

Institute for
Religion, Culture,
and Public Life

Annual
Report
2018-2019

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Letter from the Director



Across America, places of worship are being turned into sites of sanctuary, as politically committed believers put their faith into action by offering refuge to undocumented migrants. Throughout India, the government is busy erecting monumental statues of gods, in an effort to cement—quite literally—particular visions of the nation, and to whom it belongs.

These are just two of the topics I had the privilege to reflect upon this year—my first as director of IRCPL, and indeed as a member of the Columbia community. The lessons were often sobering, picking up on the issues and challenges posed by populist movements. But they were on other occasions uplifting, and never short of intellectual stimulation and challenge. IRCPL plays a crucial role at Columbia in providing a forum for leading experts to reflect upon, and engage with, not only political trends, but also the annals of scholarship and detailed debates therein. This is an institute in which you can learn about legal activism and art history from one day to the next.

It is my pleasure to introduce IRCPL's 2018-2019 Annual Report, detailing the full range of our events, publications, and awards—including many that have focused on our perennial commitment to the critical analysis of religion's place within current events. This year, for instance, we continued two projects, ably begun under my predecessor, Katherine Ewing: the first on pluralism in the Middle East/North African region; and the second on religion and populism.

In an especially exciting development, Professor Ewing and I were awarded significant funding from the Henry Luce Foundation to direct a new project, entitled "Rethinking Public Religion in Africa and South Asia." Working with colleagues across campus, as well as two new post-doctoral fellows at IRCPL, this project will run until 2021, and is devoted to a comparative analysis of the ways in which religious publicity takes shape in these two key world regions.

When I arrived at Columbia last summer, I resolved to spend as much time as I could getting to meet colleagues and students. This included not only those with existing connections to IRCPL, but those with whom

the institute had not yet worked. I had a lot of coffee in the process—believe me. And it seems I will need to have a lot more, for I've only just scratched the surface of what's taking place across the university, from the Mailman School of Public Health to Hamilton Hall.

What's come of the coffees thus far has been encouraging. This includes a new partnership with the Center for the Study of Social Difference, which has a well-established model of running dynamic, faculty-driven seminar-style projects. We also hosted an at-capacity event with the Law, Rights, and Religion Project at Columbia Law School. Stayed tuned for further collaborations there.

The development of our networks, old and new, extended beyond the university, too. In May 2019, we co-hosted a workshop with the Social Science Research Council. In a separate vein, I curated a forum on The Immanent Frame—SSRC's award-winning blog on secularism, religion, and the public sphere—featuring work from the "Rethinking Public Religion" project.

Students are the lifeblood of any university, and it's my firm belief that they need to be at

the heart of IRCPL, too. That's why this spring we launched a new source of student support, to complement our existing provision of Research Fellowships. From fall semester 2019, then, be on the lookout for our Dissertation Fellows—PhD students in the final phases of writing up their theses. This is precisely when a bit more financial support can make all the difference. I think it will also make a real difference to the cultivation of IRCPL's community.

Looking ahead, I can also note that we have some exciting publications in the pipeline, as part of the institute's series with Columbia University Press. Having hosted two book launches this year, both of which packed Maison Française, I've come away deeply impressed by the level of campus-wide engagement with our authors (many of whom are drawn from the faculty ranks).

Next year you should also be on the lookout for our diverse thematic series. As ever, the core series on "Religion and Public Life" will provide a platform for exploration and debate of the most pressing current events. We will also run the second year of lectures on "Rethinking Public Religion in Africa and South Asia." Last but not least, take note of

"Death and After," which will bring a range of academics, artists, and others to campus, all reflecting on this most universal of interests.

If a lot of my work as director this year has involved patronizing the coffee shops of Morningside Heights and beyond, much of the rest of it has been spent in various offices and meetings rooms along Claremont Avenue. It's in these more workaday settings that I've come to value, and appreciate, the passion and commitment of the staff, my predecessors, and the Faculty Advisory Committee. They've made this all possible, and I'm deeply grateful.

On behalf of the staff and the Advisory Committee, let me finally extend our collective thanks to you, for your interest in, and support of, IRCPL.

Sincerely,

Matthew Engelke

Director of the Institute for Religion, Culture, and Public Life; Professor of Religion

Ongoing Projects

RELIGION AND THE RISE OF POPULISMS: DIFFERENCE, DISSENT, AND TOLERANCE

Last year, IRCPL launched an international project on the global rise of populist movements and their ties to religion. Among the most visible manifestations of religion in politics today are the growing calls among populist leaders in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East region to thwart the rise of “radical Islam” and prevent Islamization from impinging upon popular perceptions of “liberal” values and forms of tolerance, in a rhetoric that ironically uses the idea of tolerance to stigmatize and marginalize others. At the same time, many of these leaders assert their own national religious identities and heritages. Officials are also using religious populism to justify their moral authority over certain populations, framing obedience to the ruler as a religious and/or patriotic duty.

The project explores comparatively how structural factors such as inequality, changing labor markets, and new media are shaping these populist movements, how governments and societies are engaging populist nationalist rhetoric and policies, how certain populist leaders are taking cues from other countries and regions, how religion is being evoked in populist mobilizations, and how religious leaders and communities diversely respond to this moment across time and space.

We kicked off last year with a series on “The American Case,” while this year we explored the subject in a different world region—the Middle East/North Africa. The third and last workshop, “Populist Power, Faith and Precarity in Europe,” will take place at the Columbia Global Center | Paris in November 2019.



UNTANGLING POPULAR POWER: RHETORIC, FAITH, AND SOCIAL ORDER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In collaboration with the Columbia Global Center | Amman, IRCPL organized a two-day workshop entitled “Untangling Popular Power: Rhetoric, Faith, and Social Order in the Middle East,” which took place in Amman on March 2-3. The organizers of the workshop brought together regional and international experts working on the topics of populism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), who were particularly interested in historical and contemporary forms of populist power through theoretical, social, economic, and

religious lenses. The workshop was structured around five panels – Popular Politics and Social Movements in MENA; Livelihoods, Economic Predicament and Protest; Histories of Populism and Revolt; Media(ted) Populism; and Mobilizing the Faithful. During the workshop, the participants analyzed the concept of populism, examined the role of modern populist movements in the region, and raised questions of how political figures in MENA utilize religious identity to further their political goals. More specifically, some of the themes addressed the question of popular power in Erdogan’s Turkey, the history of Salafi movements in Egypt, intellectual history of Islamic economics, and the role of female preachers in Saudi Arabia.

Select papers presented at this workshop will be collected in an edited volume. Another outcome of the project is a short video documentary edited by the Emmy award winner, videographer, and editor Carmen Vidal. Through brief interviews, the video documentary showcases organizers’ and participants’ contributions to and their understanding of the concept of populism in relation to the MENA region.

PROGRAM DETAILS

March 2-3, 2019 in Amman, Jordan

Keynote Address

“Populism and the Democratization of Injustice,” by Jon A. Alterman (Center for Strategic and International Studies)

Co-sponsored by Columbia Global Centers - Amman, the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS) at the University of Oslo, the Centre for Religion, Conflict, and Globalization at the University of Groningen, the Centre de Recherches Internationales (CERI) at Sciences Po, and the Alliance Program at Columbia University

LIFE HISTORY IN NORTHWEST AFRICA: EVERYDAY LIFE, HISTORICAL MEMORY, AND THE PUBLIC SQUARE

In 2016, IRCPL started a three-year interdisciplinary project funded by the Henry R. Luce ACLS Program in Religion, Journalism & International Affairs, entitled “Life History in Northwest Africa.” Directed by **Katherine Ewing** and **Alexander Stille**, “Life History” examined the ways in which individuals narrate their lives in order to consider how the everyday space of individual experience speaks back toward larger narratives of history, politics, and social change. A team of local researchers was brought together to build an archive of life histories in Senegal, Mauritania and Morocco: Over the course of two years, they have been interviewing local interlocutors, recording these exchanges and writing interpretive descriptions. Several training workshops were organized to bring together this international group of scholars.

LIFE HISTORY AND MÉMOGRAPHIE: ENCOUNTERING SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CHANGE IN NORTHWEST AFRICA

The final program organized for this project was a three-day conference entitled “Life History and Mémographie: Encountering Socio-religious Change in Northwest Africa,” which took place in Dakar, Senegal, in December 2018. The conference was an opportunity to present the group’s research findings and to approach indirectly the questions posed about the boundaries of different Islamic traditions and investigate the layered, complex, and opaque ways in which people enact and experience Islam.

“Life History and Mémographie” was organized together with the Laboratoire d’Analyse des Sociétés et Pouvoirs / Afrique-Diasporas (LASPAD) at Gaston Berger University, which is conducting an independent project titled “Mémographie.” This conference was also meant to bring the two research teams together: In a way, “Mémographie” served as a theoretical and methodological counterpoint to “Life History,” as LASPAD scholars have engaged with IRCPL researchers in crucial ways to locate these conversations within the context of broader

scholarship on socio-religious change in North and West Africa.

PROGRAM DETAILS

December 13-15, 2018 in Dakar, Senegal

Co-sponsored by the Laboratoire d’Analyse des Sociétés et Pouvoirs / Afrique-Diasporas (LASPAD) at Gaston Berger University and the Centre de Recherches Internationales (CERI) at Sciences Po

Rethinking Public Religion in Africa and South Asia



In partnership with the Institute for African Studies and the South Asia Institute, IRCPL is leading a three-year project generously funded by the Henry Luce Foundation. The program considers the ways in which religion becomes public through diverse forms of encounter, with a focus on interregional parallels, differences and flows across South Asia and Africa. By attending to the broad array of phenomena that comprise lived religion and its place in public life, our goal is to rethink the concept of “public religion.” The project also aims to shift public and academic discourse away from a tendency to foreground discrete religious traditions, sectarian boundaries and identity politics, which all too often reduces the variety of ways in which religion’s place can be seen within social, political, and cultural life and reinforces the boundaries between communities.

PEOPLE

Matthew Engelke, PI
Katherine Ewing, PI
Walid Hammam, Project Director
Rajbir Judge, Post-doctoral Research Fellow
Brian Larkin, Senior Project Advisor
Mohamed Amer Meziane, Post-doctoral Research Fellow
Gauri Viswanathan, Senior Project Advisor

WORKSHOP

The workshop “Word, Image, Sound” brought together an interdisciplinary group of young scholars to explore, through a range of methods, how instantiations of media like the printed word, the calligrapher’s pen, calendrical art, digital photography, posters, television, shouts, whispers... help us to understand religion’s publicities in (and/or across) various African and South Asian contexts. The ten participants were invited to reflect on the potential comparative dimensions of their work, taking into account the broader historical, cultural, and political dynamics of these two major world regions, including their pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial relations.

COURSES

Rethinking Public Religion made possible the teaching of four courses over the past academic year. Mohamed Meziane taught **Empire and Secularization in Africa: Reform, Mission, Islam**, which examined how Empires paved the way to a new form of domination in Africa, and **On African Theory: Religion, Philosophy, Anthropology**, which explored how religious traditions shape African theory and how the influence of colonial anthropology on concepts of African culture and tradition can be challenged. **Rajbir Judge** Singh taught **Colonialism and Religion in South Asia**, which looked at the conceptual trouble wrought by colonial rule in relation to boundaries, both of tradition and identity, and **South Asia and the Secular**, which examined different contestations and inflections of the secular in South Asia.

LECTURE SERIES

IRCPL also organized a well-attended speaker series over the fall and spring semesters. **Kajri Jain** (University of Toronto) started the fall semester with a talk entitled **When Gods**

Emerge from the Temples: Iconic Exhibition Value and Democratic Publicness in India.

Jain spoke about how successive new image technologies and genres of public iconopraxis in India, from neighbourhood festivals and printed icons to monumental concrete deities, have played a key role in melding the sensible idioms of democracy and religion. **Patrick Eisenlohr** (University of Göttingen) brought together our community for **Atmospheric Citizenship: Sonic Movement and Public Religion in Shi’ite Mumbai**. This talk focused on the sonic dimensions of religious life and place-making in Mumbai, and its connections to a “right to the city” for people facing a precarious future. **Tom Boylston** (University of Edinburgh) gave a lecture entitled **Religion as a Problem of Attention: Asceticism and Spectacle in Orthodox Ethiopia**. His lecture discussed contemporary Orthodox Christian revival in Ethiopia from two perspectives: the ascetic cultivation of attention to God through fasting, and the capture of public attention through preaching movements, public exorcisms, and educational drives.

We started the spring semester with **Birgit Meyer**, whose talk entitled **Religious Matters in Public Spaces** explored the public—and by

implication, material and corporeal—presence of religion in plural configurations in Ghana. **William Mazzarella** gave the final talk of the year, **Populism as Political Theology: An Anthropological Perspective**, which sought to reanimate the grounds of critical theory via anthropological understandings of shared substance and ‘occult’ motifs of efficacious resonance.

IRCPL partnered with the Columbia Journalism School to use these talks as the basis for a podcast series hosted by Prof. **Alexander Stille**.

For the last event of the year, IRCPL invited **Peter van der Veer**, the Director at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity in Göttingen in Germany, to teach a specialized master class on his book *The Value of Comparison*. In the book, van der Veer makes a compelling case for using comparative approaches in the study of society and for the need to resist the simplified civilization narratives popular in public discourse.

PROGRAM DETAILS

**When the Gods Emerge from the Temples:
Iconic Exhibition Value and Democratic
Publicness in India**

Lecture | October 9, 2018

Speaker: Kajri Jain, University of Toronto

**Atmospheric Citizenship: Sonic Movement
and Public Religion in Shi'ite Mumbai**

Lecture | November 4, 2018

Speaker: Patrick Eisenlohr, University of
Göttingen

**Religion as a Problem of Attention: Asceticism
and Spectacle in Orthodox Ethiopia**

Lecture | December 4, 2018

Speaker: Tom Boylston, University of
Edinburgh

Religious Matters in Public Spaces

Lecture | February 21, 2019

Speaker: Birgit Meyer, Utrecht University.

Co-sponsored by the Department of
Anthropology and the Institute for Social and
Economic Research and Policy

Word, Image, Sound

Workshop | April 4-5, 2019

**Populism as Political Theology: An
Anthropological Perspective**

Lecture | April 23, 2019

Speaker: William Mazzarella, University of
Chicago.

Co-sponsored by the Department of
Anthropology and the Institute for Social and
Economic Research and Policy (ISERP)

The Value of Comparison

Masterclass | May 9, 2019

Speaker: Peter van der Veer, Max Planck
Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic
Diversity

Rethinking Public Religion in Africa and
South Asia is a project funded by the Henry
R. Luce Foundation and co-sponsored by the
Institute for African Studies and the South
Asia Institute



Religion & Public Life

FLATTENING FAITH: SEARCHING FOR 3-DIMENSIONAL RELIGION IN 2-DIMENSIONAL FICTION

As a follow-up to last year's "Writing God(s): The Creation of Modern Mythologies and Post-Modern Theologies in Comics", in November 2018 IRCPL organized another panel on religion in works of fiction. The expansiveness of fictional worlds does not always apply to the religious lives of the characters populating our narratives: religion can be made flat, so that the lived religious experiences and ideals of characters are simply signified by objects such as head coverings, prayer beads, or feathers. As a result, both the religion and practitioner are not fully realized.

Conversely, imaginary worlds can add depth and nuance to religions that have been flattened in real life. Our panelists, two authors and one illustrator, reflected on the

tensions of how religion is (re)presented in fiction and in real life, and how it is actually practiced by adherents. **A. David Lewis** revived the first Muslim superhero—Kismet (first appeared in 1944)—to evolve beyond orientalizing stereotypes, while illustrator **Sara Alfageeh** is known for her redesign of Marvel comics hero Dust - a Niqabi woman whose hyper-sexualized costume was critiqued by many. Using a different medium, **S.A. Chakraborty** takes inspiration from Middle Eastern folk tales to create well-rounded characters in her fantasy novels, in which religion is depicted matter-of-factly, as an ordinary aspect of the world she built.

PROGRAM DETAILS

November 29, 2018

Speakers: Sara Alfageeh, S.A. Chakraborty, A. David Lewis, and Hussein Rashid (moderator)

Co-sponsored by the Office of the University Chaplain.

THE HOLOCAUST AND THE NAKBA: A NEW GRAMMAR OF TRAUMA AND HISTORY

The first event of the Spring semester, the book launch of *The Holocaust and the Nakba: a New Grammar of Trauma and History*, attracted an audience of more than 130 people. Published in the IRCPL book series, *The Holocaust and the Nakba* explores the historical, political, and cultural intersections between these two foundational tragedies.

Book editor **Amos Goldberg**, from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, started the conversation by introducing the framing of the book and suggesting that, despite the big differences between the events and the emotional difficulties of a joint discussion, the Holocaust and the Nakba happened in a historical continuum and must be understood as connected in many ways. His presentation was followed by interventions by **Raef Zreik**, from Tel Aviv University, historian **Alon Confino**, UMass Amherst, and our own **Gil Anidjar**, from Columbia University's Department of Religion. Prof. **Gil Hochberg**, Professor of Hebrew and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, moderated the panel conversation.

PROGRAM DETAILS

January 28, 2019

Speakers: Gil Anidjar, Alon Confino, Amos Goldberg, Gil Hochberg (moderator), and Raef Zreik

Co-sponsored by the Middle East Institute, the Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies, and the Department of Religion

NONHUMAN EMPIRE AND ITS AFTERLIVES

The panel, "Nonhuman Empire and Its Afterlives," investigated the multiple registers of the nonhuman in shaping colonial and postcolonial South Asia by exploring the question of care in relation to the nonhuman.

Parama Roy (University of California, Davis) examined the encounter between two different moral economies in relation to the nonhuman by focusing on Lockwood Kipling's *Beast and Man in India*. Roy traced how a new colonial moral economy centered on care and inclusion encountered an existing Indic economy of vegetarianism and non-killing of animals, which it sought to cast, not as kindness to animals, but as a form of cruelty to them. **Ezra Rashkow** (Montclair State University) examined how the colonial obsession with sports hunting and vermin eradication shifted to the love for wildlife conservation that dominates public discourse today. Asking why attention to the Nonhuman in India is so repulsive, **Naisargi Dave** (University of Toronto) ended the panel by conjoining narratives of two distinct women: the Nazi Aryosophist Savitri Devi Mukherjee, and the legendary dancer, parliamentarian,

and Theosophist, Rukmini Devi Arundale. She noted how the animal remained tied to women, a conceptual bondage central to Empire and its afterlife, that produces repulsion in the feminization of social action, which, in these two particular cases, is also marked by a kind of queerness.

PROGRAM DETAILS

February 19, 2019

Speakers: Naisargi Dave, Rajbir Judge (moderator), Ezra Rashkow, and Parama Roy

Co-sponsored by the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society

SANCTUARY LAW: CAN RELIGIOUS LIBERTY PROTECT IMMIGRANTS?

Organized in collaboration with the Law, Rights, and Religion Project at the Columbia Law School, this program brought together an all-women panel for a keynote lecture and conversation on the role of religion in the immigrants' rights movements, both historically and today. Our speakers discussed, broadly, how the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (1993) can or might be used to protect undocumented immigrants and those who provide sanctuary.

California attorney **Lizbeth Mateo** gave a poignant account of her work with undocumented clients and stressed that giving sanctuary or relief is just a temporary measure – the end goal of immigrants rights activists like herself is to stop deportation and to allow for family and community reunification. Her keynote address was followed by a lively conversation between **Amy Gottlieb**, Associate Regional Director of American Friends Service Committee, Rutgers Law Professor and Chancellor's Social Justice Scholar **Rose Cuison-Villazor**, Reverend **Winnie Varghese**, Director of Justice and

Reconciliation at Trinity Wall Street, and Prof. **Katherine Franke**, from the Columbia Law School.

PROGRAM DETAILS

March 13, 2019

Speakers: Rose Cuison-Villazor, Katherine Franke (moderator), Amy Gottlieb, Lizbeth Mateo, and Winnie Varghese

Co-sponsored by the Law, Rights and Religion Project, Columbia Law School

RELIGION, ENVIRONMENT, AND ECONOMIC TRADITIONS: REFINING AN EPISTEMOLOGY OF MORAL ACCOUNTABILITY

The two-day international workshop entitled “Religion, Environment, and Economic Traditions: Refining an Epistemology of Moral Accountability” showcased the cluster of theoretical, epistemological, and historical approaches and convergences between economic and environmental theories within religious and intellectual traditions.

On the first day, the keynote lecture, given by Professor **Waleed El-Ansary** from Xavier University, addressed the study of Islamic economics as rooted in its metaphysical and cosmological sciences. Such an understanding of economic thought in Islamic tradition reveals a path to economic justice and ecological equilibrium by recovering the Islamic intellectual heritage. Professor El-Ansary maintained that this is accompanied by the establishment of scientific, technological, and other social structures that integrate scientific findings into higher orders of knowledge, in order to attain spiritually meaningful work and integral development.

On the second day, the participants analyzed environmental, economic, and ethical theories in relation to classical and contemporary Islamic thought, early Christian tradition, and political ecology. While the workshop focused on Islamic studies, it brought together scholars working on other religious traditions and philosophical movements. The key theme of the workshop was thinking of economic and environmental theories beyond their respective boundaries as set by the particular division of sciences in the West, while simultaneously exploring their ethical dimensions. Themes that were addressed during the workshop were, among others, (classical) Islamic economics, Green Islam, Islamic ecology, environmental sustainability, Muslim environmentalism in Southeast Asia, the notion of halal economy, as well as the question of time and environment in Western intellectual history.

PROGRAM DETAILS

March 27-28, 2019

Keynote Address

“Islamic Environmental Economics and Sciences of Nature,” by Waleed El-Ansary (Xavier University)

RELIGION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS IN TRANSATLANTIC PERSPECTIVE

In May 2019, we partnered with the Social Science Research Council's program on Religion and the Public Sphere to organize a symposium on the ethical and spiritual motivations and framings of religious activism and community mobilizing. Our panelists looked at social movement participation in both the US and Europe given the rise of nationalist and exclusionary movements on both sides of the Atlantic. These distinct dimensions of injustice often reinforce each other and may travel and shape dynamics across borders – thus making an interdisciplinary and interregional approach essential.

As such exclusionary populist movements have racialized and mobilized against immigrant groups and communities of color, we aimed to generate reflection and a comparative perspective with religious responses to Islamophobia, the demonizing of migrants, and the broader attacks on growing racial and religious diversity. The discussion was organized around three

panels that explored questions on religious transformation and social action, new social justice movements, and future perspectives on the mobilization of faith.

PROGRAM DETAILS

May 17, 2019

Cosponsored by the Social Science Research Council and Columbia Maison Française



41st Bampton Lectures in America

Founded in 1948, and housed at IRCPL since 2009, the Bampton Lectures in America are a series of biennial lectures given by prominent scholars in the fields of theology, science, art, and medicine. The Lectures were established through a bequest from Ada Byron Bampton Tremaine, and are given at periodic intervals in the fields of religion, science, art, and medicine. In accordance with the wishes of Ms Tremaine, they are delivered to a general audience and subsequently published by Columbia University Press.

CRISPR BIOLOGY AND TECHNOLOGY: THE FUTURE OF GENOME EDITING

This year we hosted prominent scientist **Jennifer Doudna** for the 41st iteration of the Lectures, on April 30th and May 1st. Dr. Doudna, Professor of Chemistry and Molecular and Cell Biology at UC Berkeley, attracted more than three hundred people with her lectures on the groundbreaking genome editing technique CRISPR-Cas9, of which she is co-inventor.

In the first lecture, at the Columbia University Irving Medical Center, Dr. Doudna presented current research into the molecular mechanisms of CRISPR-Cas enzymes, including recent work on CRISPR-CasX and anti-CRISPR inhibitors. During the second lecture, more geared towards a non-specialized audience, Dr. Doudna engaged in a conversation on the ethical and societal implications of genome editing with Stanford Law School professor **Hank Greely**.

PROGRAM DETAILS

April 30 and May 1, 2019

Speakers: Jennifer A. Doudna and Henry T. Greely

Book Series

The Religion, Culture, and Public Life series at Columbia University Press is devoted to the study of religion in relation to social, cultural, and political dynamics, both contemporary and historical. It features work by scholars from a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives, including religious studies, anthropology, history, philosophy, political science, and sociology. The series is committed to deepening our critical understandings of the empirical and conceptual dimensions of religious thought and practice, as well as such related topics as secularism, pluralism, and political theology.

THE HOLOCAUST AND THE NAKBA: A NEW GRAMMAR OF TRAUMA AND HISTORY

Edited by Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg
November 2018

In this groundbreaking book, leading Arab and Jewish intellectuals examine how and why the Holocaust and the Nakba are interlinked without blurring fundamental differences between them. While these two foundational tragedies are often discussed separately and in abstraction from the constitutive historical global contexts of nationalism and colonialism, *The Holocaust and the Nakba* explores the historical, political, and cultural intersections between them. The majority of the contributors argue that these intersections are embedded in cultural imaginations, colonial and asymmetrical power relations, realities, and structures. Focusing on them paves the way for a new political, historical, and moral grammar that enables a joint Arab-

Jewish dwelling and supports historical reconciliation in Israel/Palestine. This book does not seek to draw a parallel or comparison between the Holocaust and Nakba or to merely inaugurate a “dialogue” between them. Instead, it searches for a new historical and political grammar for relating and narrating their complicated intersections. The book features prominent international contributors, including a foreword by Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury on the centrality of the Holocaust and Nakba in the essential struggle of humanity against racism, and an afterword by literary scholar Jacqueline Rose on the challenges and contributions of the linkage between the Holocaust and Nakba for power to shift and a world of justice and equality to be created between the two peoples. *The Holocaust and the Nakba* is the first extended and collective scholarly treatment in English of these two constitutive traumas together.

THE POLITICS OF SECULARISM: RELIGION, DIVERSITY, AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN FRANCE AND TURKEY

By Murat Akan
April 2019

Discussions of modernity—or alternative and multiple modernities—often hinge on the question of secularism, especially how it travels outside its original European context. Too often, attempts to answer this question either imagine a universal model derived from the history of Western Europe, which neglects the experience of much of the world, or emphasize a local, non-European context that limits the potential for comparison. In *The Politics of Secularism*, Murat Akan reframes the question of secularism, exploring its presence both outside and inside Europe and offering a rich empirical account of how it moves across borders and through time.

Akan uses France and Turkey to analyze political actors' comparative discussions of secularism, struggles for power, and historical contextual constraints at potential moments of institutional change. France and Turkey are

critical sites of secularism: France exemplifies European political modernity, and Turkey has long been the model of secularism in a Muslim-majority country. Akan analyzes prominent debates in both countries on topics such as the visibility of the headscarf and other religious symbols, religion courses in the public school curriculum, and state salaries for clerics and imams. Akan lays out the institutional struggles between three distinct political currents—anti-clericalism, liberalism, and what he terms state-civil religionism—detailing the nuances of how political movements articulate the boundary between the secular and the religious. Disputing the prevalent idea that diversity is a new challenge to secularism and focusing on comparison itself as part of the politics of secularism, this book makes a major contribution to understanding secular politics and its limits.

THE LIMITS OF TOLERANCE: ENLIGHTENMENT VALUES AND RELIGIOUS FANATICISM

By Denis Lacorne;
Translated by C. Jon Delogu and Robin Emlein
May 2019

The modern notion of tolerance—the welcoming of diversity as a force for the common good—emerged in the Enlightenment in the wake of centuries of religious wars. First elaborated by philosophers such as John Locke and Voltaire, religious tolerance gradually gained ground in Europe and North America. But with the resurgence of fanaticism and terrorism, religious tolerance is increasingly being challenged by frightened publics.

In this book, Denis Lacorne traces the emergence of the modern notion of religious tolerance in order to rethink how we should respond to its contemporary tensions. In a wide-ranging argument that spans the Ottoman Empire, the Venetian republic, and recent controversies such as France's burqa ban and the white-supremacist rally in Charlottesville, *The Limits of Tolerance* probes crucial questions: Should we impose

limits on freedom of expression in the name of human dignity or decency? Should we accept religious symbols in the public square? Can we tolerate the intolerant? While acknowledging that tolerance can never be entirely without limits, Lacorne defends the Enlightenment concept against recent attempts to circumscribe it, arguing that without it a pluralistic society cannot survive. Awarded the Prix Montyon by the Académie Française, *The Limits of Tolerance* is a powerful reflection on twenty-first-century democracy's most fundamental challenges.

Research Community

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS

MOHAMED AMER MEZIANE is a philosopher whose current research projects and teaching activities involve IRCPL, the Department of Religion, and the Institute of African Studies. He is also a research associate at the Sorbonne Institute for Law and Philosophy (ISJPS) and a member of the governing board of the CNRS based Research Network ICC (Islam et chercheurs dans la Cité) in which he holds a seminar series on secularism and public religion. His new research project analyzes the ways in which these imperial transformations are challenged within African spaces. The project questions the boundaries of Africa and the Middle East through the religious, racializing and ecological effects of political geographies. The aim of this project is to try and unfold the contemporary stakes of a systematic critique of these geographies for African theory, from Fanon until today.

RAJBIR SINGH JUDGE is a historian with affiliations in the Department of Religion and South Asia Institute. His current project examines the ways in which Sikhism at the end of the 19th Century remained a generative site through which Sikhs and their diverse milieu in the Punjab contested not only British rule, but the very nature of sovereignty, refusing closures enacted by the colonial state. More broadly, he specializes in the cultural and intellectual history of South Asia, with a particular emphasis on the Punjab. His most recent publications can be found in the Journal of the History of Sexuality and History & Theory.

SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWS

The IRCPL Summer Research Fellowship is awarded each Spring to assist students with expenses directly related to research, including travel, lodging, and materials during the Summer or Fall semester. Upon returning from their travel, students will issue reports on the results of their research.

Nile Davies is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology. His dissertation examines the historical conjunctions of labor, settlement and the built environment in the Western Area of Sierra Leone, where centuries of successive arrivals have produced powerful ideological associations between place, space and categories of personhood (“creoles”, “natives”, “strangers”). The IRCPL Fellowship will support ethnographic and archival research in Sierra Leone and England.

Devon Golaszewski is a sixth-year doctoral student in African history at Columbia University, and a candidate for the Graduate Certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Her research focuses on the history of gender and sexuality, and the history of medicine, in 20th century francophone West Africa. Her dissertation is entitled “Reproductive Labors: Reproductive Expertise and Biomedical Legibility in Mali, 1935-1999.”

Owain Lawson is a PhD candidate in Columbia University’s Department of History. His research examines the history of technology, society, religion, political economy, and environment in the twentieth-century Middle East. He is writing a dissertation that explores the history of the development of the Litani river in Lebanon between 1920 and 1978. The IRCPL Research Fellowship will support archival research in Paris and Nantes, France, in summer 2019.

Zehra Mehdi is a PhD student in the Department of Religion, where she studies psychoanalysis, gender theory and religious and political identity of Muslims in India. Her dissertation is a psychoanalytic study of how Muslims resist seeing themselves as victims and forge their identity as Indians through the complex and delicate interplay of gender and religion. The IRCPL Fellowship will support archival research of Hindi and Urdu print media in north India.

Anna Reumert is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology, where she focuses on the history and social life of Sudanese migration to Lebanon. She is broadly interested in relations of difference and religious identity as it pertains to histories of labor, migration and racialization in the postcolonial and post-Ottoman slavery context of the Arab Mediterranean. For her dissertation, she conducts fieldwork with a multi-faith Sudanese migrant community in Beirut.

Shaunna Rodrigues is a PhD student in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies. Her dissertation traces Islamic justifications of the Indian Constitution primarily through the work of Abul Kalam Azad and his interlocutors. The IRCPL Fellowship will support her research on tracing practices of justification against liberal imperialism undertaken by Islamic scholars like Azad.

DISSERTATION FELLOWS

Beginning next Fall, IRCPL will provide fellowships to advanced PhD students who are writing a dissertation that focuses in significant ways on the study of religion or secularism.

IRCPL Dissertation Fellows will meet monthly to present their research and workshop chapters of their dissertation. The first cohort of fellows is composed of Joseph Fisher (Religion), Andrew Jungclaus (Religion), Sayori Ghoshal (MESAAS), Devon Golaszewski (History), and Dialika Sall (Sociology).

JOINT PROJECTS AWARDS

As part of its mission, IRCPL works to facilitate the study of religion and public life in for faculty in a wide range of departments. With the annual Joint Projects Award, IRCPL selects a number of projects and works directly with Columbia faculty to organize conferences, working groups, seminars and other programs that bring together an interdisciplinary group of scholars.

The projects selected for the 2019-20 academic year are:

Hamid Dabashi (MESAAS) and **Brinkley Messick** (Anthropology and MESAAS)
The Global 1979 Revolution: Iran's Revolution After Forty Years

Katherine Franke (Law School) and **Elizabeth Rainer Platt** (The Law, Rights and Religion Project)
Pilot Study: Policies of Religiously-Affiliated Health Care Facilities in the U.S. South

Stathis Gourgouris (ICLS)
The Legacy of Bandung Humanisms in the Era of Globalization

Rajbir Judge (Religion)
Nonhuman Empire and Its Afterlives: Rethinking Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia

Christia Mercer (Philosophy), **Clémence Boulouque** (Religion), and **Elizabeth Castelli** (Religion, Barnard)
Radical Thinking in Religious Contexts: Medieval Women on Self-Knowledge, Truth, and Nature

People

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Co-Sponsored Events

CONVERSATION | *Entangled Spirits: Mickalene Thomas and Darnell Moore in Conversation*

Organized by The Society of Fellows and Heyman Center for the Humanities
February 6, 2019

LECTURE | *The Immigrant Body in the Court of Judgment*

With Amitava Kumar and Bruce Robbins.
Organized by the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality
February 7, 2019

CONFERENCE | *Scholar and Feminist Conference: The Politics and Ethics of the Archive*

Organized by the Barnard Center for Research on Women
February 8-9, 2019

LECTURE | *Tankers, Tycoons, and the Making of Modern Regimes of Law, Labour and Finance*
With Laleh Khalili.

Organized by the Middle East Institute
February 11, 2019

BOOK TALK | *Ganga as Imperial Icon: Warfare, Spoliation and the Practices of Indian History*

With Sudipta Sen.
Organized by the South Asia Institute
March 25, 2019

LECTURE | *Becoming a Tradition: Pueblo Indian Patron Saint Feast Days as Resistance and Adaptation*

With Andrea McComb Sanchez
Organized by the Barnard College Department of Religion
April 8, 2019

Partners

Alliance Program

Barnard Center for Research on Women

Barnard Department of Religion

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Columbia University Irving
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Department of Anthropology

Department of Religion

Institute for African Studies

Institute for Comparative Literature
and Society

Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies

Institute for Research on Women,
Gender and Sexuality

Institute for Social and Economic
Research and Policy

The Italian Academy for Advanced
Studies in America

The Law, Rights and Religion Project,
Columbia Law School

The Middle East Institute

Office of the President

Office of the University Chaplain

Social Science Research Council

The Society of Fellows and Heyman
Center for the Humanities

South Asia Institute

