with eleven bedrooms on each floor. Please note that we do not have lifts and a ground floor room may be requested when booking.

Each floor has a fully equipped kitchen, table and benches and a soft seating area with a TV. Tea and coffee making facilities are also available. Each booking includes bed and breakfast, linen, towels, toiletry pack and internet service. At the centre of Elms BT9 is the Treehouse where breakfast is served from 07.30-10.00 daily. Free internet access is available in your room.

On the next page you will find directions from the main conference venue (the Lanyon Building) to the accommodation.

TRAVEL INFORMATION

For information on getting to Belfast/Queen’s University, please see here:
https://www.qub.ac.uk/about/Living-in-Northern-Ireland/Getting-here/

TAXI NUMBERS

FonaCab: 02890 33 33 33 Value Cabs: 02890 90 80 90 Belfast Cabs: 07446 014761

INTERNET

The conference venue is fully covered by Eduroam – delegates are asked to please ensure that they are set up for Eduroam access in advance of the conference. If any delegate cannot use Eduroam, they can sign up to The Cloud for internet access in the Canada Room/Council Chamber where registration will take place, and where the publishers’ stalls and catering will be. Delegates staying in the university accommodation will also be given free internet access in their room.
Lanyon Building, University Road, Belfast to Elms Village
Walk 0.8 mile, 17 min

Directions to Accommodation from Lanyon Building

1. Walk west
2. Turn left towards University Rd/B23
3. Turn right towards University Rd/B23
4. Turn left onto University Rd/B23
   - Continue to follow B23
5. Turn left
   - Destination will be on the left

Elms Village
78 Malone Rd, Belfast BT9 5BW
BASR

The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) was founded in 1954 and is a member association of the International Association for the History of Religions and of the European Association for the Study of Religions.

The object of BASR is to promote the academic study of religion/s, understood as the historical, social, theoretical, critical and comparative study of religion/s through the interdisciplinary collaboration of all scholars whose research is defined in this way. BASR is not a forum for confessional, apologetic, or similar concerns.

BASR pursues its aims principally through an annual conference and general meeting, a regular Bulletin, and a Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions. Membership is open to all scholars normally resident in the United Kingdom.

All correspondence concerning the BASR should be sent to the Honorary Secretary: Dr Stephen E. Gregg, Department of Religion and Philosophy, MC234 Millennium City Building, University of Wolverhampton, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1LY; Email: s.gregg@wlv.ac.uk

ISASR

The Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions is an association of scholars and researchers devoted to the academic study of religions within Ireland and internationally. It is a forum for the critical, analytical and cross-cultural academic study of religions, past and present and provides a space for scholarly activity across different disciplines and fields. The Society aims to foster a variety of research-related activity including e.g. conferences, seminars, workshops and publications. The ISASR is not a forum for confessional, apologetical, interfaith or other similar religious activities.

ISASR was founded on Feb 19th 2011 with an Action Committee comprising scholars from a wide range of disciplines, specialities and institutions. The ISASR was welcomed into membership at the EASR’s annual meeting which took place in Budapest in September 2011. The Society held its first general meeting and elected its first regular committee on May 26th 2012. The Society’s current president is Dr James Kapaló, Senior Lecturer in the Study of Religions at University College Cork and the Secretary is Dr Jenny Butler, also a Lecturer in the Study of Religions at University College Cork. The other Committee members are the Treasurer, Dr Brendan McNamara, UCC Study of Religions, Publications Officer Chris Heinhold, affiliated with University of Chester Centre for Islamic Studies, Website Officer Dr Laurence Cox, National University of Ireland Maynooth Sociology, and members Dr Alexandra Grieser, Trinity College Dublin Religions and Theology, and Dr Brad Anderson, Dublin City University.