



IRCI

Institute for
Religion,
Culture, and
Public Life

Annual
Report
2019-2020

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Letter from the Director



It would be impossible to write the Director's Note this year with anything like business-as-usual; that mode had already been under pressure. And if only the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic could be limited to the cancellation of some university events, and even—painful as I know it has been—student and faculty research and travel. If only. Of course, this happened for us: several cancelled events—perhaps most disappointingly a long-planned student field trip to Punjab; they were due to leave only ten days after the Provost rightly suspended such activities.

But the story of 2020 is not simply some cancelled events, and it is not even simply the viral pandemic. It is also the new level of exposure given to systemic racism and police brutality, following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, among many others. IRCPL joins with the voices of protest—now heard across the world—in proclaiming that Black Lives Matter. IRCPL is also committed to the processes of reckoning, part of which involves what

a university institute can offer an anti-racist agenda through its programming and funding.

As a step in this process, let me highlight two upcoming events. Looking forward in this way is also a lens for reflection, because each of these events was supposed to have taken place in the spring. Both are both part of our series, “Death and After,” now stretching into an unforeseen second year, and taking on unforeseen resonances.

The first event is “Life in Proximity to Death.” It will feature two leading experts on how to deal with the challenges of end-of-life care and commemoration in the modern world, especially in dense mega-cities, such as New York. While the original scope of this event had nothing to do with Covid-19, the rescheduling allows us to address the fact that while the pandemic poses new challenges, it also exacerbates longstanding ones, including those around racism and public health.

The second event is “Life After Death in Black America,” the initial prompt for which included the haunting words of Claudia Rankine: “The condition of black life is one of

mourning.” This event will address Black Lives Matter as part of a longer history of protest, and brings together leading figures working at the intersection of African-American and Religious Studies. But it will no doubt be generatively different in November than it would have been on its originally scheduled day last April.

Events will continue—online—but all the same our funding this past year shifted notably in the direction of supporting Columbia’s students. That trend will continue. In September 2019, we began a new Dissertation Fellowship, which is outlined in more detail below. I had the privilege of working with the first cohort of fellows in monthly workshops, whose innovative projects make me hopeful for the future of religious studies. I look forward to meeting our second group of fellows at the start of the fall semester.

This year we also began a dedicated stream of funding for undergraduates and, as the events of the spring unfolded, planned three other largely student-focused funding streams. One of these, the 2020 Scholarship Fund, focused on helping graduate students meet the challenges that Covid-19 has posed

for their research and writing; another is a dual initiative with the Provost’s Office and Office of Student Life on addressing structural racism; a third bridges the two by offering students, TAs, and faculty support for online curriculum innovations in 2020-21, especially around the topics of religion and racism, climate change, and public health.

The Institute’s book series with Columbia University Press is going from strength to strength, with several new titles out and forthcoming. In 2019-20, we also launched the Claremont Prize, which is dedicated to the publication of first books. This opportunity for junior scholars is another way in which we hope to cultivate tomorrow’s leading voices in the study of religion.

While our Luce-funded project ran into several virus-related roadblocks this spring, there are two good pieces of news on this item. First, we plan to recoup some of the lost time by extending the project into a fourth year. And second, one of our postdoctoral fellows, Rajbir Singh Judge, has been appointed to a tenure-track position in the Department of History at California State University, Long Beach. We wish Rajbir all the best in his new position, and look forward to

future collaborations.

I write this at home. And I am grateful that the work of IRCPL can continue remotely. But I miss the IRCPL community, and the wider circles in which we move—within and beyond Columbia. There is, of course, occasion to Zoom with the staff, student and postdoctoral fellows, the advisory committee, and our many project partners. But the convenience and help of computer technology still falls short, and I look forward to (what I consider) real presence again.

In the meantime, I want to thank the IRCPL staff and our Faculty Advisory Committee for their dedication, work, and flexibility over this past year. I am truly grateful. And as always, our collective thanks to you, for your interest in the Institute.

Sincerely,

Matthew Engelke

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

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 project generously funded by the Henry Luce Foundation. The program, now in its second year, 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
Mohamed Amer Meziane, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Rajbir Judge, Postdoctoral Research Fellow
Brian Larkin, Senior Project Advisor
Gauri Viswanathan, Senior Project Advisor

WORKSHOP

IRCPL invited a group of scholars to explore the theme of **Time, Space, Memory** in our second workshop. This interdisciplinary group discussed some of the most contentious topics in the articulation of public religions throughout Africa and South Asia. Whether addressing the legacies of European colonialism, in which time and space were folded into a teleological model of social evolution—ostensibly erasing certain geographies and temporalities—or grappling with contemporary deployments of the (national) past through the appropriation of specific sites, the contours and cadences of time, space, and memory give significance and shape to various modes of religious publicity.

COURSES

Rethinking Public Religion allowed us to offer four courses this academic year. In the Fall Semester, **Rajbir Judge** offered **But So What?: History, Time and Tradition**, which examined the overwhelming hold of “history” in the present from the problem-space of ‘history’ itself to the imbrication of history with theology and the secular. His second course, **Punjab and Religion**, examined religion in Punjab from the Early Modern period to the present. This course was supposed to have a travel component, but our planned trip to Punjab was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. **Mohamed Amer Meziane** also taught two courses. **Frantz Fanon: Religion, Race, Philosophy in Africa and Beyond** examined the work of Fanon through its sources, its context and its contemporary interpretations. The second course, **Dialectics**, considered to what extent dialectic reasoning forms secular epistemologies and how it shaped the language of revolutionary Marxism both in Europe and Africa.

LECTURE SERIES

We were able to host three scholars before Columbia cancelled on-campus events. Art historian **Iftikhar Dadi** (Cornell University) considered two frameworks for situating the question of the secular in Pakistan and its diaspora in a talk entitled **Situating Contemporary Art and the Secular**. **Isabel Hofmeyr** (University of the Witwatersrand) spoke about the ways in which the colonial maritime boundary offers an unusual and suggestive node for thinking about public religion in her lecture **Custom House, Copyright, Censorship: Hydrocolonial Formations**. Finally, **Arvind Rajagopal** (New York University) gave a talk entitled **Technopolitics and Hindu Populism**, which offered a broad outline of popular politics’ successive phases in modern times with a reinterpretation threaded through the question of technology. A scheduled event with **Derek Peterson** (University of Michigan) was postponed to next year. A book talk with the Zimbabwean novelist **Petina Gappah** was canceled due to personal circumstances.

Videos of all the lectures in this series are available on our website.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Time, Space, Memory
Workshop | October 3-4, 2019

Situating Contemporary Art and the Secular
Lecture | October 15, 2019
Speaker: Iftikhar Dadi, Cornell University

North Africa in Africa: the Decolonizing Centrality of Algeria
Panel | October 17, 2019
Speakers: Daho Djerbal, Mohamed Amer Meziane, Mahmood Mamdani, Mamadou Diouf, and Madeleine Dobie (moderator)
Co-sponsored by the Middle East Institute

Custom House, Copyright, Censorship: Hydrocolonial Formations
Lecture | November 12, 2019
Speaker: Isabel Hofmeyr, University of the Witwatersrand & New York University
Co-sponsored by the Department of History

Technopolitics and Hindu Populism
Lecture | February 4, 2020
Speaker: Arvind Rajagopal, New York University
Co-sponsored by the Institute for Contemporary Literature and Society

Religion & Public Life

CONCERNING MEASLES: A PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE OUTBREAK AND JEWISH COMMUNITY RESPONSES IN NEW YORK CITY

Before COVID-19 surfaced in March, New York State was facing another public health crisis: the worst outbreak of measles since the 1980s, with the majority of cases appearing in ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities. The community-centered aspect of the measles outbreak has been a focal point of the media coverage, yet much of this coverage glossed over how we should understand such a “religious” identification. For this panel, we invited five experts in public health and community outreach to discuss to what extent—and in what ways—this is an “ultra-Orthodox” issue and how the affected communities are responding. **Blima Marcus**, a nurse from the ultra-orthodox community in Borough Park, started the conversation with a presentation on pro-vaccine communication efforts in her community. Prof. **Zachary Berger**, from Johns Hopkins University,

discussed his research on the dynamics of mistrust between patients and doctors, and explained that this phenomenon is unsurprisingly heightened in the Orthodox community, given the long history between minority communities and the institutional infrastructure of public health. Then, Dr. **Alyssa Masor**, the Department of Health’s liaison to the orthodox Jewish community, gave a helpful account of the city’s outreach efforts. Masor also highlighted the issue of mistrust, and stressed the need to employ positive, non-paternalistic communication methods. Finally, public health historian **Michael Yudell**, of Drexel University, provided some context to the recent outbreak, and to the broader history of anti-vaccine sentiment.

PROGRAM DETAILS

September 19, 2019

Speakers: Zackary Berger (Johns Hopkins University), Alyssa Masor (NYC Department of Health), Blima Marcus (Nurse Practitioner), and Michael Yudell (Drexel University).
Moderated by Ayala Fader (Fordham University).

THE OTHER EVANGELICALS: BEYOND A CHRISTIAN RIGHT

On Election Day, we hosted a panel discussion on the landscape of faith-based politics in America. Over the past several decades, the popular image of an evangelical Christian has become ever more rigid. From preaching personal salvation over hellfire and damnation, to pushing for conservative “family values,” to, most recently, lobbying for a certain vision of the US Supreme Court, the media has helped construct a very particular figure. We invited three leading experts in the social sciences to explore how accurate this understanding is, and detail the ways in which different configurations of theology, social engagement, race, sexuality, and other factors shape the evangelical fabric.

The sociologist **Wes Markofski** (Carleton College) presented his research on the religious and political transformations of different movements within American evangelicalism, focusing in particular on progressive evangelicals. Fellow sociologist **Gerardo Marti** (Davidson College) addressed the broad contours of evangelicalism and race, including the religious life of Latinx believers. **Janelle Wong**, a professor

of American Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, explained some important differences between white and non-white evangelicals voters, and summarized key findings from a study focusing on demographic change within the traditional conservative Christian movement.

PROGRAM DETAILS

November 5, 2019

Speakers: Wes Markofski (Carleton College), Gerardo Marti (Davidson College), and Janelle Wong (University of Maryland)



Michael Yudell listens to a member of the audience / Photo by Ohad Klopman

Death & After Lecture Series

THE AURA OF THE DEAD IN A DISENCHANTED WORLD

Cosponsored by the Department of History, the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, and the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society

Tuesday, September 24, 2019
5:00-7:00PM
Lindsay Rogers Room, IAB 7th Floor

THOMAS LAQUEUR
University of California, Berkeley



Artwork: Herman Herberichus, 1667-1705, courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art



The DEATH AND AFTER Series 2019-2020

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

SYNAESTHETICS

MAKING SENSES OF THE AFTERLIFE (#3)

About Farman, The New School for Social Research
Thursday, December 5th // 6-8 PM
Schermerhorn Ext., Room 465

Part of a series of readings/performance lectures by **Abou Farman** and **Leonor Caraballo** featuring tumors, shamans, insects, and hydrogen protons. How can we make sense of the afterlife beyond the limits of a secular frame? And how can the afterlife help us make sense - literally, as in cultivate new modalities of sensing? We will explore these questions through a notion of synaesthetics reformulated from Susan Buck-Mosses by way of MBIs, smells, sounds, and vibrations.

The DEATH AND AFTER Series 2019-2020

JAIL FOR THE DEAD: How New York City Buries the Unclaimed

Wednesday, September 25, 2019, 5-7PM
Heyman Center, Common Room

Cosponsored by the Department of History, the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy, the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, and the Society of Fellows and Heyman Center for the Humanities

THOMAS LAQUEUR
University of California, Berkeley

in conversation with
MELINDA HUNT
President of The Hart Island Project

COLUMBIA HARRIMAN INSTITUTE
Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies

The DEATH AND AFTER Series 2019-2020

THE FUTURE OF IMMORTALITY

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2019 // 6-8 PM
INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS BUILDING, ROOM 1219

a book talk with
ANYA BERNSTEIN
Harvard University

in conversation with
ANTON VIDOKLE
e-Flux

and
ADAM LEEDS
Slavic Languages

In September, we launched a thematic series dedicated to the quintessential questions of “what is death, and what comes after?”. We started with an intervention by acclaimed cultural historian **Thomas Laqueur** (University of California, Berkeley), whose lecture explored the ways in which the aura of mortal remains functions to create sacrality in the absence of God. The following day, Laqueur joined artist and activist **Melinda Hunt** for a conversation on the history of the potter’s field, particularly as it pertains to New York City’s Hart Island—where unclaimed bodies are buried in mass graves by prisoners. Hunt, President of the Hart Island Project, also talked about her work to document the dead and win visitation rights for families.

For the following event, we invited anthropologist **Anya Bernstein** to present her latest book, **The Future of Immortality**. In conversation with artist **Anton Vidokle** and Columbia professor **Adam Leeds**, Bernstein discussed her fieldwork among Russian immortalist communities—from the owners of a small cryonics outfit to scientists inaugurating the field of biogerontology, from grassroots neurotech enthusiasts to believers in the Cosmist ideas of the Russian Orthodox thinker Nikolai Fedorov.

In December, the artist and anthropologist **Abou Farman** (New School for Social Research) gave a multi-sensory performance and lecture, exploring questions related to terminal cancer, the afterlife, and the sensed presence of the dead. Through a mixture of the spoken word, blindfolds, video, and sound, Farman questioned the orthodox parameters of what constitutes an academic “presentation.”

The last event in the series, before all University activities were suspended, was a conversation between historian **Caroline Walker Bynum** and German artist **Heide**

Hatry. Hatry’s most recent work, the series **Icons in Ashes**, consists of realistic portraits created out of the cremated remains of their subjects. The experience of her subjects’ families strongly suggests an uncanny and consolatory effect that is best understood in terms of a sense of the continuing presence of their dead, the demise of which experience underlies our modern “culture of mourning.” Hatry addressed issues of presence, new (and recovered) understandings of our relationship to death and the dead, and the place of art in the process of grieving. Bynum, whose scholarship explores issues of the body, devotional objects, and the nature of likeness, situated Hatry’s work within a larger history of relics and commemoration.

PROGRAM DETAILS

The Aura of the Dead in a Disenchanted World

Lecture | September 24, 2019

Speaker: Thomas Laqueur (University of California, Berkeley)

Co-sponsored by the Department of History, ISERP, and the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society

Jail for the Dead: How New York City Buries the Unclaimed

Panel | September 25, 2019

Speakers: Thomas Laqueur and Melinda Hunt (The Hart Island Project)

Co-sponsored by the Department of History, ISERP, the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society, and The Society of Fellows and Heyman Center for the Humanities

The Future of Immortality

Panel | October 23, 2019

Speakers: Anya Bernstein (Harvard University), Anton Vidokle (e-flux) and Adam Leeds (Columbia, Slavic Languages)

Co-sponsored by the Harriman Institute

Synaesthetics: making senses of the afterlife (#3)

Lecture | December 5, 2019

Speaker: Abou Farman (The New School for Social Research)

Co-sponsored by the Department of Anthropology

Icons and Images: Objects of Commemoration and Presence

Panel | January 28, 2020

Speakers: Heide Hatry (artist) and Caroline Walker Bynum (Columbia University & Institute for Advanced Study)

Co-sponsored by the Departments of Germanic Languages, Art History, and History

Ongoing Projects

THE RELIGION OF KARL OVE KNAUSGAARD

In January 2015 a small group of religious studies scholars gathered under the title “The Religion of Karl Ove Knausgaard” to discuss **My Struggle**, the six-volume novel by Karl Ove Knausgaard that has been described as one of the most significant literary works of the first part of the twenty-first century. Published in Norwegian between 2009-11 and subsequently translated into English, the ambiguously figured “autobiographical” novel is an absorbing, even gripping, first person narrative of the life of a Norwegian writer. Many commentators have observed the religious textures of Knausgaard’s writing, and that Knausgaard’s is a world at once fully disillusioned and thoroughly enchanted; it seemed to us to be a particularly good entrypoint for a new discussion about the representation of religion and secularity in modern times.

Over the next five years (and with additional funding from Indiana University Bloomington), the group met annually over an extended weekend to discuss the novels, focusing on shared passages and exploratory essays and commentary written in advance. The group’s process developed into a project of serious play in both writing and interpretation, concentrating on topics as they emerged from our practice of reading and writing together, that extended into broad questions about how to write and write about religion, today. The group is currently planning one last meeting, in September 2020, hosted by the University of Rochester, to finalize a corporately produced volume.

PROGRAM DETAILS

The Religion of Karl Ove Knausgaard
Workshop | August 24-26, 2019
Co-sponsored by Indiana University,
Bloomington

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

For the third year in a row, IRCPL looked at global populist movements and their ties to religion. After two international conferences on “The American Case” (New York, 2018) and “Rhetoric, Faith, and Social Order in the Middle East” (Amman, 2019), this year we met in Paris to discuss populism and religion in Europe.

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.

This year’s conference, titled **Populist Power, Faith, and Precarity in Europe**, brought together an interdisciplinary group of

scholars to discuss the relationship between religion and populism in the connect of Europe. In recent years, liberal democracies have had to contend with the rise of populist parties and leaders, which have disrupted the established political order and upended the consolidation of Europe that has taken place over the past several decades. Participants discussed the use of religion as a powerful marker of identity, and how populists have deployed religious identities and traditions to present “the people” as morally good in contrast to the established ruling class – labeled as corrupt or morally bankrupt. Scholars were given a platform to discuss various forms of popular power in Europe by examining how populism is defined in various contexts, the role of historical movements in the present-day construction of populist narratives and rhetoric(s), how the use of religious identity shapes these movements, as well as the relationship between populist groups and how a movement engages with different media platforms.

A capstone conference, “Faith in the People,” scheduled for May 2, 2020, was postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Populist Power, Faith, and Precarity in Europe
Workshop | November 8-9, 2019
Co-sponsored by Columbia Global Centers | Paris, 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.

Joint Projects

As part of its mission, IRCPL works to facilitate the study of religion and public life 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 GLOBAL 1979 REVOLUTION: THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION AFTER FORTY YEARS

Principal Investigators: **Hamid Dabashi** (MESAAS) and **Brinkley Messick** (Anthropology)

This program combined two public events with Part 2 of a research workshop designed to prepare a scholarly volume for Cambridge University Press (Part 1 took place at NYU in May 2019). The opening public event, **Iranian Revolution and Its Literary Consequences: Home, Exile and Displacement** featured **Omid Tofighian**, who translated the best-selling memoir **No Friend but the Mountains** written by Behrouz Boochani, in conversation with the exiled poet-scholar **Fatemeh Shams**. Focusing on themes of migration, exile, detention and discrimination as well as the art and politics of translation, it drew a packed audience of 70-80 people. The following evening, Professor **Nasrin Rahimeh** of UC-Irvine gave a public keynote lecture titled **How to Represent Iran at the Intersection of Academy and Community** that

engaged a more intimate audience on the challenges of negotiating different Iranian diasporic constituencies and political agendas in the context of a university-based center.

The two-day workshop featured the work of twelve participants, who had circulated article-length papers ahead of time, and also included other scholars as invited guests. The papers were expanded versions of proposals discussed at the first part of the workshop in May and, taken together, constituted the first draft of the volume set to be published in 2021. The goal of this interdisciplinary workshop was to reinterpret the Iranian Revolution from a global perspective, meaning to consider how various aspects of the events leading up to the revolution fit into a larger, transnational flow of knowledge, people, movements, and material resources. Covering a wide range of fields and methodologies, the papers were presented and discussed in order to advise authors on revisions towards publication.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Iranian Revolution and Its Literary Consequences: Home, Exile and Displacement Panel | December 5, 2019
Speakers: Fatemeh Shams (University of Pennsylvania) and Omid Tofighian (American University in Cairo)

How to Represent Iran at the Intersection of Academy and Community
Keynote Address | December 6, 2019
Speaker: Nasrin Rahimieh (University of California, Irvine)

The Global 1979 Revolution: The Iranian Revolution after Forty Years
Workshop | December 6-7, 2019

Cosponsored by the Ehsan Yarshater Center for Iranian Studies, the Persian Heritage Foundation, the Middle East Institute, and the Iranian Studies Initiative at NYU

RADICAL THINKING IN RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS: MEDIEVAL WOMEN ON SELF-KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH, AND NATURE

Principal Investigators: **Clémence Boulouque** (Religion), **Elizabeth Castelli** (Religion, Barnard), and **Christia Mercer** (Philosophy)

The Center for New Narratives in Philosophy at Columbia held a two-day workshop on February 15–16, 2020 that brought together scholars of medieval and early modern literature, theology, philosophy, and art history to explore the creative and often perilous means that Muslim, Jewish, and Christian women used to reflect on questions about self, community, dignity, truth, and divinity. The participants discussed how women, who were considered intellectually and morally inferior to men, created ways to express new ideas and establish forms of authority. They inquired about the ways in which religious communities allowed women to promote radical religious and social change: What were the risks women and their communities faced when they shared their ideas publicly? And how did they minimize those risks? Finally, they discussed the genres and means

of argumentation they used to present their ideas.

The first day of the workshop highlighted these questions in Christian medieval philosophy. Presentation topics ranged from deciphering new insights within medieval philosophies of self to treating particular medieval women's responses to religious and political authority through their articulations and transformations of notions of prayer, spirituality, knowledge, virtue, and the power of God. The second day of the workshop emphasized the distinctive contributions of Jewish and Muslim female figures and their responses to authority by reclaiming the meaning of religious identity.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Seeking Authority: Women, Genre, and Philosophical Reflection in Medieval and Early Modern Europe
Workshop | February 15-16, 2020

Cosponsored by the Center for New Narratives in Philosophy, the Department of Philosophy, the Department of English and Comparative Literature, and Columbia Maison Française

INVESTIGATION OF RELIGION & HEALTHCARE IN THE US SOUTH

Principal Investigators: **Katherine Franke** (Columbia Law School) and **Elizabeth R. Platt** (The Law, Rights and Religion Project)

For this pilot project, attorneys and students at the Law School's Law, Rights, and Religion Project (LRRP) partnered with student and faculty researchers at the Columbia School of Journalism, as well as freelance investigative journalist Amy Littlefield, to investigate and raise awareness about the range of religiously influenced restrictions on healthcare in the US South, with a particular focus on non-Catholic, religiously affiliated healthcare providers.

During Fall 2019 and Spring 2020, the research team conducted both online research and phone interviews to study how the religious identities of hospital facilities, as well as local regulations and religious exemptions thereof, impact their institutional policies and procedures. Individual interviews took a multi-pronged approach to uncover the nature of religious affiliation and level of real-world impact by contacting

individuals who play different roles within the healthcare ecosystem: 1) representatives from religious organizations such as conventions, foundations and churches that are associated with local or regional hospital systems; 2) providers from hospital systems in said locales or regions; 3) high-level administrators who act as decision-makers; and 4) front desk staff from their perspective as employees.

Due to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person interviews have been put on pause since April 2020, as it has proven nearly impossible to get in touch with hospital staff and providers. Additionally, the Law, Rights and Religion Project Director has been away on parental leave since January, with the intention to return in July. Once the LRRP Director returns in Summer 2020, the goal is to produce a written report based on the findings gathered thus far.

QUESTIONS OF THE NONHUMAN: RETHINKING COLONIAL AND POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH ASIA

Principal Investigator: **Rajbir Singh Judge** (Religion)

The nonhuman—whether animal, vegetal, telluric/elemental/mineral/topographical, extra-terrestrial, monstrous, or spectral—has called into question colonial and postcolonial imaginative circuits, political formations, and bodily registers, creating new forms of ethical engagement and analysis. Participants in this workshop were invited to confront the non-human in all its capaciousness, and its various linkages with South Asia.

Papers explored, through a range of methods, how the non-human helps us to grasp the coordinates that structure(d) empire and its afterlives through what Etienne Balibar calls “the systematic ‘bestialization’ of individuals and racialized human groups.” However, the nonhuman is not an invariable proxy for the human, nor is the management of men, for example, the sole objective of empire or the postcolonial state. Therefore, papers also consider how centering the non-human

undoes the partitions of the “anthropological machine,” centered on divisions between subject/object, sameness/difference, spectator/participant, inclusion/exclusion, by attending to how the nonhuman troubles and, perhaps, even surpasses given forms including our desire for autochthonous ones.

PROGRAM DETAILS

Questions of the Nonhuman: Rethinking Colonial and Postcolonial South Asia Workshop | November 14-15, 2019

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.

GERMAN, JEW, MUSLIM, GAY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HUGO MARCUS

By Marc David Baer
April 2020

In this groundbreaking book, leading Arab Hugo Marcus (1880–1966) was a man of many names and many identities. Born a German Jew, he converted to Islam and took the name Hamid, becoming one of the most prominent Muslims in Germany prior to World War II. He was renamed Israel by the Nazis and sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp before escaping to Switzerland. He was a gay man who never called himself gay but fought for homosexual rights and wrote queer fiction under the pen name Hans Alienus during his decades of exile.

In **German, Jew, Muslim, Gay**, Marc David Baer uses Marcus's life and work to shed new light on a striking range of subjects, including German Jewish history and anti-Semitism, Islam in Europe, Muslim-Jewish

relations, and the history of the gay rights struggle. Baer explores how Marcus created a unique synthesis of German, gay, and Muslim identity that positioned Johann Wolfgang von Goethe as an intellectual and spiritual model. Marcus's life offers a new perspective on sexuality and on competing conceptions of gay identity in the multilayered world of interwar and postwar Europe. His unconventional story reveals new aspects of the interconnected histories of Jewish and Muslim individuals and communities, including Muslim responses to Nazism and Muslim experiences of the Holocaust. An intellectual biography of an exceptional yet little-known figure, *German, Jew, Muslim, Gay* illuminates the complexities of twentieth-century Europe's religious, sexual, and cultural politics.

Research Community

POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS

MOHAMED AMER MEZIANE holds a PhD in Philosophy from Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University. His first book, *Des empires sous la terre* (Empires under earth), will be published in 2021 by Éditions de la Découverte. Through a particular focus on French colonialism in 19th-century Algeria, it deploys a new critique of Orientalism by examining two of its intertwined effects: the Hegelian idea of Christianity's secularization in the modern world and the colonization of North Africa and the Arab world in the aftermath of the Expedition to Egypt. His current publication and research projects focus on climate change and fossil-empires but also on socialism and decolonization. Mohamed Amer Meziane also serves as a member of the editorial board of the journal *Multitudes*. He has two papers forthcoming: "How the Critique of Heaven Confines the Critique of the Earth," in *Qui Parle*, and "Is Orientalism Islamic?" in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*.

RAJBIR SINGH JUDGE specializes in the cultural and intellectual history of South Asia, with a particular emphasis on the Punjab. 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. His most recent publications can be found in the *Journal of the History of Sexuality, History & Theory*, and *Qui Parle*. He has two forthcoming articles: "The Invisible Hand of the Indic," in *Cultural Critique*, and "Critique of Archived Life: Toward a Hesitation of Sikh Immigrant Accumulation" (co-authored with Jasdeep Singh Brar), in *positions: asia critique*. He is the co-PI of an Alliance Program grant titled "Punjab at the Limits of Indian History" (2019-2020). He has accepted a position as Assistant Professor in the Department of History at California State University, Long Beach, starting in Fall 2020.

SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWS

The IRCPL Summer Research Fellowship is awarded each Spring to assist students with expenses directly related to their research. This year, for the first time, we decided to run a separate competition for undergraduate students. Given the COVID-19 pandemic, for this year IRCPL altered the terms of the award, so that the students could use the funding in spite of not being able to travel for fieldwork and archival research.

Chloé Faux is a 4th year PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology. Her dissertation examines the historical and emergent dilemmas of reproduction in contemporary South Africa. Her work centers the ancestral realm as a site of speculation to examine modes of black relationally but also rupture, through the logic and exercise of violence. She puts multiple theories of the political, including queer, feminist, Marxist, Afropessimist, Pan-African, and postcolonial thought, into conversation with each other, while grounding her work in ethnographic practice.

Margaux Fitoussi is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology. Her research analyzes transformations in social life and the built environment in the Maghreb in the wake of colonialism, migration, and political authoritarianism. More specifically,

she focuses on projects of demolition and preservation in Tunisian cities while engaging philosophical and political theoretical debates about materiality, cosmopolitanism, and cultural memory.

Sayori Ghoshal is a PhD candidate in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies. Her research interests include intellectual history, political thought, and the public life of concepts in modern South Asia. In her dissertation, she traces the epistemological production of 'minority' as a group identity, in late colonial and early postcolonial India. Based on archival materials, she examines how religious difference intertwined with biological categories and with the politics of enumeration to constitute non-Hindus as the 'minority' vis-a-vis a secular national 'population'.

Aaron Glasserman is a PhD candidate in the Department of History. His dissertation, *Islam and Muslim Politics in Modern China*, focuses on the central province of Henan. It situates the formation of a national Chinese Muslim political constituency and the division of Chinese Muslims into rival sects in the party politics, mass media, bureaucratization, and war that followed the collapse of the Qing dynasty. It draws on more than a year of documentary and ethnographic research in archives and mosques throughout Henan, in other parts of mainland China, Taiwan, and Japan.

Ishai Mishory is a PhD student in the Department of Religion, where his research in Jewish history focuses on the culture of Hebrew printing in Renaissance Italy and the Ottoman Empire. He has written and published about the special place early modern Hebrew printed material occupies in Jewish material history and its cultural historiography, and has engaged with the reception of print technology in different cultures in light of the postsecular turn in religious studies. The IRCPL fellowship will support research into early modern printed tomes held in libraries and archives in the Middle East, Italy and the United States.

Lexie Ruth Mitchell is a BA candidate in the Department of Religion. She currently works as an intern at the Religions for Peace International Secretariat at the United Nations Church Center. Her research interests include South Asian Tantra, Hindu Goddess traditions, New Religious Movements and New Age religiosity. Her current research focuses on menstruation practices in contemporary Tantric communities and centers around questions of authority, the role of the female in Tantric practice, women's health and spiritual multiculturalism.

Sonja Wermager is a PhD candidate in the Department of Music, where she studies intersections of music, religion, historicism, and nationalism in the late works of German Romantic composer Robert Schumann (1810-1856). Her work seeks to problematize narratives of creative failure that have characterized reception of Schumann's late compositions, asking instead what we might learn about these works by examining them within the complex landscape of mid-nineteenth-century belief and spirituality. The IRCPL fellowship will support archival work at research centers in Düsseldorf, Berlin, and Zwickau.

DISSERTATION FELLOWS

In the Fall 2019 semester, IRCPL successfully launched a new Dissertation Fellowship program. The first cohort, composed of advanced PhD students in different disciplines, met monthly with the director of IRCPL to present their research and to workshop chapters of their dissertation. Each fellow was also awarded \$5000.

Joseph Fisher is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Religion. He earned a BA (2013) from Franklin and Marshall College in Religious Studies before earning an MA (2015) and MPhil (2016) in Religion at Columbia. His training is in the fields of North American Religions and Philosophy of Religion with a focus on the intersection of religion, science, and technology. His dissertation research concentrates on the human enhancement debate in academic and public bioethics and how the concept of human nature operates within this discourse. Joseph's research is inspired by the ways in which bio- and neuro-technologies (real and speculative) shape understandings of what it means to be human and what it might mean in the future.

Sayori Ghoshal is a PhD candidate in the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies. Her research interests include political theory, intellectual history and the public life of concepts in modern South Asia. In her dissertation, she traces the genealogy of the religious minority discourse in late colonial and early postcolonial India. Based on archival and published materials, she studies the epistemological and political debates that produced the non-Hindu Other

as the religious minority; and simultaneously, examines the intertwining of the religious with the biological as well as with the politics of enumeration.

Devon Golaszewski is a doctoral student in African history at Columbia University, and a candidate for the Graduate Certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Her dissertation, entitled "Reproductive Labors: Reproductive Expertise and Biomedical Legibility in Mali, 1935-1999," examines the intertwined and competing practices by which Malian families sought to ensure successful conception, pregnancy and childbirth in the context of high maternal and infant mortality. It traces simultaneously the development of biomedical maternal and reproductive health programs and the changing interventions of local specialists such as birth attendants and nuptial counselors.

Andrew Jungclaus entered Columbia's doctoral program in Religion in 2012 after receiving his BA in American Studies and English Literature from the College of William and Mary (2009) and his MA in Theology from the University of Oxford (2011). Before coming to Columbia, Andrew spent

a year as a research associate at Harvard University's Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research exploring the concept of theodicy within American civil rights struggles. Andrew's dissertation, "True Philanthropy: A Religious History of the Secular Non-Profit Family Foundation," focuses on the evolution of philanthropic models within a history of capitalism.

Dialika Sall is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at Columbia University. Her research examines the integration experiences of the children of African immigrants, focusing on their racialization and acculturation. As an IRCPL Dissertation Fellow, Dialika analyzed how Christianity and Islam structure West African immigrant youth's integration.

THE CLAREMONT PRIZE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION

Another competition launched this academic year, the Claremont Prize is dedicated to the publication of first books by early career scholars working in any discipline of the humanities or social sciences. Prize-winners are invited to IRCPL to participate in a workshop and the books will appear in IRCPL's series, "Religion, Culture, and Public Life," published by Columbia University Press.

The first recipient of the prize is **Alexandra Kaloyanides**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Dr. Kaloyanides served as Managing Editor of *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* and currently serves as editor of the Asian Traditions section of *Marginalia Review of Books*, a *Los Angeles Review of Books* Channel. Her book is titled **Objects of Conversion, Relics of Resistance: Materials of Religious Change at the American Baptist Mission to Burma**, and it illuminates little-known histories of Burma's last kingdom and America's first foreign mission. Throughout the nineteenth-century American Baptist mission to Burma, Burmese Buddhists largely resisted Christian

evangelism while minority communities were baptized in astonishing numbers. And American Baptist Christianity also found itself changed. This book traces four key objects—the sacred book, the school house, the pagoda, and the portrait—to show Burma not as a simple country of unified Buddhists defending themselves against a monolithic Western enemy, but rather as a site of multiple clashing and remade religious worlds.



Dissertation research fellows, from left to right: Sayori Ghoshal, Dialika Sall, Joseph Fisher, Devon Golaszewski, and Andrew Junglaus.

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Co-Sponsored Events

CONFERENCE | *Ecologies of Remembrance: The Material Afterlives of Unidentified Death along the Central Mediterranean Migration Route*

Organized by the Department of Anthropology and the Barnard Human Rights Program
September 11-12, 2019

CONFERENCE | *Religion and Rituality. Fourth Annual Conference of the Francophone Society of the Philosophy of Religion*

Organized by Columbia Maison Française
September 20-21, 2019

BOOK TALK | *Lost Graves and Recycled Mourning Sheds: How the Late Koryo Elite Took the Drama Out of Afterlife.* With Juhn Ahn
Organized by the Center for Korean Research
November 7, 2019

PANEL | *Buddhism and Politics in Korea.* With Juhn Ahn, Hwansoo Kim, Seong Uk Kim, and Jin Y. Park
Organized by the Center for Korean Research
November 8, 2019

SYMPOSIUM | *Competing Truths: Art and the Objects of History after the Council of Trent*
Organized by the Italian Academy
November 15-16, 2019

BOOK TALK | *A Sacred Space Is Never Empty: A History of Soviet Atheism.* With Victoria Smolkin
Organized by the Harriman Institute
February 13, 2020

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