

Fourth Biennial Conference on Religion and American Culture

June 4-7, 2015
J.W. Marriott
Indianapolis

Conference Schedule



THURSDAY, JUNE 4

6:00-8:00 PM Opening Reception and Registration

FRIDAY, JUNE 5

8:30-10:00 Session 1: What do we mean by "religion" in a time of "spirituality," "lived religion," and "non-religion"?

The very term "religion" is contested, not least by concepts such as "lived religion," "spirituality," and various forms of contemporary "non-religion." Is "religion" now primarily about institutions, practices, and ideas that self-define as such? Is religion, on the other hand, everything that contributes to individuals' identities and meanings (including their corporations)? How do recent legal decisions clarify or complicate matters? Is the question being raised in the same way by social scientists, historians, and theologians? If so, or even if not, are their conversations moving along parallel tracks or are the terms being contested in different ways in different fields?

Panelists: Kathleen Flake (University of Virginia)
Deborah Dash Moore (University of Michigan)
Omar McRoberts (University of Chicago)
Robert Orsi (Northwestern University)

10:30-12:00 Session 2: Whither New Religious Movements?

Compared to the 1980s and 1990s, there is less discussion about cults, sects, and new religious movements in the broader discussions of American religious studies. What accounts for this? Are new rubrics of analysis replacing that approach or terminology, or have our scholarly interests waned with the lack of what the public perceives as "dangerous" homegrown groups in our midst?

Panelists: Marion Goldman (University of Oregon)
J. Gordon Melton (Baylor University)
Judith Weisenfeld (Princeton University)

2:00-3:30 Session 3: American Religion and Global Flows

Where once we talked about missions, immigration, or hybridization, the field is increasingly putting those and other topics under the larger umbrella of "global flows." Network societies exchange and interact among actors in religious realms right alongside economic and political. With structural logics made up on nodes that link together social, cultural, and physical places, how are to understand American religion, both presently and historically? What traditional interpretations are sloughed off with this global interpretation and with what are they being replaced?

Panelists: Kate Engel (Southern Methodist University)
Zareena Grewal (Yale University)
Timothy Matovina (Notre Dame University)

4:00-5:30 Session 4: "Religion in the Americas" as an Organizational Paradigm

Some religious studies departments are organizing tracks around the theme of "religion in the Americas," while others retain traditional tracks but try to find ways to include transnational themes. How does this move redefine our topics for research as well as teaching? What, if anything, is left out by organizing in this fashion?

Panelists: Sylvester Johnson (Northwestern)
Winnifred Fallers Sullivan (Indiana University-Bloomington)
Thomas Tweed (Notre Dame University)

SATURDAY, JUNE 6

8:30-10:00 Session 5: Religion and Market

Globalization is, in large measure, about the globalization of trade. Market processes stand alongside large, bureaucratic states as the defining feature of contemporary life. How has religion shaped, and been shaped by, market forces or, more specifically, by capitalism?

Panelists: Kate Bowler (Duke University)
Darren Dochuk (Washington University in St. Louis)
Rhys Williams (Loyola University of Chicago)

10:30-12:00 Session 6: Religion, Class, and Labor

Alongside recent studies of religion, capitalism, and markets have been new studies on religion, class, and labor. How do these differ from earlier social histories? What concerns dominate this area now and what topics still need analysis? How do studies in religion, class, and labor contradict, complement, or complicate studies of religion, capitalism, and markets?

Panelists: Richard Callahan (University of Missouri)
Bill Mirola (Marian University)
Evelyn Sterne (University of Rhode Island)

2:00-3:30 Session 7: What is the currency of "civil religion"?

We are approaching the 50th anniversary of Robert Bellah's seminal essay in *Daedalus*. What is the state of studies in Civil Religion today? Having been introduced at a time of war, how is it faring today in our constant state of war? How does it add to or complicate our understanding of religion and American culture, which has undergone many changes since 1967?

Panelists: Penny Edgell (University of Minnesota)
Mark Silk (Trinity College)
Wendy Wall (University of Oregon)

4:00-5:30 Session 8: Liberalism vs. Pluralism as Models of Interpretation

In the 1970s, after the publication of Sydney Ahlstrom's *Religious History of the American People*, the creation of a post-Puritan, liberal Protestant culture was the dominant model for interpreting American religious history. The 1980s saw the beginning of the "de-centering" of American religion, with important contributions coming from various fields. Pluralism and diversity became the watchwords of courses and textbooks. Recently, a new model that again underscores liberalization, even secularization, has arisen—placing the story in a literal marketplace where religion lives alongside other aspects of American culture. Are these competing models? If so, which should be preferred? If not, how are they reconciled?

Panelists: Pamela Klassen (University of Toronto)
Stephen Prothero (Boston University)
Leigh Schmidt (Washington University in St. Louis)

5:30 Closing Reception