-letter from the chair

I am honored to serve as the 2015-2016 Chair of the Sociology of Religion Section. Any keen observer will acknowledge the importance of religious ideas, institutions, and identities to events unfolding in the United States and throughout the world. Global geopolitics is shot through with the dynamics of religious identity, lending the aura of transcendence to claims of blood and soil. A Papal visit to the United States draws national interest and stokes debate about social inequality, sexual identity, free-market capitalism, immigration reform, and more. An act of racially motivated terrorism is perpetrated in the midst of a Bible study. A Christian African-American presidential candidate declares that a Muslim should never hold the office. The first female-only mosque is established in Los Angeles. Religion enters, from various angles, fraught conversations about the moral implications of scientific advancement. Of course, our very discipline first congealed around considerations of the fate of religion, and most of us are in theoretical, substantive, and methodological conversation with other parts of sociology. But today the sociology of religion should be at the center of more of the most critical conversations in sociology. Our 2016 Annual Meeting theme is “Rethinking Social Movements: Can Changing the Conversation Change the World?” This year our programming will highlight, through four exhilarating sessions and numerous thoughtfully composed roundtables, how sociological understandings of religion are key to the conversations that are shaping the world.

Thanks to all who helped the section -- by renewing yourselves or making gift memberships -- to exceed the 600 members required to retain all four of our sessions. I extend especially warm greetings to our student members, who comprise more than 40% of the section. I hope that our mentorship program, among other things, will demonstrate the usefulness of
of membership in this section. You are important members now, but you also represent the future of this section and the sociology of religion. I encourage you to submit content for the newsletter, not only your announcements, but brief “research note” style reflections and other creative items for us to consider publishing.

Meanwhile, I encourage all to nominate section members for association-wide awards and leadership positions.

Thanks to all of the section members who have generously agreed to serve on the various committees. I also thank outgoing chair Elaine Howard Ecklund for her marvelous leadership of the section, and for her ongoing advocacy and tutelage as I begin. I look forward to working with all of you as we continue to build.

Omar M. McRoberts
Chair, Sociology of Religion Section

Recently Published Articles


Recently Published Books


Recently Published Book Chapters


Awards

Section Awards

Distinguished Book Award

Distinguished Article Award

Student Paper Award

NSF Award
Prema Kurien received a three-year National Science Foundation grant from the Sociology program (SES-1528344) for her ongoing project, “The Incorporation of Religious Minorities in Canada and the United States.”
Member News

Penny Edgell was recently appointed (in August) as the Associate Dean for Social Sciences in the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Minnesota. It is a 3-year position; and she remain a full professor in the sociology department. A big part of her portfolio is working with departments on strategic planning and identifying ways to strengthen the social sciences as a whole. She is delighted and honored to have been chosen.

Job Postings

Political Sociology Assistant Professor

Syracuse University. The Department of Sociology in the Maxwell School of Citizenship & Public Affairs invites applications for a tenure-track Assistant Professor position to begin Fall, 2016. We seek a scholar with a strong background and interest in broader questions of political sociology linked to law and society, social movements, social policies, or citizenship.

Preference will be given to candidates who can contribute to other strengths in the sociology department as well as to Maxwell School- wide priorities. Candidates must have a Ph.D. in Sociology or a related discipline by the time of appointment and must show success in or a strong promise of scholarly achievement and productivity, as well as a commitment to graduate and undergraduate teaching. Faculty members have the opportunity to affiliate with one of the Maxwell School's research institutes or a number of other interdisciplinary centers and programs. We will begin reviewing applications on December 1, and continue until the position is filled.

For consideration, interested candidates must apply at www.sujobopps.com by completing a brief faculty application. Candidates must attach a letter of interest, vita, teaching statement, and one publication or writing sample on line. In addition, candidates must ask three people to submit letters of reference. Candidates will be notified if additional letters are needed.

Syracuse University is an equal-opportunity, affirmative-action institution. The University prohibits discrimination and harassment based on race, color, creed, religion, sex, gender, national origin, citizenship, ethnicity, marital status, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, veteran status, or any other status protected by applicable law to the extent prohibited by law.
Postdoctoral Fellowship for Quantitative Analysis

The Center on Religion and Chinese Society (CRCS) at Purdue is seeking a Postdoctoral Fellow for Quantitative Analysis to start in January 2016. The Postdoctoral Fellow’s primary responsibility will be quantitative analysis of survey data, writing reports, and preparing manuscripts. The position requires proficiency in statistical analysis software packages such as STATA and SPSS; ability to work independently as well as in cooperation with others; and willingness to travel for fieldwork research and presenting at professional conferences. Ph.D. degree in sociology, statistics, or some other related discipline is required. Knowledge of religions in China and Chinese reading ability are preferred. This is a full time position with benefits; salary is competitive. To ensure full consideration, please send your application letter and curriculum vitae, including names and contact info of three references by October 31, 2015 to donge@purdue.edu. Search will remain open until filled. The position is for one year and renewable if additional funding is available. (www.purdue.edu/crcs)

Publication Note

J. I. (Hans) Bakker of the University of Guelph, in Ontario, Canada, has recently contributed a chapter on a religious ritual in Bali, Indonesia. He argues that the “thick description” of this temple cleansing ritual provides insight into the Balinese calendar and the key religious factor in the maintenance of some degree of traditional belief in the Balinese religion (agama Bali). While guidebooks tend to say the religion is “Hindu” that is highly misleading. There are elements of 5th century Upanishadic and Buddhist beliefs, as well as later 8th and 9th century Buddhist-Hindu beliefs which were at one time important in Central and East Java (e.g. Borobudur, Prambanan). Those Javanese beliefs and rituals migrated to Bali when Islam became consolidated on most of Java, starting with northern coastal Java (the pasisir states). Hindus from India who visit Bali point out that the Balinese belief system is quite different from Hinduism as practiced in many parts of India today. The ritual is called the odalan and it lasts about six days. It is carried out annually at each of the more than 20,000 village temples. A Balinese year is 210 days, according to the traditional calendar (the wuku, uku, pawukan). Jane Belo (1966 [1953]) wrote excellent anthropological ethnographic accounts
of the odalan in Sajan, Gianjar district, before WWII (in 1937-38). (It was not published until after the war.) She collaborated with Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson. But the topic has been neglected. Few tourists who come to Bali for a week or two learn anything about the odalan or the importance of inviting the gods to come to visit every year. It is important to placate the gods with offerings (banten). One aspect discussed in the chapter is the fact that Clifford Geertz does not really utilize thick description in his famous article about the Balinese cockfight. Bakker (2015) argues that the odalan is a much “deeper” form of religious “play” (Bellah, 2014) than the cockfight. For one thing the cockfight is mostly attended by men (and some boys) but the odalan is an activity in which all members of the community are expected to participate. The purpose of the odalan is to evoke good dharma for the community, which even today has Gemeinschaft-like properties. Most villages have three temples, one each for local versions of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. The powers of the visible world (sekala), including the rice harvest, are controlled by the invisible world (niskala), which includes the rice goddess. In addition to thick description we also need Weberian ideal type models in order to make sense of the complex semiotic system that holds Balinese society together despite the massive influx of short-term tourists every year. We should not romanticize Bali as a kind of Shangri-la or Bali-hi, but at the same time it continues to support very clear vestiges of a worldview that is more than a thousand

**Upcoming Talk**

On Wednesday Nov 4 from 12-1pm, Randa Kayyali will be speaking at the Library of Congress, Middle East and North Africa Division on the intersections of religion and race for immigrants in the U.S. in the first half of the 20th century. The title of the talk is, “Classified as White: Historical Insights into the Racial Classifications of Americans of Middle Eastern and North African Descent.”

**Upcoming Conference**

The Religion Network of the Social Science History Association invites ASA Religion Section members to attend the annual meeting of the Social Science History Association in Baltimore, Maryland, November 12-15, 2015. Below, we include details of Network panels of particular interest to section members.
Further information, including registration details, is available on the SSHA website (www.ssha.org). Please feel free to contact the Religion Network representatives, Ates Altinordu (atesaltinordu@sabanciuniv.edu), Damon Mayrl (dmayrl@clio.uc3m.es), and Samuel Nelson (scnelson0@gmail.com), with any questions.

Religious and Racial Boundaries (Thursday, November 12, 3:15-5:15PM); Discussant: Aliza Luft

- Keith Lyon, “The Sound and the Frenzy: Sacralized Space, Emotional Displays, and Social Structure at Nineteenth Century American Camp Meetings”
- Richard Boles, “Antislavery, African Americans, and Pluralistic Churches in the American North, 1770-1820”
- Andrea Althoff, “Divided by Faith and Ethnicity: Religious Pluralism and the Problem of Race in Guatemala”

Religion and Law (Thursday, November 12, 5:30-7:30PM); Discussant: Philip Gorski

- David Buckley, “Institutional Flexibility, Reproductive Health Policy, and Religious Exemptions in the United States and the Philippines”
- Sinem Adar, “Legal Pluralism: An Institutional Mechanism of Fostering Belonging”
- Matthias Koenig, “Religious Minorities in International Human Rights Law: Historical Trajectories and Sociological Conflict Dynamics”

Roundtable Discussion: Global Abolitionisms (Friday, November 13, 8:00-10:00AM); Chair: Maartje Janse

- Peter Stamatov, Angela Alonso, Seymour Drescher, Kevin Grant, Jonathan Sassi, John Oldfield
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Religion and Social Class (Friday, November 13, 10:15-11:45AM); Discussant: Keith Lyon
- Rhys Williams, “Religion and British Labour Movements”
- Iida Saarinen, “Turning Laborer’s Sons into Cosmopolitan Priests: A Prosopographical Study of Scottish Roman Catholic Seminarians, 1818-1878”

Religion and Genocide (Friday, November 13, 2:15-4:15PM); Discussant: Ates Altinordu
- Rogers Brubaker, “Modalities and Mechanisms of Violent Conflict: Is Religion Special?”
- Ronald G. Suny, “Rationality, Affect, and Faith: The Young Turks and the Armenian Genocide”
- Yektan Turkyilmaz, “‘Ordinary Muslims?’ Evaluating the Religious Vocabulary of Mass-Mobilization in the Armenian Genocide”
- Robert Braun, “Religious Minorities and Resistance to Genocide: Evidence from Rescue Networks in Twente during the Holocaust”

Protestantism and Progressive Politics (Saturday, November 14, 8:30-10:30AM); Discussant: Damon Mayrl
- David Mislin, “The Limits of Clerical Influence: Liberal Protestants and Religious Pluralism in Progressive-Era America”

Author-Meets-Critics: After the Wrath of God: AIDS, Sexuality, and American Religion, by Anthony Petro (Saturday, November 14, 10:45AM-12:45PM)
- Courtney Bender, Melani McAlister, Jenny Trinitapoli, Trevor Hoppe, Heather White

Author-Meets-Critics: Grounds for Difference, by Rogers Brubaker (Saturday, November 14, 10:45AM-12:45PM)
- Jennifer Hochschild, Philip Gorski, Matthias Koenig
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Religious Cultures: Knowledge, Image, and Practice (Saturday, November 14, 1:30-3:30PM); Discussant: Melissa Wilde
- Frode Ulvund, “Travelling Representations: Images of Mormonism in Scandinavia, 1850-1900”
- Baris Buyukokutan, “Keeping Cross-Aisle Ties Going: The Ebbs and Flows of Orientalism in the Turkish Field of Literature”

Religious Networks, Advocacy, and Government in the Early Modern World (Saturday, November 14, 3:45-5:15PM); Discussant: Ruth Braunstein
- Catherine Arnold, “To Commiserate with Their Distressed Condition: Religious Networks and Humanitarian Interventionism in Early Modern Europe”
- Craig Gallagher, “This Long Wished and Prayed For Privilege: Scottish Religious Networks and the Glorious Revolution in the Atlantic World”
- Daniel Jones, “The Butcher, the Bastard, and the Bear: Family Networks and Religious Opposition in Early Modern Bern”

Religion and Politics in Global Perspective (Sunday, November 15, 8:00-10:00AM); Discussant: Matthias Koenig
- Elisabeth Becker, “Re-Placing Stigma? The Reception of Mosques in Contemporary Germany”
- Anne Taylor, “Asceticism, Alchemy, and Autonomy: The Intersection of Faith and Knowledge in Puritan Opposition to the English Empire”
- Julia Sloan, “Catholic Identity in the Cold War US”