

CMRC

A u g u s t 9 - 1 3 2 0 1 0

7th international
conference on
media, religion,
and culture



Hosted by
Ryerson University
Toronto, Canada

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Welcome to Ryerson University and The 7th International Conference on Media, Religion and Culture

My first academic meeting as a graduate student was the 1996 Conference on Media, Religion and Culture hosted by Stewart Hoover and Lynn Schofield Clark at the University of Colorado at Boulder. I arrived alone and knowing no one, but found a welcoming network of people who approached this field of endeavour in new, interesting, truly interdisciplinary ways, and it made all the difference to my own work. This series remains my favourite academic gathering, and I'm delighted to be able to return the hospitality extended to me in each subsequent setting.

Following up on exploratory conversations at the 2008 Sao Paulo meeting, we'll be discussing the future organization of the group Thursday, Aug. 12 at noon. Please consider joining us for this important meeting.



Photo: Catherine Farquharson

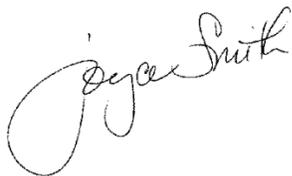
This year, you'll find fewer plenary sessions but more chances to hear about the research of your colleagues from across the spectrum. The call for papers emphasized diversity of traditions and approaches, and I think you'll agree that the program is one of the most varied we've seen yet.

Ryerson University is well-known for its attention to teaching, so it also gives me great pleasure to see the number of panels which address the way in which we might evolve this important aspect of our academic pursuits.

I hope you'll take the opportunity to explore Toronto, central for media production in Canada, rich in religious expression of all kinds, and bursting with cultural celebration, especially during this summer season.

My thanks to all who have helped me in the planning and organization of this meeting, and to you, for attending and participating in what I hope will be another collegial, inspiring CMRC.

Welcome!



Joyce Smith,
Host, CMRC2010
Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director
School of Journalism, Ryerson University
CMRC2010 Conference at a Glance

MONDAY, August 9, 2010

12:00 p m	Registration begins in George Vari Engineering and Computing Centre (ENG) (245 Church St.)
4:30 - 6:00 p m	(ENG103) Welcome from host Joyce Smith and Ryerson University Opening Address: Jane Ash Poitras, Experiences of an Advocate for Shamanism
6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	Reception in Vari Atrium, third floor of George Vari Engineering and Computing Centre

TUESDAY, August 10, 2010 (full schedule begins on page 5)

8:30 am - 4:00 pm	Registration continues in ENG building			
8:30 am - 9:00 am	Daily Announcements			
9:00 am - 10:30 am	LG5 Masculinity: Thevenin, Coats, Casteline, Hoover	LG6 TV: Hirji, Lynch, Ferré	LG12 Religion & Senses: Classen, Howes, Slaney, Plate	LG13 Catholicism: Ruoizzi, Cantoni/Rapetti/Tardini/Van nini, Roncakova
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Coffee Break			
11:00 am - 12:30 pm	LG5 Nordic: Linderman/Lövheim, Reintoft-Christensen, Sumiala, Lundby	LG6 Teaching: Boutros, Coats, Asamoah- Gyadu, Mahan, Hoover	LG12 TV: Dierberg, Smith, Echchaibi/Subijanto	LG13 Books: Ronald, Paradis, Zenk, Plessentin
12:45 pm - 2:30 pm	Lunch			
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	LG5 Strife: Karim, Hoover/Echchaibi, Siraj, Cohen/Tsarfaty	LG6 East Asian: Lee, Travagnin, Chi- Keung	LG12 TV: Karis, Nieder, Dorestal, Krämer	LG13 Mediatization: Boutros, Winston, Petersen
4:05 pm - 4:30 pm	Coffee Break			
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm	LG5 Online/Offline: Baffelli, Lundby, Cheong/Huang/Poon, Hutchings	LG6 Soft Power: Odartey- Wellington, Riley, Khan, Jiwani	LG12 Youth: Carmen, Goossen, Bobkowski, Mir	

WEDNESDAY, August 11, 2010 (full schedule begins on page 41)

8:30 am - 4:00 pm	Registration continues in ENG building			
8:30 am - 9:00 am	Daily Announcements			
9:00 am - 10:30 am	LG5 News: Koutsoukos/Cassin, Mandell, Stockard Jr., Taira	LG6 Brands: Einstein, Fahlén, Lauricella		LG13 Communities: Haskell/Flatt/Lathang ue, Michels, Teusner, Bobkowski/Malik
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Coffee Break			

11:00 am - 12:30 pm	LG5 Identity: Grieve, Schofield Clark, Wagner, Subijanto	LG6 Japan: Dorman, Chilson, Baffelli	LG12 Scripture/Method: van der Stoep, Thorn, Soukup, Horsfield	LG13 Politics: Healey, Amari, Dyson
12:45 pm - 2:30 pm	Lunch			
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	LG5 History: MacLennan, Kenny, Koerber, Tiitsman	LG6 Film: Xavier, Preston, Sjö, Axelson	LG12 Witnessing: Richards, Thomas, Sumiala	LG13 Teaching: Torma, Godkin, Schwartz
4:05 pm - 4:30 pm	Coffee Break			
4:30 pm - 6:00 pm	LG5 Authority: Campbell/Golan, Lagerwey, Granholm, Teusner	LG6 News: Buddenbaum, Hoover, Mason, do Nascimento Cunha	LG12 Politics: Cho, Taske, Plude, Mandell	

THURSDAY, August 12, 2010 (full schedule begins on page 76)

8:30 am - 9:00 am	Daily Announcements			
9:00 am - 10:30 am	LG5 Electronic: Chauhan, Pasche Guignard, Abdel-Fadil	LG6 Disaster/Salvation: Dakroury, Mitchell, Sang	LG12 Communities: Eberhardt Casteline, Echchaibi, Stevens, Cohen	LG13 Teaching: Kenny, Coffey, Marchessault, Garner
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Coffee Break			
12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	ENG 103: Meeting on organization of future activities			
1:00 pm - 2:30 pm	Lunch			
2:30 pm - 4:00 pm	LG5 Virtual: Hardy/Corban, Vallikatt, Derry/Michael, Garner	LG6 Space: Coats, Billings, Emerich, Obata	LG12 TV & Film: Volaric, Siaw, Anas	LG13 Dialogue: Eid, Gerolami
4:05 pm - 4:30 pm	Coffee Break			
5:00 pm and on	Dinner 'dates' around the city			

FRIDAY, August 13, 2010 (full schedule begins on page 95)

8:30 am - 9:00 am	Daily Announcements			
9:00 am - 10:30 am	LG5 Networks: Bantugan, Bekkering, Orhon, Ben Moussa	LG6 Struggles/Spheres: Bustamante, de Matos/de Matos, Salam, Axner	LG12 Virtual: Radde-Antweiler, Teusner	
10:30 am - 11:00 am	Coffee Break			
12:00 pm - 1:30 pm	ENG 103: Closing Plenary			
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm	Closing Lunch in Pitman Hall			

Opening Keynote by

Jane Ash Poitras: Experiences of an Advocate for Shamanism

Jane Ash Poitras, RCA is an internationally acclaimed visual artist whose work has been showcased in numerous solo and group exhibitions around the world, and can be found in many



Curtis Trent Photo

prestigious public, private and commercial collections. She is a graduate of the University of Alberta with degrees in microbiology and printmaking, and has a Master of Fine Arts in Painting and Sculpture from New York's Columbia University.

Respected for her generous support of Aboriginal and community causes, her numerous honors include the Alberta Centennial Medal, the National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Arts and Culture, University of Alberta Alumni Award of

Excellence, and the City of Edmonton Cultural Hall of Fame.

Born in the isolated northern Alberta community of Fort Chipewyan, Jane was orphaned at an early age and fostered by Marguerite Runck, then 65, a devout Catholic of German descent. Growing up in the McCauley area of Edmonton, Jane spent many happy hours drawing and coloring and cutting and pasting (her first experience with collage).

Despite her artistic leanings, she was told it was impossible to make a living as an artist and encouraged to make another career choice. Jane chose medicine, but health problems intervened in her efforts to become a doctor. Despite those problems, she successfully gained a Bachelor of Science degree in microbiology at the University of Alberta.

While working as a microbiologist, Jane continued to work at her art, taking evening courses at the University of Alberta. With encouragement from those who recognized her talent, she graduated in 1983 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Printmaking. Accepted by several post-graduate programs, she chose prestigious Columbia University in New York City, graduating with a Master of Fine Arts in Painting and Sculpture in 1985.

Since returning to Canada, Jane has been much in demand as a guest lecturer, first as a sessional lecturer at the University of Alberta, and then as an invited guest lecturer at universities and public galleries across North America. Her courses in Contemporary Native Art and Shamanic Art are among the most popular at the university.

Jane Ash Poitras: New Acquisitions of Contemporary First Nations Art *features four paintings. The works will be on display in the Royal Ontario Museum's Daphne Cockwell Gallery of Canada's First Peoples from Sept. 25, 2010 to September 2011.*

Tuesday, August 10

9 – 10:30 a.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: TV

Room: LG6

Chair:

Faiza Hirji (McMaster University) Through the Looking Glass: Muslim Women on Television

Over the years, Muslim women have constituted a source of fascination in the media. This is particularly true in times of conflict e.g. the Islamic Revolution, the first Gulf War, and the 2001 “war on terror,” where the war was often described by journalists as a way to liberate Afghan women oppressed by Taliban rule. While the glare of the media may be most intense in the arena of news, dramatic and comedic programs have also begun to incorporate images of the Muslim woman.

Some of these programs may utilize stereotypical imagery frequently and rather openly, especially in the case of programs that are heavily invested in narratives of terror and enemy infiltration, as with the dramatic series *24*. Others, however, may be more well-intentioned, as in the case of the light-hearted comedic series, *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and yet even *Little Mosque*, touted as an enlightening and successful comedy, does very little to change essentializing images of Muslim women. In *Little Mosque*, perhaps even more than in *24*, there is a normative vision of the Muslim woman. She is bright, independent and articulate, and usually prepared to speak on behalf of women’s rights. Undoubtedly, this is a more positive depiction than many others available through the media. With the exception of a very young Muslim woman and one woman who is a convert, however, devout Muslim women on *Little Mosque* usually wear a head covering and often adhere to one interpretation of Islam, as though no other existed. This may promote the notion that Islam is monolithic and that Muslim women generally fall into a few stereotypical categories. While the show appears to work diligently to address and counter notions of oppressed Muslim women, its portrayals do not leave space for the many Muslim women who practise differently from the female characters on this show. Ultimately, despite *Little Mosque*’s attempts to educate, which separate it significantly from *24*, which has no other apparent mandate than to entertain and perhaps to instill fear in its viewers, it seems questionable whether either show contributes meaningfully to expanding the spectrum of existing discourses about Muslim women.

This paper discusses whether television programming has evolved over time in its depiction of the Muslim woman, drawing upon existing literature regarding historical depictions, and building upon that review with a discourse analysis of contemporary shows such as *24*, *Little Mosque on the Prairie* and *Lost*. It interrogates the role of entertainment media in advancing pluralist discourses, and investigates the limitations and possibilities of historical and contemporary depictions of Muslim women in such media.

Gordon Lynch (Birkbeck College, University of London) **Media and the sacrality of the care of children**

This paper forms part of a larger project currently conducted by the author on developing a theoretical framework for the sociology of the sacred. An important element of this project is a discussion of the role of media as the primary institutional site for the reproduction, negotiation and contestation of the sacred in late modern societies.

Dayan and Katz's theory of media events provided a seminal account of the sacred role of public media. The subsequent critical reception of their work has tended to explore alternative ways in which the concept of ritual might be applied to contemporary media, as well as exploring how performances of the sacred through media might elicit conflict, disenchantment and cynicism more than social integration. Whilst acknowledging the value of this critical discussion, the paper seeks to challenge both of these responses firstly by questioning whether the concept of ritual is necessary for thinking about the negotiation of sacred forms through media, and whether alternative ways of conceiving the sacred (e.g. Jeffrey Alexander's semiotic approach) might explain how traces of sacred forms are dispersed through a range of media texts and practices. Secondly, the paper will raise the question of whether performances of the sacred necessarily elicit counter-performances, disenchantment or cynicism, or whether particular forms of the sacred can still evoke widespread identification.

The paper will use the case example of the sacrality of the care of children to develop these points. Noting the historical contingency of this sacred form in Western culture, the paper will examine both the ways in which the sacrality of the care of children is diffused through different media forms, as well as the ways in which this sacred form 'nests' other contemporary forms of the sacred, challenging, for example, the autonomy and authority of traditional religious institutions. Using the recent case of the BBC's decision not to broadcast a humanitarian appeal for Gaza, it will also explore how the power of this sacred form presents challenges for public broadcasters in pluralist societies, in ways that can undermine the role of public media as a site for encountering and reproducing sacred forms.

John Ferré (University of Louisville) **Television Criticism through a Half Century of *Christianity Today* Cartoons**

In 1984, when the award-winning political cartoonist Wayne Stayskal moved from the Chicago Tribune to the Tampa Tribune, *Christianity Today* featured him under the headline "Newspapers Serve as Pulpits for This Editorial Cartoonist." The 52 year old recalled having considered becoming a pastor, but he decided instead to turn his artistic talents and his evangelical Christian outlook into a career as an editorial cartoonist. *Christianity Today* said, "His pulpit is the newsprint that carries his views to hundreds of thousands of readers each week." Television, both secular and religious, is among the subjects that Stayskal has tackled through his syndicated cartoons, and over the years *Christianity Today* has published several of them.

American television's most outspoken critics have been Christian evangelicals, and among Christian evangelical institutions, the most enduring source of television criticism has been

Christianity Today. Called “a medium unparalleled in promoting the message of the new evangelicalism and in reflecting the cultural and religious attitudes of its constituency” by church historian Douglas Sweeney, the flagship evangelical magazine has used cartoons that have questioned television broadcasting for the past 45 years. This paper analyses Christianity Today’s cartoons about TV -- some 61 in all since 1965, some original to Christianity Today, some republished from newspapers, and most from the 1980s and 1990s -- to explicate the concerns that TV’s most vocal North American critics have had since TV became a ubiquitous household window on the world.

Nearly a third of these cartoon commentaries have taken on religious broadcasting, but most of them have gone after secular broadcasting, highlighting issues of control, content, audience, channel, and effect. Although the messages of these cartoons are diverse, they are largely critical of both secular and religious television. In general, their criticism of secular television singles out programmers or advertisers; challenges television’s preoccupation with sex, violence, and consumerism; faults the audience for a lack of discipline; and considers television to be a complicating and consuming medium that impedes Christian faith and devotion. The cartoons see little salvation in religious television, which they characterize as derivative in content, practice, and effect.

Panel B: Catholicism

Room: LG13

Chair: Colum Kenny

Federico Ruozzi and Annalisa Sezzi (Institute for Religious Studies (Bologna) / University of Modena and Reggio Emilia) The television representation of the second Vatican council (1962-1965): how the image of the Catholic Church changed

Pope John XXIII had wanted The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council (Rome, October 11th 1962- December 8th 1965) with the aim of renewing the Catholic Church and updating it to modern times. Television had an important role in this religious event: for the first time in history, a Council was convoked in the Media Age, and, for the first time, its images were broadcasted all over the world. In particular, Rai-Tv broadcast many programmes such as documentaries, weekly survey, historical and theological transmissions, interviews, journalistic reports and so on in order to give an account of this event. Actually, the Italian public television was the sole responsible for all the transmissions on the Council and the mass media attention stimulated a double level, creating an unexpected relationship of centripetal and centrifugal forces, two different categories of analysis: from internal to external, the media (radio, paper, cinema, but above all, television) conveyed more information about the conciliar events and about what happened inside than had ever been done before; instead, from external to internal, they influenced the Council fathers themselves, directly on the discussion. The television images in fact were an important actor of the event, affecting the discussion of the conciliar fathers. The public opinion was not simply a spectator of the show, “but through the news media also acted as a sounding board, with undeniable results”. Not only did the Italian television provide worldwide coverage, but it also took care of the event. This medium had the privilege and the control of its representation to the world. As a matter of fact, the opening ceremony of the Second Vatican Council ushered in the era of the worldwide transmission: Telstar (operative since July 11th

1962) transmitted the Council images simultaneously in 18 international agencies connected with Eurovision and North America, as well as the radio commentary in 11 countries.

Hence, the broadcasting of the opening ceremony represented the first worldwide television connection between Europe and North-America and these television images show us a church that was changing in its visible aspects, and they also revealed a deep change in its teachings. In fact, for the first time the Italian public could see the image of the universal Church. The television images showed a global Church, which was once invisible to the society and culture of the 60s and of the economic boom. The most important theologians and historians appeared on the Italian screen in prime time and they spoke about ecumenism, dialogue with other religions and confessions, biblical and liturgical renewal: themes unknown to the Italian Roman Catholic. As a matter of fact, till then television had shown just single fragments of the Pope's public life. Thus, unconsciously RAI carried out a revolution: the image of the church changed in a radical way, and in this pontificate under the eyes of television we can find the roots of every contemporary change regarding the image of the Catholic Church and the use of the medium made by the church. But this religious television is totally different compared with the religious television of nowadays. After the visual revolution of the Second Vatican, television returned to concentrate its attention, on the one hand, on the Pope declarations and action (Wojtyła pilgrimages, his funeral, Jubilee, festive celebration) and on the other hand on the charismatic figure through many fictional representations.

Lorenzo Cantoni, Emanuele Rapetti, Stefano Tardini and Sara Vannini (Università della Svizzera italiana) The use of ICTs by Christian Catholic Priests: Canada Compared against the World Picture

The Christian Catholic Church has always devoted great attention to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and to the Internet potential. Aim of this paper is to investigate how Church ministrants exploit ICTs for their pastoral activities, and, in particular, how priests active in Canada differ in their use from priests in the rest of the world.

The project "PICTURE" (Priests' ICT Use in their Religious Experience – www.pictureproject.info) aims at drawing a map of this scenario. Data about the use of ICT by priests have been collected through a questionnaire, available both online and on paper, which was translated into seven languages (English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish). The questionnaire was addressed only to Catholic priests, and was promoted in different ways, in order to ensure a wide distribution.

Data collection has been made over 3 months and was closed the 28th of February 2010: a total of 5'189 questionnaires were collected, corresponding to 1.3% of the whole population of Catholic priests. Respondents were from 120 countries: 54.9% from Europe, 37.5% from America, 3.5% from Asia, 2.5% from Africa and 1.6% from Oceania.

96 questionnaires have been collected from Canada, representing 1.1% of the population (according to the latest Holy See data, in 2007, 8'421 Catholic priests were active in Canada). 61% of Canadian respondents filled in the questionnaire in English, 35% in French and 4% in other languages.

The very first results of this research show that, although Canadian priests have a slightly higher access to ICT than priests in the rest of the world (for instance, 63.8% of them have a desktop computer in their parish, while the global average is 54.1%), they seem to exploit them less than their colleagues in their pastoral and spiritual activities.

Priests in Canada seem to appreciate the use of ICTs within their religious experience less than the world average: 45.7% of them declared to consider the Internet very useful for facilitating their pastoral activities (compared to 55.6% globally) and as much as 11.7% appreciate it only a few or not at all for that purpose (compared to 7.6%). Also, only 5.3% uses the Internet everyday for praying (compared to the 15.5% in the rest of the world), while 36.2% would never use it for that purpose.

On the other hand, the Internet appears to be considered a very useful tool to retrieve information and especially to better prepare for preaching: 61.7% of priests in Canada declare they use it for their homilies.

A last glance about the usage of social media shows that in Canada priests who are not in contact with anyone among their colleagues using a social network amount to 50.0% (versus 35.4% in the rest of the world).

Terezia Roncakova (Catholic University, Ruzomberok) Religious Messages and the Media Code Inherent features of the media language code and the transmission of religious messages

The purpose of this study is to determine whether the media language code is suitable for transmitting religious messages. This study was based on Catholic research sample, and the cultural context of this study is also Catholic.

In order to transmit a message successfully, one must accommodate to the character and nature of the message. Messages are formed by the news values. When speaking about a religious message in the media, we recognize a need to emphasize the classical news values first and foremost. In religious media communication, however, one observes a tendency not to respect the classical news values, and in fact tends to limit them. This approach makes religious media communication fail at the start. If messages are formed by news values, then religious messages are formed by means of values that we named the gospel values, and can be identified with traditional Catholic Church virtues. Finding possible connections between the news values and the gospel values seems to be one of the basic solutions for the religious message media coding.

This study further reviews individual news values in detail, choosing specifically those that relate (positively or negatively) to the religious messages. Using textual analysis and qualitative research techniques, e.g., focus groups and Delphi, we investigate: (1) conflict first and foremost, then (2) scandalousness, (3) entertainment, (4) fragmentation, (5) incompleteness, (6) stereotypes, and (7) story.

The Church, as an external communicator, assumes an attitude of resistance, and thus it loses the media potential it might otherwise have. The category of conflict is especially relevant here.

While some may perceive the conflict in the religious setting positively (the so-called prophetic mission of Christ's followers), others believe that the Church media outputs are deservedly condemned for false "non-conflict", even sterility.

The Church attempts to master some of the other news values and lays excessive hopes in them. Entertainment and recreational news values for example, have been proved to be identified as "life-style, tabloid, commercial way to hell" in the religious messages context. That is why the study attempts to find an objective view of potential individual news values in the religious media communication.

Finally, this study synthesizes individual observations into practical results. It reviews the inadequacies on the one hand, and possible solutions on the other, thus presenting a useful output for media communicators who are either professional writers and journalists, or are members of the Church. These results are a part of a complex research output that focuses not only on the medial language code but also on the nature of the media channel, external impacts on the medial communication, and the philosophical and ideological bases of the communication (topoi).

Panel C: Religion and the Senses

Room: LG12

Chair:

Constance Classen (Concordia University) *Fire in the Hand: Shrines, Museums and the Power of Touch in Early Modernity*

"Fire in the hand" was a premodern expression signifying immediate apprehension – a revelation which comes as quickly and forcefully as the experience of touching fire. Relics and rarities were believed to contain a supernatural fire, a powerful force which could only be accessed by touch. Visitors to shrines and museums in early modernity were therefore eager to touch such powerful objects and have a mystical experience of "fire in the hand," an experience thought capable of producing both spiritual and physical transformations. This talk discusses the ancient and medieval origins of this notion as well as the specific tactile practices employed at shrines and museums in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

David Howes (Concordia University) *Witchcraft on Display: The Transformation of Indigenous Religions into Visual Artifacts in the Ethnographic Museum*

In the late nineteenth century, it was common practice to arrange ethnographic artifacts in glass boxes in illustration of diverse Western-inspired typologies. The Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford presents a classic example of this display strategy, with its formal ("evolutionary") arrangements of weaponry, musical instruments, and – of particular interest to us -- objects of "primitive superstition." In this way, numinous phenomena were transformed into object lessons in the march of civilization. In recent years, certain ethnographic artifacts have stopped being viewed as objects and come instead to be treated as sentient subjects in accordance with the beliefs of their indigenous creators. These artifacts have their senses catered to by curators and/or ritual specialists and their presentation is designed to make a distinct impression on the museum-

visitor. This talk explores the history of the disabling/enabling of the (non-visual) senses in the ethnographic display of sacra.

Frances Slaney (Carleton University) **Sensing Witchcraft in the Sierra Tarahumara**

This paper explores the sensory signs of witchcraft within a Tarahumara (Rarámuri) community in northwestern Mexico, and describes the extraordinary sensory skills required to combat the work of witches. More than a matter of inter-personal relations gone wrong, Tarahumara witchcraft threatens an entire landscape. Witches conjure animate proxies that pervert healthy life. They send birds across the night-sky to suck blood from people sleeping below and direct pebbles to invade human bodies. Such life-threatening misfits are ambient, loose in a landscape through which subsistence horticulturalists make their lives. Bewitched entities, however, emit sensorial clues that belie their presence: bird proxies hum and the animated pebbles shriek as they plunge into human flesh. Techniques for addressing them require finely honed sensory perception and powerful skills to repair damage and overpower witches. A shaman's speech is a sonic force that plays a significant role in this remedial process.

S. Brent Plate (Hamilton College) **The Skin of Religion: Toward an Aesthetic Theory of the Sacred**

This paper introduces an approach to understanding religion in and through its skin. The accent is on the materiality, sensuality, and mediated quality of religious experience. The paper begins by recuperating the original Greek meaning of the term "aesthetics" – that is aesthetics as "sense perception". Aesthetics, as discussed here, is about the ways human bodies sense their religious worlds through sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell, among other possible senses. Sometimes the sensual encounter enables humans to be touched and transformed by beautiful art (i.e. the "aesthetic" in the conventional modern sense of the term), but such encounters more often occur on an immediate and everyday basis: in the candle lit before Sabbath prayer, in the incense smelled upon entering the temple, in the bitter herbs eaten at Passover, in the chanted call to prayer of the Muezzin, in the watercolor portrayal of the head of Jesus Christ, in the stroll through the Zen inspired gardens of Kyoto. An aesthetic approach to religion pays attention to senses as they engage with the material objects and activities that comprise the religious experience. The paper concludes by offering some notes towards an aesthetic theory of the sacred.

Panel D: Media, Religion, and the "Crisis" of Masculinity: Discourses of Commitment, Values, and Purpose

Room: LG5

Chair: Stewart Hoover, (University of Colorado, Boulder)

Benjamin Thevenin (University of Colorado, Boulder) ***Braveheart* and Masculinity among Christian Men**

Given the pervasiveness of media in contemporary society, it is no wonder that a film would be the text referenced most in relation to issues of masculinity among the participants in the Center for Media, Religion and Culture's current "Media, Meaning, and Work" project. Interestingly,

these men commonly invoked the warrior-archetype depicted in the film *Braveheart* in these discussions of manhood.

Analyses of *Braveheart* as well as Mel Gibson's other work, suggest that depictions of the warrior-archetype is a response to the perceived 'crisis of masculinity' that is felt most significantly among conservative Christian men. In fact, discussions of this crisis, like that of Christian author John Eldredge, specifically cite *Braveheart* as an exemplification of this lost conception of manhood.

But despite the perceived function of the film as a reconciliation of this crisis, the readings of *Braveheart* vary—much like individual interpretations of scripture. Among the men interviewed for the study, some identify with William Wallace's violent quest; others are critical of it. Some sympathize with his efforts to avenge his family, others with his efforts to liberate his people.

This paper will treat both the specific depictions of masculinity in *Braveheart* and how these depictions are read by individuals in relation to their particular religious, cultural and social contexts. Because however these participants read the film and conceive of their roles as men, it is evident that the issue of masculinity is significant and that *Braveheart* has emerged as a key text in discussing it.

Curtis Coats (Millsaps College) Mainline men in crisis? Continuing the conversation of media and masculinity from non-Evangelical perspectives

Conservative Christian men and women have, by and large, dominated the cultural conversation regarding a perceived "crisis of masculinity" in the United States. Stadium events, small group discussions, weekend seminars and retreats, radio shows, video materials and any number of books have sounded a clarion call about this "crisis" and solutions for it.

Scholars of religion have, rightly, followed this conversation. Whether pointing to embedded patriarchy, negotiations and fluidity of "masculine" and "feminine" identity, or differences between official conservative Christian rhetoric and "people in the pews," the academy has built a necessary, critical conversation about this (or these) conservative voice(s).

But what of the mainline, or non-Evangelical, Christian conversations about this perceived 'crisis'? Do such conversations exist? If so, how are they similar and different from their conservative counterparts? In particular, in what ways do non-Evangelical conversations draw on media to inform and/or amplify their ideas about masculinity and any perceived crisis therein? This paper will explore this "side" of the Christian conversation regarding masculinity. It will draw on field data from in-depth interviews as well as focus groups conducted with mainline (non-Evangelical) men who have participated in the "Media, Meaning, and Work: Men, Vocation, and Civic Engagement" project conducted by the Center for Media, Religion and Culture at University of Colorado-Boulder.

Kimberly Eberhardt Casteline (University of Colorado, Boulder) Answering the call: Vocation and calling among evangelical and mainline Christians

This paper reports on work in progress as a part of the "Media, Meaning, and Work: Men, Vocation, and Civic Engagement" project conducted by the Center for Media, Religion and

Culture at University of Colorado-Boulder. This multi-year study is an investigation of how religion and media serve as sources for received ideas about the familial, civic and political roles of men. Interviews and focus groups are being employed to investigate the complex and nuanced ways that religion, media, and masculinity interact in the making of contemporary civic and cultural identities.

Calling surfaces as an explanatory concept used by many respondents when explicating the various roles they inhabit in the family, at work, and in the public sphere. This paper presents a discursive analysis of narratives about calling in order to present conceptualizations of calling by evangelical and mainline Christian informants. These two groups have traditionally been framed as diverging along lines of conservatism versus liberalism in regards to gender roles, the interpretation of Biblical texts, and other issues. In light of the historical differences, this paper examines three potential areas of dissimilarity: 1) discursive constructions of calling in relation to gender, 2) expectations for children in relation to calling and 3) how calling integrates with their familial, civic and cultural roles.

Stewart Hoover (University of Colorado, Boulder) **The Media Imaginary of Masculinity**

This paper will assess the overall findings of the study regarding the role that media play in relation to both received ideas of masculinity and received values and resources from religion and religious culture. It will address the complex and layered ways that media interact with ideas and values for informants in the research, in the context of daily practices of media use and consumption. It will then move on to theoretical and conceptual reflection on how received ideas about media are rooted in shared and commonplace ideas about domestic values, these ideas themselves rooted in complex ways in ideas about religion and spirituality. Finally, it suggests a way of conceptualizing these issues in relation to competing registers of masculinity: a "*normative*" register of normative and received values and ideas about the "shoulds" of masculinity and its various elements or components, and a "*practical*" register where men (and women) negotiate out actual, lived conditions of domestic, civic, and work life. The paper will argue that the media imaginary provides powerful and meaningful articulations of the normative register and far more equivocal and contradictory ideas about the practical register, with a variety of consequences.

Tuesday, August 10

11 – 12:30 a.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: TV

Room: LG12

Chair:

Jill Dierberg (University of Denver/Illiff School of Theology) **Religious Identity and The Colbert Report**

Both The Daily Show and The Colbert Report have been highly successful among young adult viewers. In addition, both of these shows, especially The Colbert Report, employ religion as a

key component in their critiques of the political system and of arrangements of power more generally, and furthermore, these programs often reference religion in ways that seem to echo the stance of irreverence that has long been associated with young adult stances toward religion. Therefore, the relationship between religion and shows such as these should not be ignored.

This paper, then, utilizes textual analysis and reception studies (Hall 1993; Markham and Baym, 2008) to highlight the rhetoric devoted to religion on Comedy Central's *The Colbert Report* as well as the religious rhetoric on the show's online fan forum, *Colbert Nation*. Analyzing how religious viewers negotiate their religious identity within the context of the show, this paper finds that religious young people who watch *The Colbert Report* negotiate their religious identity in relation to the show in several ways, depending on their religious-political identity as well as their willingness to maintain, reject, or synthesize their religious beliefs in relation to the show's religious and political messages.

Research into the religious rhetoric within *The Colbert Report* therefore contributes to existing studies that have found that 21 percent of young adults received their political news during the 2004 presidential campaign from comedy shows such as *Saturday Night Live* and *The Daily Show*, (Pew 2004). Although a great deal of research has focused on the political effects of soft news on its viewers (Baumgartner and Morris, 2005, 2006; Moy, 2005, 2006; Cao and Brewer, 2008; LaMarre et al., 2008) there has been no research dedicated to the way in which these shows portray religion, or how viewers understand their religious identity in relation to various forms of soft news. Yet if viewing contributes to political understandings, we can expect that viewing practices might similarly contribute to religious understandings – or at least, to how people position themselves in relation to religious identities and religious rhetorics. This paper therefore explores that relationship.

Joyce Smith (Ryerson University) *Rescue Me: Fact, fiction and faith*

First airing in 2004, *Rescue Me* is now in its sixth season. The show is set in a New York City firehouse post 9/11, and centres on Tommy Gavin, a heroic but deeply flawed firefighter. Over the course of the six seasons, Gavin and his family (by birth as well as by occupation) deal with literal ghosts as well as alcoholism, parenthood, family disintegration, infidelity, illness, racism, homosexuality, job stress and politics. Few other TV series have dared to depict Jesus Christ and Mary Magdalene in the flesh, or spent as much time developing the character of a defrocked priest (Father Mickey Gavin). This paper will look at the way in which the writers and directors blend news reports and fact with intangible ideas of faith, centring on Irish-American Catholicism. Particular attention will be given to the depiction of clergy, from the stereotypical drunken priest to the suspected pedophile, and how *Rescue Me*'s handling of these differs from other images in American television, literature and journalism.

Nabil Echchaibi and Rianne Subijanto (University of Colorado, Boulder) *Building Religious Authority in the Media Age: The New Muslim Media Personality*

The actions of Muslims have often been inscribed in a cultural and political discourse that casts them in subordinate terms as traditional, introverted and fatalist. Re-instituting faith in a culture that sees itself mostly at the receiving end of a powerful imported secular culture, no matter how

liberating it might be, is unequivocally considered regressive and anti-modern by those who see no emancipation in the dogmas of the religious. But a number of Muslims have turned to modern media technologies like satellite television and the Internet, not necessarily to re-invent religious tradition and stir up pious passions but to seek original ways to render religious discourse more deliberative and create an alternative modernity. Today, Islamic television is a far cry from the staid sheikh delivering his sermon on a state-owned channel. Men and women host talk shows, reality programs, and music variety shows where formerly taboo issues like politics, sexuality, relationships, and women's rights are openly debated. A growing number of teleIslamists effectively weave Quranic narratives into elaborate programs of social change and civic engagement. And traditional institutions of religious authority like Al-Azhar University in Egypt and other state-sanctioned constituencies are also adopting aggressive media strategies to counteract what they see as an emerging culture of semantic disarray over what Islam means today. On the Internet, videobloggers and otherwise marginal actors are capitalizing on much cheaper means of media production to join this massive fray of new cultural producers in Islam.

The paper we propose analyzes the rise of a new generation of dynamic Muslim media and situate the emergence of this arguably democratized religious space within changing historical contexts both in the Muslim world and among Western Muslims. Through our comparison of Egyptian and Indonesian Muslim media personalities we examine the ways in which these new religious celebrities gain legitimacy as influential religious figures capable of competing with traditional anchors of authority both in their country and transnationally. Specifically, we ask how this new face of public Islam is appropriating specific media aesthetics and communication modes to draw inspiration and establish alternative sources of authority in Islam. How much of this mediated Islam is a rupture from the traditional tropes of religious preaching and how much of it is a break from traditional sermonizing and doctrinal Islam? What particular norms do these personalities create and what kind of public do they produce? We also probe the question whether there is a uniform transnational mediated Islam or if its modes of delivery and discourses change from one Muslim country to another.

Panel B: Renegotiating the Sacred Secular: Religion, Media and Cultural Identity in the Nordic Countries

Room: LG5

Chair: Mia Lövheim (University of Oslo)

Alf Linderman and Mia Lövheim (Uppsala University and the Sigtuna Foundation) The Resurgence of Religion in Swedish Press: Exploring the Relation between Modernization and Religion

This paper presents a new research project aiming to explore representations of religion in editorials in Swedish daily press from 1975 to 2010. During recent years, claims of a resurgence of religion in the public life of the Swedish society have increased in media, political debate and research. Despite this, there are few empirical studies that confirm these claims. The question of a “resurgence of religion” does not, however, only concern if the presence of religion has increased in modern society, but also how religion is represented. Thus, the project will analyze how representations of religion in the editorials relate to values that are constructed as central to the modern Swedish society, such as freedom, democracy, equality, security, and family.

Given that Europe is the context upon which the whole notion of secularization as a natural outcome of modernization is based, and that the World Values Survey suggest that Sweden is the most modern country in the region, the study of the resurgence of religion in Swedish media becomes an interesting point of departure for exploring the relation between modernization and religion. Starting from this approach, a central aim of the project is to explore how the issue of the resurgence of religion in Swedish media can contribute with new questions and perspectives on the relation between modernization and religion.

The paper will focus on three areas actualized by this project:

- Conceptual implications of the nature and relation between religion and modernity in claims of a resurgence of religion in Swedish society
- Observations and data upon which the present project is founded: transformations over time with regard to the public presence of religion
- New issues raised by studies of representations and constructions of religion in the media for studies of cultural and religious identity in modern Nordic societies.

Henrik Reintoft-Christensen (Aarhus University) Secularism and Media: The Case of Scandinavia

This presentation is based on some of the findings in a recent dissertation on religion and politics in the press and parliaments in Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. It examines how the public sphere represents religion in relation to politics in some of the most secularized countries in the world. This presentation concerns articles from three important newspapers in each country collected for the last three months of 2006.

The paper focuses on those representations of religion that are involved in the diagnosis and prognosis of problems relevant to society.

While previous research have focused on the religious actors going public, this study shows that it is not enough to examine when religious actors engage in issues of societal importance. The results of the study shows that most debates on religion in the press are neither initiated by religious actors nor have such actors as their main participants. Thus, the analysis must also include both non-religious actors' reactions to public religion as well as their use of religion to further their own agendas.

This paper shows how public debates on religion in highly secularized countries comprise an ideal case for studies of comparative secularism for several reasons. First, if the countries perceive of themselves as secular and are described as secular, what does the presence of religion in the public sphere entail for the theory of secularization? Second, it draws attention to differences and similarities that can be used in an examination of the strategies employed by religious and non-religious actors. Thirdly, through the use of a typology of how the authority of religion is represented in the mainstream media, we may explore why religion is sometimes perceived as a legitimate authority, and sometimes as illegitimate, and how this relates to ideals and values of both the media and liberal democracy in each country, as well as issues of social cohesion or debates on national identity.

Johanna Sumiala (University of Helsinki) YouTube Goes Religion? Rethinking Sacred in the Visual Performance of School Shootings on YouTube

This paper discusses the relation between sacred and (late)modernity by applying media anthropology as a theoretical and methodological framework. The paper explores the idea of the sacred by drawing on Durkheim (1912/1994), Orsi (2005) and Rothenbuhler (1993, 1998, 2005). In this paper the sacred is discussed in relation to mediatized death and how it is performed in social media (a form of a new public sphere with a logic of its own). The paper gives special emphasis to the analysis of the ritualized performance of death on YouTube video clips. By analyzing the performance of death on YouTube, the paper emphasizes the role of ritualization in sacralizing certain type of death in social media. The empirical material consists of 100 YouTube videos on the two deadly events that raised a large public media interest Finland and in other Nordic countries: the school shootings in Jokela (2007) and Kauhajoki (2008).

Knut Lundby (University of Oslo) The Case of Norway: Another Cartoon Story

In February 2010 a new cartoon protest arose among Muslim communities in Norway. The newspaper *Dagbladet* published a drawing of the Prophet Muhammed as a pig, to illustrate a news story on Internet activities linked up by the security police. Grassroot demonstrations by Muslims did occur that brought to the surface moderate as well as Islamist voices that had not been visible in Norwegian media. This paper will analyse the role of the media in this new cartoon case, in relation to the overall religion-society transition in Norway. Focus will be on the mediatization processes, i.e. on how and to which extent media formats and media representations did shape the interaction between different actors in this conflict.

Norway is in transition from a majority-based state church argumentation for “sacred” cultural identity towards a minority-based discourse on human rights, a “sacred secular”. This transition has some of its roots in the changing patterns of beliefs and belonging following secularization and immigration, and legal adjustments to international commitments on freedom of religion. The ties are being loosened between the state and Lutheran Church of Norway that encompasses some 80 percent of all Norwegians. Laws that have given priority to the majority in schools and other institutions are being amended. Furthermore, the relationship to the growing number of Muslims is much debated in the Norwegian public sphere. Islam is now the second largest religious community, after the Church of Norway, although no more than 90 000 of a total population of 4,8 millions are registered with Muslim mosques. The Muslim presence creates tensions, not with official church bodies but in the population at large.

Norway was involved in the cartoon crisis 2006, although not as heavily as Denmark. However, following the re-publication of the Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammed in the small Christian paper *Magazinet*, and subsequent distribution of this event via Internet and other media to the Middle East, Norwegian embassies were attacked and set to fire. The conflict in Norway was calmed down through dialogue and never escalated as in Denmark.

Panel C: Books and reading

Room:LG13

Chair:Tim Hutchings

Emily Ronald (Boston University) Spiritual Education or Talking about Feelings: Gender and Reading in the Religious Book Group

Religious reading groups and book clubs have complex associations with gender. Several different gendering narratives are at work, sometimes reinforcing each other and sometimes contradicting each other. Reading, especially reading for pleasure, is strongly associated with women. Arguments about the potential moral and irreligious dangers of fiction have often been targeted at women and children. Devotional and popular religious texts are likewise associated with women readers, while access to sacred texts has been frequently limited to men. The book club or reading group itself, however, is often characterized as a feminine pursuit. Are religious book clubs more hospitable to the idea of men reading for pleasure and personal exploration? How do masculine and feminine ways of reading emerge in discussion? This paper will attempt to disentangle these complex and competing narratives about gender, religion, and reading. Using data from my dissertation research, I will examine how these narratives play out in practice among religious and non-religious book clubs in order to better understand the religious book group as a setting for studying print media consumption.

Kenneth Paradis (Wilfrid Laurier University) Homiletic Reading and Popular Fiction, or, Why all the Fuss about The Da Vinci Code?

“Almost everything our fathers taught us about Christ is false,” claims Lea Teabing, a scholarly central character in Dan Brown’s 2003 bestselling novel, *The Da Vinci Code* (235). “So what?” asks Russell Grigg in the conservative evangelical magazine *Creation*. “Other pulp-fiction books have made huge historical blunders, so why worry about Brown’s ludicrous distortions?” Grigg answers his own question in a way fairly representative of the response to the book in vocal parts of the North American Christian community. *The Da Vinci Code* “is not just fiction,” Grigg argues. The novel’s “real goal” is to “erode” Christian faith: “Brown has willfully exchanged real history for demonstrable hoaxes ... which is good for his income but perilous for the eternal destiny of many of his readers.” Brown’s novel became “a touchstone in America’s culture wars,” and the controversy it generated illuminates two quite different normative models of reading. Secular readers took the novel as a piece of commercial popular fiction. They privileged its entertainment value, and considered its themes subordinate to their suspension in a narrative that is primarily defined in terms of genre conventions. But the way of reading that informs Grigg’s response differs radically. It assumes that the effective and satisfying manipulation of the conventions of popular fiction help the text act as the vehicle of messages that readers interact with in ways that will have real effects in their (spiritual) lives. This way of reading popular fiction assumes that the distinction between fiction and non-fiction is subordinated to the criterion of efficacy and that familiarity and affirmation are more valuable than those of ambiguity, originality or defamiliarization. It accepts, via a reliance on a particular relationship of Protestant typology to early modern science, the conceptually coherent integration of techniques associated with seemingly quite different practices of romance and realist representation. And it understands that sentiment is not always emotionally manipulative, but can elicit the kind of honest, unguarded open-heartedness at the root of real faith. It is easy to dismiss homiletic reading as simply the product of the ideological blinkers worn by religious fanatics who don’t “get” popular fiction, and who should lighten up a bit. But dismissing it in this way

reveals an ignorance of very old, dynamic and persistent models of engaging narrative developed by American Protestants during their own periods of cultural hegemony.

This paper, a summary of a longer article now under consideration at the Journal of American Culture and the successor to a rhetorical analysis of sermons delivered at the height of The Da Vinci Code controversy at Easter 2006 published in the Review of Religious Research, shows not only the now often forgotten historical continuity of evangelical homiletic reading practices and assumptions with those of secular popular culture but, by illustrating the key points of divergence between them, illuminates a genuinely resistant and self-consciously dissenting set of interpretive practices that provide intellectual coherence to what is arguably the most coherent and effective constituency in American politics over the past quarter century.

Thomas Zenk (Freie Universitaet Berlin) Bestsellers against God - The "New Atheism" as a media-made phenomenon

Atheistic or even anti-religious voices have returned: the books written by Richard Dawkins ("The God Delusion"), Sam Harris ("The End of Faith", "Letter to a Christian Nation"), Christopher Hitchens ("God Is Not Great"), and Daniel Dennett ("Breaking the Spell") have all become bestsellers, not only in the United States, Canada, and Great Britain, but also in the German speaking hemisphere. Their ideas and arguments have been vividly discussed in the public. In order to characterize the recent tendencies of criticism of religion, American journalist Gary Wolf has coined the term "New Atheism".

Given this, it appears as if the "New Atheism" is a media-made phenomenon: Even though none of the above mentioned authors has ever used the term "New Atheist" as a self-description or has claimed to have produced an especially innovative criticism of religion, the label "New Atheism" - or "Neuer Atheismus" in German - has been widely used by academics and journalists alike. Nevertheless, the term is remarkably fuzzy and under-defined and can hardly be used as an analytical category for academic research. Due to the constant usage of this label, however, atheist individuals have recently started to describe themselves as "New Atheists". This clearly shows the effect of the media on the construction of social identities and the constitution of realities in general.

For that reason, our research project at the Free University of Berlin intends to analyze the public discourse about the "New Atheism": How is the term "New Atheism" used? Who labels which author as a "New Atheist"? What is his/her intention of doing so? In order to answer these questions in a broader context we examine the discourse on "New Atheism" in Germany and in the United States. At the 2010 Conference on Media, Religion and Culture in Toronto we will present our findings.

Ulf Plessentin (Freie Universitaet Berlin) Discovering the Unknown Self – Atheists and Non-believers in Recent German Media

Since the German reunification 20 years ago, about 30 per cent of the population in Germany has been unaffiliated with churches or other religious groups. Other statistics point out that about 25 per cent of today's population state that they do not believe in any god/gods, transcendent spirit

or life force. Even though figures like these are often criticised for being too fuzzy and vague they outline at least demographic conditions.

Given this particular situation, it is especially interesting to notice that in the last years, we find a shift of awareness in the German speaking media: While in the 1990s topics like atheism, non-believers, religious indifference and similar were not much covered by the German media – and if so, they were often closely connected to the historic situation of former socialist Eastern Germany – in the mid of the 2000s the media have covered extensively and abundantly on these issues on a more current background.

Which factors supported this change of media's interest? Are there any differences in reporting on these topics observable? And what role did the rise of new forms of communication as the Internet play here?

In order to answer these rather wide-ranging questions, I would like to discuss three possible factors that seem to be influential in this context: First, attention should be drawn on the impact of international and national bestsellers written by so-called “New Atheist” as Dawkins, Hitchens and German author Michael Schmidt-Salomon and how they were received by the media. Second, the focus is on newly founded German institutions and associations which claim to represent the non-religious part of population. What is of particular interest here is the Humanistischer Pressedienst (Humanist Press Service), a recently created press agency that aims to give non-religious positions a voice in public debates. And third, I shall discuss the relevance of public debates such as the debate on the German atheist bus campaign, on the demand for a national holiday of evolution instead of a Christian holiday and the controversy on prohibiting a child-book with atheist contents.

Panel D: Media, religion and culture: pedagogical questions

Room: LG6

Chair:

Alexandra Boutros (Wilfrid Laurier University) The challenge of teaching 'religion and media' or 'religion and technology' courses

Teaching courses such as ‘religion and media,’ or ‘religion and technology’ come with particular challenges. Students submerged in a highly mediated environment may have difficulties ‘pulling back’ in order to take a critical look at media practices. Part of the task of such courses is to unpack circulating assumptions about media and technology. In particular, the pervasive assumption that technology and forms of new media are signifiers of progress and promises of a better future (while, often, religion is seen as ‘backward’ or something of the past) is something that students need to address. At the same time, some students come to ‘religion and media’ courses, as with other religious studies courses, from a strong faith perspective that can (although does not necessarily) hinder critical analysis. While some have argued that religious studies works best when researchers, pedagogues and students leave their faith perspective at the door, the work of feminist scholars in standpoint theory and reflexive methodologies can provide a scaffolding on which students can build critical analysis that incorporates their own subjective viewpoints. ‘Religion and media’ courses are also influenced by their placement within the

institutional structures of the university. Do these courses ‘belong’ to communication or media studies, or to religious studies? Are they cross-listed? Are they part of an established curriculum, or are they ‘special topics’ courses that come and go? Where these courses are located and how they are supported by institutional structures also affects how students approach such courses. Drawing on my own experiences, I will explore the pedagogical challenges and possibilities that arise when teaching religion and media.

Curtis Coats (Millsaps College) Student/teacher interaction in the classroom

In ethnographic encounters with “New Age” followers, I have heard many people express “the inward turn” of religion. This notion that the ultimate source of authority is located within the Self is pervasive and, in fact, commonsensical to these followers. In these encounters, I am careful to listen, eager to understand and disinclined to offer counter-narratives.

In pedagogical encounters with mainly “Christian” followers, I hear the same expressions of this “inward turn.” Most students have fully embraced the authority of the Self and a strong sense of agency, freedom, and, in some cases, entitlement. I am careful to listen and eager to understand, but I am compelled to offer counter narratives, particularly those that engage relations of power.

Certainly, the classroom is not “the field,” though this question of “the field” has been a conceptual battleground in its own right for some time now. But our students are still people, working out their identities in social relations of power just like the rest of us. So, should we afford them the same sensitivity that we afford our respondents?

This presentation will address this and other ethical considerations of the teacher/student relationship. It will explore the classroom as a field of social (and power) relations, and it will discuss the goals of pedagogy in this setting and their implications.

J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu (Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon. Accra) ‘Widening Horizons’: Religion, Media and Religious Scholarship in Africa

This proposes to be a study on the growing influence of religious media and the challenges of teaching this as an academic discipline in Africa. Religious pluralism in Africa has been facilitated partly by the media explosion on the continent. The speed and competitive approach to the use of media by the various religious organizations has opened up new horizons and opportunities for the academic study of religion and media in several African institutions. Focusing primarily on Ghana, but drawing on the experiences of other neighboring countries such as Nigeria, this study would look at how ‘religion and media’ has evolved as an academic discipline in Africa and the challenges that have been associated with it. References would be made to some of the published and unpublished works on religion and media in Africa in order to show the importance of this area of academic study in contemporary African religious and media scholarship.

Jeffrey H. Mahan (Iliff School of Theology) Themes and methods for teaching

What are we teaching about media, religion and culture? After a decade and a half of international conferences, "Media, Religion and Culture" remains a relative new and still emerging set of conversations - and part of larger conversations in religious and theological studies about such topics as popular culture, religion and art, communication, cultural theory, etc. In an effort to contribute to understanding the boundaries of this project gathers syllabi from a dozen scholars in diverse settings and positions in their careers who teach courses they identify as reflecting work in Media, Religion and Culture. This presentation reflects on key themes, methods and critical resources in an effort to clarify the primary approaches, questions and concerns which are distinctive to this area of scholarly conversation.

Stewart Hoover (University of Colorado, Boulder) Approaches to curriculum planning

The field of media and religion studies has benefitted recently from ever-increasing student interest. This has meant that more and more courses are being offered, across both the religious studies and media studies disciplines. As an emerging field, these developments raise important questions about what, how, and why to cover in curricula. Should courses be organized thematically, historically, or by technology? Each approach has its own value, but this presentation will argue for approaches that ground teaching in larger themes and trends in social and cultural change. The interactions between media and religion can best be brought into relief by looking at their operations in context. The presenter will reflect on his own experience offering courses at both the graduate and (for the first time within the past year) undergraduate level.

Tuesday, August 10

2:30 – 4 p.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: Framing Strife

Room: LG5

Chair:

Karim Karim (Institute of Ismaili Studies) “Keeping the Self Pure: ‘Homegrown Terrorists’ as Alien Others”

This paper will examine coverage in the Canadian newsweekly magazine, Maclean’s, from June 2006 to December 2009 the discovery and trials of Muslim Canadian suspects planning a series of attacks in Toronto and Ottawa. It seemed astonishing to the magazine’s writers that young men who grew up in the West would contemplate terrorism against it: the “Islamic terrorist” was supposed to be a foreign Other. They appeared to be disregarding the long history of the conflicts in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, India, Egypt, the USA, Japan, Germany and many other countries where the state had engaged with the political violence of local groups. Indeed, the Canadian government had itself contended with the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) during the October 1970 crisis.

Since Islam in dominant discourses is an alien religion, journalists seemed to be surprised that Canadians were taking up arms for an ideological cause that supposedly did not have anything to do with the Self or its constituent parts. They were forgetting that in the 1990s the Canadian

children of some Serbian and Croatian immigrants had travelled back to the former Yugoslavia to fight on the respective sides of their ethnic / national groups. It is also not rare for Jews from Canada and other countries to serve in the Israeli military forces. The Self and Other are not as polarized in reality as their dominant conceptions make them out to be. They are occasionally presented in cultural narratives as seeking union with each other in romantic and spiritual contexts. Despite the resistance of dominant discourses to the possibility of the joining of Self and Other, the traditional conception of the nation-state as composed of a monolithic population with a consistently singular loyalty is becoming increasingly untenable. Lateral links of diasporas and other transnational connections of a country's citizens are straining the vertical adherence to exclusivist national ideologies. The national Self is not insular, and most likely never was. Nevertheless, dominant media discourses hold on to the fiction of a consistently binary positioning of Self and Other. By endowing the "homegrown terrorists" with the primary identity of the Other, the Self does not have to deal with the uncomfortable thoughts about how "Islamic" violence against the nation could be engendered from within.

As with so much in current global relations, the centuries-old imagery of the Muslim as the violent Other serves culturally to underpin the public explanations for this as well. Through emphasis on the Muslim rather than the Canadian identity of the malcontents, it becomes possible to avoid consideration of even the remotest likelihood that some of the causes of deviance may find their sources in the Self. The Self is kept pure by disregarding the hybrid nature of young Canadians of various origins who contemplate political violence – the blame is placed on what are viewed as the inherently violent characteristics of their alien heritage.

Stewart Hoover and Nabil Echchaibi (University of Colorado, Boulder) and Jeffrey Mahan (Iliff School of Theology) "Perceptions, Positions, and Prescriptions: Christian and Muslim Perspectives in and on the Public Sphere"

The Twenty-First Century dawned with a newly-invigorated profile for religion in global public discourse, and a newly-pressing need for inter-religious understanding in national and global settings. The singular set of events were unleashed by the events of 9/11/01, but have evolved into an ongoing struggle over the meaning of religion and faith in relation to politics and civic culture. These discourses have reached a particular intensity in Europe, but in the Industrialized West in general, more and more public discussion centers around the seeming re-emergence of Islam as a force in culture, and around efforts by Muslims to craft a public narrative that transcends received biases and misunderstandings. The media and processes of mediation of religious symbols, values, and claims are increasingly central today, and this fact introduces an additional layer of challenge to long-standing efforts at religious dialogue and understanding.

These two facets of the current situation: the question of Islam and the question of how media, mediation, and "mediatization" are active in religious understanding, challenge scholars of media and religion. Implicit in the question of Islam, of course, is the question of Christianity, particularly in the West, and taken-for-granted beliefs about moral, theological, and practical equivalence between these two faiths. This paper details a research project focused on these questions that begins with the question of how Muslims and Christians in the west think about the question of religious self-presentation in public discourse. The project assumes that the way people think about the presentation of their faith traditions is both practically and heuristically related to those presentations that are mediated. That is to say that the public understanding of

religion is at least in part a function of their representation in media, and that for many people it is impossible to think about the way their faith is represented without thinking about the way it is mediated.

The initial phase of this study—on which this paper will report—includes focus interviews with opinion leaders in the Muslim and Christian communities in a major U.S. city. These groups met initially in religion-specific groups, during which each was asked to consider the same set of provocations. Following this, joint meetings of these opinion leaders are planned, and following those focus interviews with laypeople from each faith tradition. The paper will base this on a discussion of the conceptual and theoretical issues involved in this area of research.

Syed Siraj (Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad) Exploring Media Framing of Talibanization in Pakistan

This paper aims at empirically testing John Galtung's model of 'Peace Journalism' by analyzing Talibanization in Pakistan of the leading Pakistani newspapers. Taliban consist of local tribesmen, students of religious seminaries and few foreigners Jihadis who are against the Pakistani government for its support in the war on terror and want Islamic system in the areas of their control. Taliban are alleged to have provided help to Al-Qaeda leadership responsible for the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US.

The literature on war and peace journalism suggests that modern media are a major concern to combatants, publics, and media professionals and have insightful effect on calling attention to the conflict arena. Media coverage is integral to shaping the course of events in war and peace. Conflict reporting leads to accusations of bias from both sides (Galtung & Vincent 1992; Wolfsfeld, 2003; Lynch 2005).

Of the 427 stories of the editorial page in the specified newspapers, most of them framed war journalism than peace journalism. The mean story length of the overall coverage is also higher for war journalism. Compared to the Urdu press, the English press was dominantly war oriented. Taliban receive more unfavorable slant than favorable in the overall coverage. However, the unfavorable slant was found in the war journalism stories.

The four most prominent indicators of war journalism frames were 'differences-oriented', 'elite-oriented', 'dichotomy of good guy and bad guy' and 'zero-sum-oriented'. The four most salient indicators supporting peace journalism frame, were 'solution-oriented', 'people-oriented', 'causes and effects' and 'multi-party oriented'.

Yoel Cohen (Ariel University Center) and Orly Tsarfaty (Emeq Yisrael Academic College, Afula) Mass Media and Sources of Information in Secular-Haredi Relations in Israel

This research study examines the role of mass media as a 'bridge' in generating understanding between Haredim and secular Israelis. The level of knowledge among Haredim and secular Israelis about the other is very low. For secular Israelis, the most important media source is Television, for Haredim newspapers. The secular media does not act as a potential bridge, but

presents the dominant secular view. The same is true for the Haredi media. Both limit their coverage of the other community.

While research on religion and media have included the Haredi media (Cohen, 2005; Cohen, 2006; Tzarfati, 2009; Jewish thinking about media (Cohen, 2001), there has been no research on the question of the impact of media upon secular-religious relations. In order to fill the gap, surveys of haredim and secular Israelis were carried out by the authors in 2009. 250 Students at higher institutions of learning in Israel were surveyed.

It was found that mass media are a major source for knowledge for 88% of secular Israelis. Mass media are a major source for knowledge for 40% of Haredim. However, 60% of Haredim do not rely upon the mass media for information about secular Israelis. 49% of secular Israelis do not rely on the mass media for information about Haredim. Secular Israelis do not read Haredi papers at all, and most haredim (73%) do not read secular newspapers. Secular Israelis do not listen to haredi radio stations at all, and only 20% of Haredim listen to secular radio stations. 44% of secular Israelis believe that the media distort the image of Haredim . However, only 17% of Haredim believe that the media distort the image of secular Israelis.

82% of Haredim believe that the media contribute to secular-Haredi tensions. 70% of secular Israelis believe that the media contribute to secular-haredi tensions. Internet does not provide a potential bridge between Haredi and secular Israelis: 92% of secular Israelis do not enter Haredi websites, and 90% of Haredim do not enter secular websites. Even though the media is regarded by Haredim and by secular Israelis as an important source of information for learning about the other, yet the desire for an expansion of media coverage to learn about other groups remains low. Notwithstanding this, 39% of secular Israeli want the media to expand their coverage of Haredim, and 37% of Haredim want the media to expand their coverage of secular Israelis.

Panel B: Televised Religion: The Construction of Difference and Normality in German and US-American Media Contexts

Room:LG12

Chair: Günther Thomas (Ruhr-Universität)

Tim Karis (University of Münster) “Where are we?” Islam and Normality in German Television News Reports

Being asked by a television reporter whether or not a second mosque should be built in the small German town of Bobingen, the town’s mayor Harmut Gärtner replies: “Wait a minute ... where are we?” To him, it seems evident that having sites of Muslim worship in Germany can be tolerated – but must be an exception to the rule. Hence, the ‘normal religion’ in Bobingen to him can only be Christianity. This notion, however, is objected to by the reporting journalist. He claims that just as Christians are entitled to build as many churches as they choose, Muslims should be entitled to do the same when it comes to mosques. In other words: Building sites of religious worship is normal and thus should not be restricted.

This struggle over the building of a mosque, which was covered in a news report from 1992, can be understood as a struggle over the question as to what is normal – a question that still pervades

media coverage on Islam as a whole. Taking into account examples from 30 years of media coverage on Islam, Tim Karis will address the question as to how variably normality has been constructed in the popular German television newsmagazine *'Tagesthemen'* and how differing notions of Western identity come into being in this process. His thesis is that these differences can be understood with reference to the social narratives they are embedded in. These narratives revolve around concepts such as 'Christianity', 'Multiculturalism' or 'The Secularized West' and it is striking how all of these competing interpretations of contemporary events are able to produce 'Islam' as an antagonist (i. e. the other side of 'normal').

Taking this argument further, it can be said that the question of normality is of major interest in the field of research on Islam and the media. To date, research has been mostly confined to examining stereotypes and prejudices in Western media representations of Islam thereby focusing mainly on the ubiquity of violence in those news reports. Informed by both discourse theory and findings from the sociology of religion, Karis claims that the issue of normality can at the same time deepen our understanding of the media image of Islam and broaden its contextualization. He argues that it is the embedment of the news reports in social narratives revolving around the issue of normality rather than prejudices or even Islamophobia that makes a specific representation of Islam comprehensible and seemingly plausible to viewers.

Kathrin Nieder (University of Münster) "... because we are a Christian society": How to Produce Christianity as Normality in German TV-Series

Dietmar Heeg, the commissioner for broadcasting issues of the German Episcopal Conference, calls fictional TV series involving nuns and priest as major characters a "golden opportunity" to engage public sympathy for the Catholic Church. Thus, it is not surprising that Church officials in Germany have designated the screenplay writer of one of those series – a series revolving around a cloister with an average viewership of seven million – for an award honoring him for his positive contributions to the Catholic Church's reputation.

In recent years, television series involving priests and nuns – such as "Pfarrer Braun" or "Um Himmels Willen" – have repeatedly ranked among the series with the highest market share average in Germany, while the number of people attending Church services on Sundays and the number of members of the Christian churches continue to decline. Fictional television formats – the dramatic requirements of which seem to be considerably better adapted for German Catholicism than German Protestantism – are predestinated not only to discuss questions of cultural order and the place of different denominations in society, but to stage social difference and normality as culturally evident. Thus, PR strategies of the Catholic Church support Christian image construction in German fictional telecasts as a means to stage German Christian culture as normality.

Being asked why he supports the ambition to contribute to the Catholic Church's repute, one of the Creative Producers of the priest-series "Pfarrer Braun" claimed, "it is because we are a Christian society". Evidently, the highly constructive idea to produce Christian normality via fictional telecasts seems to be not only combinable with the belief in the unchangeable truth of Catholic doctrine, but also with the belief in a certain cultural reality and cultural normality as a matter of course. Thus, the idea to produce Christian normality has some paradox effects.

The central thesis of Kathrin Nieder's paper is that fictional television formats with large audiences contribute to the definition of the image of Christianity as a religious community and also to the normality of Christian religion in contemporary German society. This phenomenon, which Nieder calls 'Religiotainment', will be analyzed in two dimensions: production and product. Thus, a first focus will be upon the interaction of Christian media strategists with television professionals. Secondly, fictional telecasts are to be analyzed as symbolic orders of Christianity, which construct specific social realities utilizing their internal logic.

Philipp Dorestal (University of Erfurt) Styling Religion: Race, Gender, and Civilization Discourse in the Media of the Nation of Islam

Philipp Dorestal will examine style politics and the visual media performance of Nation of Islam-activists in the US of the 1960s. Founded in 1930 by Wallace Fard in Chicago, the Nation of Islam (NOI) became one of the most controversial African American religious groups in US society over the following decades. Especially their clear rejection of whiteness and their denunciation of whites as "blue-eyed devils" made the NOI notorious. While this particular African American group had a rather unorthodox interpretation of Islam, this community was nevertheless construed in mainstream media as the radical, hateful 'other' – for example in the 1959 TV documentary *The Hate that hate produced*. The paper will explore how the Nation of Islam inverted this logic of othering in depicting white Americans as uncivilized and promiscuous. At the same time they construed a black subject in a new way within their newspaper *Muhammad Speaks*. Publically they produced a certain style and performed a particular sort of blackness and gender identity by recurring to traditional middle class notions of respectability and chastity.

This form of styling was not only in contrast to what was deemed fashionable for white Americans but also for large segments of the African American Community. In the wake of the black power movement in the 1960s, fashion signifiers for blackness as the Afro or the African inspired dashiki-shirt became very popular. Philipp Dorestal will trace the shifting development of the black power style from acceptance to rejection, from being seen in the NOI as an expression of black pride in the early 1960s to becoming a sign of an imitation of white inferiority and primitivity in the late 1960s.

While Elijah Muhammad, the spiritual leader of the organization tolerated and promoted African apparel like bubas and Afro hair styles which were clearly inspired by African fashion in the early 1960s, the cultural hegemony of the black power movement in the late 1960s led to a different stance of NOI officials in relation to this styling. Strict dress codes for NOI members were enforced while at the same time turning the hegemonic connotation of the black power style as signs for authentic blackness upside down. The paper will take some caricatures in *Muhammad Speaks* as examples to show how white Americans were depicted as "uncivilized" because their style with mini-skirts and jeans was reminiscent of the so-called "cave people of early, uncivilized mankind". In the same vein African Americans who wore the black power style were deemed by Nation of Islam officials to mimic a form of "uncivilized", "white" fashion and lifestyle which, according to their religious doctrine, led to decay and moral destruction. As a remedy to avoid these effects and to achieve the so-called "uplifting of the race", the NOI attire

for women and men was required for members to become respectable and faithful members of the Islam religion. Dorestal will thus argue that styling intersected with narratives of religion, gender, race and civilization and became an area of contest in the US of the 1960s.

Felix Krämer (University of Münster) Gendering Televangelism: The Incarnation of Male Moral Leadership via TV in the US by the late 1970s

“We are going to prohibit every single fellow to run for office if he is pro abortion!” –Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell declared in a television interview he gave in the course of a campaign launched by evangelical activists in 1981. At first glance this campaign aimed to scare away secular politicians from taking a stance for issues that Evangelicals considered immoral. But the initiative was also a media performance to demonstrate the new role the religious movement played as a moral authority in US politics. It displayed the recent recovery of a “Moral Majority” proclaiming a position of national leadership. But which cultural mechanism brought fundamentalism back onto the US political stage?

In his paper, Felix Krämer will explore the interplay of politics, gender and religious belief on a media level. Remarkable rearrangements appeared by the turn of the decade in US-culture and -politics between 1970s and 1980s. But instead of elaborating the conventional reading of the 1980s as saturated with binary patterns of good and evil or as being repressive to marginalized groups, Krämer will highlight TV-preachers as pivotal figures that functioned within the contemporary media order of the 1970s and 1980s in a performative way. He will also carve out the body politics within the dynamics of intersecting discourses, for example the abortion debate or the fight against homosexuality by Christian strugglers. Hegemony or marginalization difference as well as normality are powerfully construed within this (moralized) mass media discourse.

In the late 1960s, several emancipation movements began to appear on front pages and screens of US media. Parts of the Afro-American civil-rights movement had radicalized towards “Black Power”. The women’s, gay’s and lesbian’s movements had accelerated.

By the early 1970s, however, these movements, their arguments and claims – though in most aspects unaccomplished – nevertheless had begun to take shape in US culture and to affect the political landscape. One goal of the social and sexual political demands was to question and to destabilize the hegemonic ideal of masculinity and its symbolic dominance.

The evangelical movement that appeared in the second half of the 1970s was mainly white dominated. Their leaders were conservative middle class men. Some of the evangelical spokesmen of the religious movement described their followers as belonging even more to a suppressed group than other marginalized men and women that had marched for equal rights. The demands of moral leadership eminently profited from the proclamation of American masculinity in crisis which appeared by the mid-70s. Especially TV-Preachers were referring to the idea of a masculinity crisis in taking claim on positions of leadership. Jerry Falwell urged his fellows to “take the helm and guide America back to a position of stability and greatness.” The correlation of masculinity, religion and politics would be the central issue guiding through a landscape of news, stories and psalms on TV by the turn of the decade. Felix Krämer explores

the role evangelical TV-preachers played as political figures and will focus on their function as mediums in the rearrangement of socio-cultural norms between the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Panel C: East Asian religions

Room:LG6

Chair:

Joonseong Lee (California State University, San Marcos) *Everybody, Let's Tighten the Anus: Exploring the Social and Cultural Meaning of a Korean Folksong*

This paper is about exploring the social, cultural, religious meaning of a Korean folk song, *Everybody, Let's Tighten the Anus*. The song was composed and sung by a famous Korean singer songwriter, Kim Do-Hyang. I came under Kim Do-Hyang's spell not only because of his distinctive interpretation of music, but also because of his idiosyncratic career as a musician and a Taoist ascetic. Until the early 1980s, Kim gained and enjoyed the everlasting fame of a popular singer as well as a Big Brother in the Korean advertisement industry, producing more than 3,000 advertisements. After years at the top, Kim simply vanished from the scene, leaving a big hit song, "I am a Fool," behind. Since then, he has dropped out of the limelight for more than 20 years while practicing Taoist meditation. Recently he decided to come back to the stage with the song *Everybody, Let's Tighten the Anus*.

Kim explains that from the perspective of the balance of yin qi and yang qi (negative energy and positive energy), the exercise of contracting and relaxing the anus would allow people to regain spiritual refinement and empower their minds as well as their bodies. The traditional Eastern philosophy of yin and yang explains that "life is governed by the interaction of two opposite poles, the ultimate of male (yang) and female (yin), positive and negative, light and dark, hard and soft, and any other opposing poles you can imagine" (Eun Kim, 2001, xvi). Acknowledging the principal of yin and yang, Kim said that he wanted Korean people to be healthy and gain strength with the help of the song, and to deal with the difficulties people encounter in daily routines.

After numerous times of in-depth interview with Kim, contextualizing the song in the current Korean society and articulating the meaning of the song from the immanent perspective, I attempted to explore the influence of music not only on individual body but also on social body. Understanding of music from the immanent perspective has significance in two aspects. First, it allows us to take a closer look at how Taoism, one of Korean's immanent religious traditions, become embedded through a folk song, which facilitates traditional Taoist practices in a contemporary way and affects the refinement of the mind and body in daily life. Second, the immanent approach to music with the view of Eastern qi philosophy can contribute to the advancement of interdisciplinary studies on media, religion, and culture in the new media age. Eastern qi philosophy, as Lee (2009) insists, can provide an important theoretical frame to understand the new media context as Deleuzian notion of "plane of consistency" (1987). Although this paper does not look into the direct application of the qi philosophy to the new media context, the converging new media context as plane of consistency blurs the boundary of on and offline, which allows this paper to explore the indirect application of the qi philosophy to the new media context.

Stefania Travagnin (University of Saskatchewan) *Baby Faith in Motion Pictures? Discovering the Childhood Experience of Myth, Ritual and Religious Quest in East Asian Films*

My research developed from the observation of a considerable presence of children in religious cinema, and aims at assessing the roles that children and childhood, as actors and as spectators, play in it. My work focuses on movies that have been produced in East Asia, directed by East Asian (religious and otherwise) directors, and whose religious contents include messages coming from the traditions of Christianity, Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism. Some of the movies that will be taken in consideration as case-studies are Bae Yong-kyun's "Why has Bodhi-dharma left for the East?" (1989), Kim Ki-duk's "Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter and Spring" (2004), Julia Kwan's "Eve and the Fire Horse" (2005), Hayao Miyazaki's "Princess Mononoke" (1997) and "Spirited Away" (2001).

This research investigates which religious messages are delivered through the acting of children, in other words, which dimensions of faith and religiosity are visualized through the children's experience of religion. In this way, based on the psychological dynamism behind and within children's spiritual experience, my paper will analyze the recovery of myths, the performance of rituals and the formulation of religious quests in the "fantasy world" of the childhood. This part of the paper will also underline the interplay of adults and children in the recovery of the pure religious teachings, as well as in the ongoing journey of self-discovery of the main characters of the films.

The second part of the paper will consider children not in their role of actors, but as spectators. A number of movies and documentaries are planned and produced specifically for delivering religious messages, especially in the form of ethical teachings, to children. My paper will thus map the registers of communication between religious organizations and the childhood, and the modalities of interaction between media production and reception in this context.

In conclusion, my paper is meant to create a conceptual framework for a new epistemology of the childhood religious experience through films, as well as provoking new challenging discussions on research methodologies in the field.

Yam Chi-Keung (Chinese University of Hong Kong) *To Live and Die on the Chinese Screen - Regarding the Religious Dimension in Chinese Language Cinema*

In recent years, the interdisciplinary study of film and religion is gradually, albeit slowly, moving away from Eurocentrism and North American-centrism and exhibits growing interests in films from other parts of the world. Despite this geo-cultural expansion, however, the Chinese language cinema is still relatively untouched by scholars involved in this field. This underrepresentation is embarrassing, especially when considered against the backdrop that for more than two decades, Chinese language films from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China have been the focus of much attention in both academic film studies as well as the general audience worldwide. This paper is an attempt to fill that lacuna by looking at the representation of a key issue of religious significance in recent Chinese language cinema. Specifically, I scrutinize how the issue of life and death is portrayed in a selected but diverse sample of Chinese

films, as well as how these portrayals are received by the audience. My contention is that many a popular Chinese language films betray rich religious undertones but these are often overlooked by observers who lack sensitivities toward East Asian cultural-religious sensibilities. I also contend that the study of film and religion can be significantly enriched by taking seriously the religious dimension of Chinese language cinema, through engaging with the aesthetics, worldviews, and cultural-religious sensibilities of the latter.

Panel D: Mediatization, religion and gender: case studies and critical reflections

Room:LG13

Chair/Moderators: Mia Lövheim (Uppsala University) and Lynn Schofield Clark (University of Denver)

Alexandra Boutros (Wilfrid Laurier University) ‘Lwa like me!’ Gender, Sexuality and the online negotiation of cultural specificity in Vodou

Media and technology have introduced the once intensely secretive ethos of Haitian Vodou to the North American public sphere. This public visibility has brought those who Wade Clark Roof has called “religious seekers” to Vodou; individuals with no genealogical or geographic connection to Haiti, the cosmological center of Haitian Vodou. Online visibility, in particular, provides newcomers with portals to the religion in the form of informational and educational websites, listservs, chat rooms and online stores. At the same time, online Vodou raises issues of authenticity, authority, cultural appropriation and cultural belonging.

This research explores the mediatization of Vodou and how the remote dispatching or dissemination of Vodou via the conduits of cyberspace is sometimes symbiotic, sometimes discontinuous with the cosmology and practices of Vodou. Nowhere is the complexity of ‘virtual Vodou’ more obvious than in online discussions about gender and sexuality in Haitian Vodou. Scholars such as Karen McCarthy Brown and Elizabeth Alister have explored how gender and sexuality are constructed through Vodou practice, particularly in large scale, communal rituals where meaning making practices are performative and embodied. In the seemingly bodiless spaces of online Vodou the ways in which Vodou signifies moves from embodied to representational practices.

Issues of sexuality and gender are popular and often hotly contested topics in the online world of Vodou. Many online spiritual seekers interpret things such as the existence of female ritual specialists or same sex practitioners within Haitian Vodou as forms of gender equality and tolerance toward queer subjectivity. At the same time, practitioners of Haitian decent express concern with what they see as Western interpretations of their religion. When newcomers to Vodou translate the complex constructions of gender and sexuality in Vodou into particularly Western understandings of masculinity and femininity, or gay and lesbian subjectivity, they risk erasing the cultural specificity of the Haitian context. While it is easy to dismiss these interpretations as inauthentic, the cultural work they do, as well as the controversies and conversations they spark, merit analysis. This exploration of Vodou, as it is represented and practiced via new media is situated within an emergent body of research into the growth of on-line religion or “cyberspirituality”. Online Vodou practitioners engage in a continual and conscious redrawing of the borders of Vodou. Drawing on frameworks of mediatization I

question whether cyber practices alter not only the Vodou tradition but also how religious membership is understood.

Diane Winston (University of Southern California, Annenberg) **The Angel of Broadway: Transformative Dynamics Among Religion, Gender and Media**

This paper explores the transformative dynamics between religion and the media by examining gender representations of the Salvation Army in the United States. Using Stig Hjarvard's theory of the mediatization of religion as an analytic lens, I look at how the new media of the early 20th century facilitated the transformation of a traditional, evangelical missionary movement into a modern, urban religion. A cautionary tale (at least for believers), the fate of Army illustrates, in Hjarvard's words, how "the media—as conduits, languages and environments—facilitate changes in the amount, content and direction of religious messages in society, at the same time as they transform religious representations and challenge and replace the authority of institutionalized religion."

Key to this process is the ways in which gendered religious representations are rendered and circulated by the secular news and entertainment media. Within the media's logic, lassies (the popular term for Salvationist women) embodied the Army, and their mediatization—that is, the way they were represented in films and magazines—profoundly changed audiences' perception of the Army's mission and identity.

The female body is a contested site for most world religions. Within Christianity, there is longstanding tension between the "good" maternal body and the sinful "sexual" body. Moreover, since the good mother—that is, the ultimate mother—also was a virgin, there is no archetype, at least on a par with the Madonna and the Magdalene, for a sexually active, good woman. For a religious movement, like the Army, in which sexually active women play a visible public role, the problem is obvious. How do you create a new image that transcends a very old, very potent dichotomy?

The dilemma, as salient in the 21st century as it was in the 1st, is whether a "good" woman can be sexual and a "sexual" woman can be good? The question was central to late 19th and early 20th century struggles over media depictions of Army women and remains relevant today. In fact, the two millennia stand-off between sexuality and spirituality assumes new relevance in the context of mediatization. Specifically, certain aspects of media logic, including commodification and entertainmentization, use this tension to exploit the female body. This paper examines how and why early twentieth century films shaped the public's understanding of the Salvation Army. To this end, I compare and contrast representations of Army lassies in secular news media, Army publications, Army "entertainments" and Hollywood movies.

Line Nybro Petersen (University of Copenhagen) **Bitten by *Twilight* - Danish teenage girls on "sacred" love in *The Twilight Saga***

This paper considers the particular process of mediatization of religion that occurs as (secular) Danish teenage girls engage in *The Twilight Saga*. *The Twilight Saga* has been discussed in the media, in both Denmark and the USA, as a potentially problematic cultural product because of

authors Stephenie Meyer's association with the Mormon faith. The matter of "religious purity" in the series has been central to many public discussions. However I suggest that, rather than serving as a tale on sexual exploration (or lack thereof), *The Twilight Saga* captures audiences, or at least Danish teenage girls, with a mix of the supernatural and romanticism. Perhaps the presence of a supernatural frame, by proximity, elevates the story of a destined love to a sort of sacredness.

Thus, this paper argues that the conjunction of the supernatural and the story of destined love in *Twilight* serve as a vehicle of feelings of transcendence for the series Danish female fans. *Twilight* provides a space for daydreaming and testing intense displays of emotions. In order to grasp how the role of religion is transformed through media, for this particular case, the paper discusses the results of a qualitative case-study of a group of self-proclaimed *fanpires*; including their personal blogs, questionnaires, focus-group, in depth interview, and their fan site (www.fanpires.wep.dk). By applying a three-sided theoretical approach I consider this process of mediatization of religion from the perspective of (1) media logic (as narratives transform religious representation to serve media purpose), (2) cognitive anthropology (to understand the nature of the emotional engagement this cultural product might offer) and (3) socio cultural aspects of religion (to reflect on the particular context these teenagers consume the *Twilight* stories in).

Tuesday August 10

4:30 – 6 p.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: Soft Power, Hard Stories and the Gendered Discourses of Muslim Bodies in the Media Room: LG6

Chair: Shahnaz Khan (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Felix Odartey-Wellington (Cape Breton University) Religion, Race and Gender in the War on Terror: The Case of Suaad Hagi Mohamud

In this paper, I interrogate the media coverage pertaining to Suaad Hagi Mohamud, a Canadian of Somali origin who was wrongfully branded an impostor by Canadian authorities when she attempted to return to Canada from Kenya. As a consequence of the Canadian government's action of branding Mohamud an impostor and subsequently requesting her prosecution by the Kenyan authorities, she was imprisoned in Kenya for eight days, and thereafter spent months in Kenya before being allowed to fly back to Canada when DNA evidence proved her identity. I argue that despite the existence of cause to suspect that Mohamud's treatment by Canadian authorities could be motivated by racism, this issue was not raised by most Canadian news media until Mohamud and her lawyers brought the issue of racism to the fore. This reticence to name race and to identify the actions that were taken as racist is part and parcel of the Canadian media's inability, if not revulsion, to acknowledge that the society is structured in dominance. Narratives of difference are thus similarly constrained within the construction of a national self that is 'fair, just, secular' and above all, immune from the taint of racism.

Krista Riley (Concordia University) Both "Us" and "Them": Understanding a White Canadian Muslim Identity in Little Mosque on the Prairie

Little Mosque on the Prairie, a Canadian sitcom, follows the lives of an eclectic group of Muslims (and their non-Muslim neighbours) in a fictional Canadian prairie town. The show seeks to claim a place for Muslims within Canadian cultural identity in multiple ways, which it does to varying degrees of success or failure. This paper will focus on the character of Sarah Hamoudi, a white Muslim woman who is described on the show's website as "a bridge between the two [Muslim and non-Muslim] communities." Writing from an anti-racist framework that looks critically at the ways that processes of racialisation have shaped understandings of what it means to be Canadian (as well as what it means to be Muslim), the paper begins with a look at the ways that Sarah's character not only bridges the two categories but also challenges the ways in which they came to be defined, and later moves to a critical examination of the ways that some other dimensions of Sarah's character come to strengthen stereotypes of Islam as foreign and strange, and Muslim women as uniquely vulnerable. I argue that Sarah's character (and, by extension, the show itself) both disrupts and reinforces assumptions about the relationship of Muslims to Canadian national identity.

Shahnaz Khan (Wilfrid Laurier University) Performing Desi: Reading Hindi films in Canada

Although built around a north Indian hetero-normative Hindu male, upper middle class subject, Bombay Cinema (aka Hindi Cinema) projects a national collectivity for the region. Its cinematic narratives however are not screened in a vacuum. They occur in a context of continued communal tensions within South Asia, tensions which inform the perspectives of many of its regional as well as transnational audiences. Moreover in the diaspora Hindi cinematic narratives frequently overlap with Hollywood's patriarchal construction of gender and sexuality and orientalist views of Muslims.

This discussion draws upon the Bombay Cinema's blockbuster film *Fanaa*, which was released in 2006, and examines transnational responses to *Fanaa* posted on an internet blog and comments made about the film by South Asian Muslims interviewed in Windsor and Mississauga, Ontario.

I argue that *Fanaa's* narrative strategies risk reinforcing stereotypes as well as initiating conversations about escalating tensions among South Asians around the globe. The film emerges as a popular cultural text which allows transnational bloggers to use the anonymity of cyberspace and articulate hugely confrontational views, something they may do not in person. At the same time the Canadian South Asian Muslim respondents that I interviewed rework the limited repertoire of *Fanaa* in ways that involve ways of seeing which both confirm and challenge the Orientalist gaze. In so doing they re-imagine community in everyday practices and resistances. Although some of the respondents found the film disorienting, their comments however identify the ways in which *Fanaa's* narrative strategies are harnessed to enable comforting identifications and undeniable pleasures.

Yasmin Jiwani (Concordia University) Veiled Women and the Canadian Mediascape

This paper focuses on representations of Muslim women in mainstream Canadian media. Drawing on research that examines the discursive constructions of the War on Terror, I pay particular attention to how imperial feminism, western benevolence, and the political economy of

the ongoing war feed into and inform constructions of veiled woman. I underline how these representations circulate in an economy that is as mobile as it is global. Underpinned by the transnational linkages between the dominant media, this economy of representations perpetuates colonial modes and ways of seeing while at the same time, inflecting Orientalist stereotypes by exploiting their internal ambivalence and doubling discourses. I argue that through the obsessive concern with forms of veiling, media discourses veil dominant hegemonic agendas while advancing imperial interests. Cultural knowledge is harnessed in the power/knowledge nexus to legitimize particular interventions and non-interventions. Moreover, the preoccupation with veiled Muslim women obscures and deflects attention from violence 'over here' thus reproducing a racialized hierarchy of worth and unworthy victims. In this regard, the media produce and reproduce a grammar of race, which pivots on the confluence of race, religion and gender.

Panel B: Youth

Room:LG12

Chair: Paul Teusner (RMIT University)

Carmen Becker (Radboud University, Nijmegen) Constructing sacramental spaces: the salafiyah in chat rooms and online forums

Young Muslims inspired by the salafiyah, a socio-religious current within Islam, in Germany and the Netherlands use computer-mediated environments in manifold ways: to gather information about Islam, to socialize, to engage in communal practices related to their belief like so called online duroos (lessons) and, simply, to "be" Muslims on the path of the salaf al-salih (the pious ancestors from the time of the prophet Muhammad). Through these different practices sacramental spaces (Campbell 2005, 118) are constructed in which young Salafi Muslims explore their faith and generate a sense of home set apart from other spaces. Drawing from ethnographic participant observation and interviews conducted within the last two years, this paper will look at the different mechanisms at play in the constructions of sacramental Salafi spaces in forums and chat rooms. The first part will focus on the scripts that are structurally at work in these environments and actors. They include, first of all, the technological and communicative potentialities which are available to the users of forums and chat rooms and, secondly, the belief traditions of this specific strand of Islam. These belief traditions carry certain ideas of sacredness, space and interaction which are at play within these spaces like, for instance, gender segregation. Those scripts set out the field from which Salafi practices evolve.

The second part will explore different practices and mechanism through which young Salafi Muslims construct and delineate their sacramental spaces in chat rooms and online forums. Specific controlling techniques inherent to the technological environment (like "banning" or eliminating profiles) as well as discursive techniques are employed in order to ensure that people behave according to the Salafi model of a Muslim. Linguistic characteristics (i.e. repetitive use of Arabic terms), shared visual elements (i.e. in avatars) and rituals like saying/typing invocations to God (ad'iyah) help people to identify the space as Salafi/Islamic and elicit a sense of being in a Salafi/Muslim space..

The performance of Salafi identities localizes the space and fills it with styles and behaviour (akhlaq) which are considered appropriate and are recognized as Salafi. In this framework, knowledge seeking stands out in computer-mediated environments as a specific element of the spiritual endeavour. In forums and chat rooms this practices involve communal interpersonal engagement with the religious sources (the Quran and the Sunnah) which heightens the sense of belonging to the community often referred to as the saved sect (al-firqa al-najiya) and being in a sacramental space. A closer look at the practice of gender segregation as one specific Salafi practice wherein space plays a crucial role underscores the uncertainty and ambiguity accompanying the transfer of offline practices to online environments.

All these practices and the underlying scripts establish boundaries—some surprisingly rigid others rather blurred and flexible—differentiating between permitted and desired behaviour and other forms of behaviour and styles which are judged to be inappropriate.

Karlijn Goossen (Ede Christian University for Applied Sciences) **Let's talk about sex**

The concept was provocative, distinctive and innovative: 40 Days Without Sex. A reality show revolving around seven youngsters, all deeply rooted in a sexualized youth culture, who take on the challenge to abstain from all forms of sex for a 40-day period. With the hopes of them discovering that love and faithfulness are meant to be the framework in which sex has a place.

Producing TV programs that remain on the cutting edge of high quality and cross media programming -both in content and style- is a challenge no matter what. But the EO is challenged even more so due to several complicating features in contemporary Dutch society. First of all, unlike most other countries' public broadcasting organizations those in the Netherlands are member-based. This requires the EO to seriously take into account the call of its members to provide them -and Dutch society at large- with content that reflects their evangelical beliefs. Secondly, commercialization of the media is also affecting public broadcasting in the Netherlands, making high audience ratings ever more important. Thirdly the mission of the EO is to reach groups that are almost never confronted with the gospel: hedonistic ambitious revelers. This forces the EO to take on the tricky experiment of making idiosyncratic and contemporary programs that appeal to both a large audience and their adherents. And fourth, both Dutch society in general as well as the EO's members seem to be falling apart into many different groups with as many profoundly differing views on sexuality.

Confident that 40 Days Without Sex would make a statement and promote discussions transcending individual and group differences, the Evangelical Broadcasting Organization decided to hold nothing back in producing and marketing the TV program. The turmoil and debate that followed the release of the show's first season in 2008 proved them right. A matter of good marketing strategies? To a degree, but that is certainly not all. In this paper I will present an analyses of the tension between marketing and religious beliefs in the dialogue between the EO, its adherents and other relevant parties. Using discourse analysis I hope to offer insight into the complex interplay between the missionary drive of the EO, the programs they produce, the way they legitimize themselves towards their adherents and the general public and the way this helps them gain and preserve credibility and influence.

Piotr Bobkowski (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) **“My utmost hero is Jesus Christ”**: Emerging adults’ communication about religion and spirituality in online profiles

Young adults use social networking sites extensively for self-presentation and communication purposes. Latest surveys indicate that 72% of 18- to 29-year-olds who have access to the Internet use social networking sites (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). As such, social networking profiles constitute an important repository of information about today’s youth culture. By investigating how young adults communicate about religion and spirituality in their online profiles, this study promises to generate unique information about the place of religion and spirituality in the lives of young people.

Recent survey and interview findings have increased substantially our understanding of emerging adults’ religious and spiritual lives (e.g., Smith & Snell, 2009). One facet that has not been fully examined is how individuals in this age group communicate about their religious and spiritual lives outside a research setting. By focusing on social networking sites, this study aims to address this gap. Additionally, by examining the place of religion in young people’s communications with their peers, this study answers the challenge issued by Ammerman and others to study religion as it is lived out in people’s everyday lives (e.g., Ammerman, 2007).

The overarching research question guiding this study is what personal attributes, such as demographics and religious identity indicators, predict the quantity and character of religious self-disclosures in young adults’ online profiles?

This study’s findings are based on a quantitative content analysis of 573 social networking profiles examined in relation to corresponding National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) Wave 3 survey data. The NSYR began in 2002 with a panel of 3,290 teenagers that was statistically representative of U.S. teenage population. Wave 3 survey was administered in 2007 when respondents were between 18 and 23 years old.

The online profiles analyzed here belong to 573 Wave 3 respondents. Coders performed a three-step content analysis: 1) they split each profile into a series of “utterances” (59,751 in total), 2) they identified which utterances concerned religion, and 4) they coded each religious self-disclosure into a series of topical sub-categories.

Thus quantified, the religious self-disclosures are currently being examined in relation to the demographic and religious history data available through the longitudinal survey. Initial findings indicate that the quantity of religious content in an online profile is associated with that profile owner’s religiosity (belief in God, frequency of attendance, importance of religious faith); potential negative perceptions of organized religion or religious people; and the proportion of the profile owner’s closest friends who are religious. The content categories most frequently used are religious affiliations, direct mentions of Jesus or God, and identifications of favorite religious media. Religious practices, experiences, institutions, and other figures are mentioned less frequently.

The research presentation will summarize the quantitative findings of this study and discuss in greater depth specific textual and graphical examples of the religious content presented in these online profiles.

Shabana Mir (Oklahoma State University) *Weird Women on Campus: Muslim Undergraduate Women's Gendered Discourses*

Based on an ethnographic study of American Muslim undergraduate women at two universities in Washington DC, this paper examines undergraduate Muslim women's construction of discourses about gender and sexuality. Orientalist stereotypes shape, in many ways, both majority American and minority Muslim constructions of what Muslim women are/do as gendered beings. Goffman's work on performance of self and stigma, more recent work on cultural production, and Foucauldian notions of surveillance and the gaze inform this study. I find that being "normal" American undergraduates and being "Muslim" on campus continue to be represented as being in constant tension and conflict. Focusing on Muslim undergraduate women's negotiation of gendered and sexual discourses in public and private life, I ask: How do American Muslim women construct gendered and sexual identities within the social spaces of campus culture? How hospitable are majority spaces on campus to Muslim women's construction of sexual discourses that may not fit dominant sexual discourses regarding, say, dating, romance, courtship, and sex? The paper highlights both Muslim women's resistance to and their adoption of such stereotypes as they construct various modalities of interaction with men on campus.

Panel C: Considering the Online-Offline Connection within Studies of Religion and the Internet Room: LG5

Chair/Moderators: Heidi Campbell (Texas A&M) and Mia Lövheim (University of Oslo)

Erica Baffelli (University of Otago) *'The guru is the truth': Aum Shinrikyō and the Internet*

In the mid 1990s some Japanese new religious movements (shinshūkyō) established a presence on the Internet. One of the most active was Aum shinrikyō (Aum Supreme Truth), the group who would go on to perpetrate a sarin gas attack in the Tokyo subway system in 1995. Aum's website featured an extensive online store, selling not only books and comics but also group merchandising. The website was eventually removed and in 2000 was replaced with another site, this one for another religious group that called itself Aleph, which had been established by former members of Aum. On this new site, the figure of Asahara, who had been imprisoned since 1995 and was sentenced to death in 2004, was much less visible. In May 2007, a number of members of Aleph, including Jōyū Fumihiko, a one-time spokesperson and public relations manager for Aum, left the organization and founded another new group called Hikari no wa (Circle of Light). Hikari no wa's website was immediately opened at the time of the group's founding. In contrast to the caution exhibited by Aleph, the leader of Hikari no wa is not only the main figure on the website, but is also becoming something of an Internet celebrity in Mixi, the biggest social network website in Japan. However, the rise of Jōyū as a Web 'celebrity' seems to be paralleled by an increasing amount of ridicule and criticism directed at Asahara's image online. Large numbers of user-generated videos have appeared on video sharing websites such as YouTube or Niko niko dōga, videos that parody the anime films that Aum Shinrikyō once

produced and distributed among members. In the most common form of these videos, an original animation movie or video from Aum is presented with different background music, creating a humorous effect aimed especially at ridiculing the ex-leader Asahara.

This paper investigates the differences and similarities between Asahara and Jōyū's self-representation online. Is Jōyū creating the image of a new leader or is he merely replicating the image of Asahara in new clothing? Is 'Web 2.0' giving rise to what Jolyon Thomas (2006) has called 'playing with religion' (shūkyo asobi)? Do these videos show us the increasingly blurry boundaries between religion and entertainment? How is Jōyū's involvement online impacting his potential influence offline?

Knut Lundby (University of Oslo) Patterns of belonging in online/offline interfaces of religion

This paper explores patterns of belonging that may develop around religious activities in the interface of the online and the offline. This is a theoretical contribution aiming to find fruitful concepts for use at the present stage of research in this field. This implies concepts that could account for the new potentials with 'social' media technology and user generated activity in the multicultural diversity of contemporary modernity. Any understanding of the online and offline as parallel worlds are rejected. The same goes for any conceptualization of the online as representations of the offline. The two today appear as intertwined in each other and have to be grasped theoretically as such. Belonging is shaped by offline relations as well as by online relations. A critical discussion of concepts of the imagined (i.e. 'cyberspace', 'virtuality' and 'imagined community') will be contrasted to sociological concepts of the social (like 'institutions', 'practices', 'interactions'). 'Social networks' in sociological understanding then meets the 'social media'. This is brought into a theoretical framework where religion and religiosity in online/offline settings are conceptualized through patterns of belonging. 'Belonging' involves relations with stronger sentiments than the 'weak ties' of shifting networks but it is more concrete and nuanced than the term 'community'.

The main focus of this paper is on patterns of belonging that build various forms of social cohesion. However, there may be conflicts of belonging as a person relate to several contexts. Such conflicts will be discussed. The paper takes it offset in a critical reading of Lorne L. Dawson's chapter on "Religion and the Quest for Virtual Community" in the 2004 collection on Religion Online (ed. by Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan). This implies a Durheimian conceptualization of religion as a starting point. The relevance of this definition of religion, however, will be critically assessed for academic study of religion and religiosity in the present online/offline co-habitat. Patterns of belonging related to religious online/offline activities are relevant for the academic debates on changing conditions of authority and identity that follows the new web-based media in the domain of religion. Questions for these debates will be raised but are not a core part of this paper.

Pauline Hope Cheong and Shirlena Huang (National University of Singapore) and Jessie Poon (University of Buffalo) Online and Offline Pathways to Enlightenment: (Re)legitimizing authority and regulations in Buddhist organizations

In recent years, a key issue of contention has been the nature of online and offline interaction, and the changing roles of authority in society, spawned by the growing development and diffusion of information and communication technologies. One common view is that the Internet challenges traditional hierarchical authority structures, and is directly linked to the erosion of relationships between superiors and subordinates, clergy and laity. Significantly, the debate on religious boundaries and authority online takes place in context of the alleged secularization of (post)modern society, where the information society might mean the a) opening up of multiple spiritual marketplaces and online social networking platforms, b) loss of exclusive control of religious knowledge and values by elites, c) move away from vertical authority towards flatter organizations or, d) a co-existence of technological modernization and religion as the Internet is perceived and shaped by religious leaders of diverse faiths. In light of contemporary trends in the mediation and mediatization of religious life, to what extent and in what ways do clergy manage the growth of their communities and (re)legitimize their authority, online and offline?

This paper examines the implications of Internet and other web-enabled application use on the ways in which religious authority is enacted with the reorganization of informational access and the social settings in which members of the Buddhist religious faith interact. We draw upon our data from our three year multidisciplinary study on religion, social capital and the internet, particularly from in-depth interviews with twenty five Buddhist monks in Singapore. Singapore provides a rich context to examine online and offline religious connections as it a highly wired, multi-religious site, with Census 2000 data indicating that Buddhism is the majority and fastest growing religion in the country. Recent attempts by Buddhist leaders to adopt the internet and engage Web 2.0 in local and transnational ways provides an interesting milieu to investigate the dialectics of tradition, change and transformation of the “sangha” (purposeful assembly) within established houses of worship. Our paper will demonstrate that instead of merely presenting religious online, in varying degrees, religious leaders are involved in the framing of religious experiences potentially facilitating the development of networked communities while changing time-space distantiations. In this way, we draw out insights for the future conceptualizations of religious community and “samagra-sangha” (harmonious order) to add to a better understanding of the governance and accessibility of socio-religious spaces. As the bulk of research on religion and the internet have largely represented views from Christianity in North America and Europe, our paper contributes to empirical research from a non-Western context to derive fresh insights on religious community and leadership. We expect that the paper’s theme is consistent with the special issue’s questions regarding the relationship between practice and conception of religion online and offline as well as the strategic management of temporal, spatial and informational resources in cyber and actual sanctuary spaces. Findings will suggest significant implications for the performance of religious authority and the reexamination of regulatory norms, and policy of religious organizations.

Tim Hutchings (University of Durham) Contemporary Religious Community and the Online Church

“Online churches” are Internet-based Christian communities, pursuing worship, discussion, friendship, support, proselytisation and other key religious goals through computer-mediated communication. My research has followed five well-known examples over the last four years, including forum, blog, chatroom, Second Life and “online campus” formats, interviewing over

100 people, participating in online and offline events and analysing media coverage. This paper introduces some of my findings, with particular attention to the multi-layered relationship between the digital and the everyday. Participants predominantly use the Internet as an additional resource to broaden and fulfil religious lives firmly based in local church communities. The churchgoing experience of members is one factor underlying the scarcity of innovation in worship or theology reported since the mid-1990s (Schroeder et al., 1998; Miczek, 2008). What is significant here is more subtle: the emergence of loosely networked global communities exchanging ideas, prayer, support and conversation, maintained alongside the local church. I attend particularly here to Wellman's "networked individualism" (2003). Adequate understanding of the significance of online religion requires attention to all levels of the relationship between online and offline activity. I identify four dimensions and illustrate each with examples from my research. Online churches copy elements of the everyday, in ritual, visual design and organisation. They become part of the everyday, incorporated into members' material, social and online lives. They remain distinct from the everyday, separate in certain respects from local social networks. Finally, they become distinctively online, developing patterns of media use and social structures that are genuinely different from those found in local religious communities. Online churches are increasingly popular and significant forms of Christian communication and community, supported by denominations and large churches around the world. This paper offers insights into the design and practice of these groups and suggests a new theoretical framework to connect online religion with offline life and activity. The author hopes that both contributions will prove valuable for the growing academic field of religion and new media.

Wednesday August 11

9 – 10:30 a.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: News coverage

Room: LG5

Chair: Charles Lewis, "Holy Post," *The National Post*

Christina Koutsoukos and Andrea Cassin (University of Newcastle, Australia) World Youth Day Sydney 2008: The acceptable face of religion in contemporary Australia

According to The Australian newspaper's Editor-at-large Paul Kelly World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney "enshrined the role of religion in the public square"(2008). In a nation such as Australia where religious fervour is usually reserved for sporting events, the WYD pilgrims' public devotion struck a chord with the media. To gain perspective on the media coverage of the event, hundreds of newspaper and television stories have been collected. Initial analysis of the print stories in national, metropolitan and local papers has demonstrated a mainly positive coverage. Preliminary observation of the television news stories again over the course of a ten days echoed Sydney 2000: Part Olympics, part celebrity happening with partying pilgrims replacing athletes. As the largest event of a religious nature to take place in Australia since the Papal visit of Pope John Paul the Second in 1995, there was no doubt it was newsworthy. In the main the coverage encompassed the 'news values' applied by journalists in their daily practice. Journalists use them to lay claim to objectivity in their reporting. But are they useful at all, given the subjective nature of the religious sphere? These questions underpin the approach taken for this case study of

World Youth Day 2008 in Sydney. This “hybrid religious media event” (Hepp & Krönert, 2008) was imposing in its scale of organization. Packing political and commercial punch, it impacted on the brash soul of the city of Sydney closing streets to traffic with songs and music. The picturesque surrounds of Sydney and its harbour were used to frame the “sacred”; Catholic High church ritual such as the Stations of the Cross was depicted through the slick “popular culture” of television production. Religion, in this case a globalized Catholic Christianity, was brought to the marketplace with Pope Benedict XVI as its core “branding”(Hepp & Krönert, 2008). What it provided was a highly visible example of the “intersection of media, religion, and popular culture” in this country. Pope Benedict, the headliner celebrity was backed up by popular culture A-listers from the sport and entertainment fields. The Sydney media embraced the young Catholic pilgrims and the Papal visitor equally. Both played key roles in what was a post 9/11 ‘good news story’. As Hoover (1998) wrote “journalism is a cultural practice: It is about manipulating symbols and presenting narrative in such a way so they are relevant to the cultural context within which journalism functions”. Given the scale and level of coverage of WYD 2008 it can be argued the Australian media made a clear choice “presenting a narrative” about what it considered to be the “acceptable” face of religion in this country.

Hinda Mandell (Syracuse University) Beyond sensationalism: Scandal as a sociological concept

As a subject of rigorous study, “media coverage of scandal” usually receives the short end of the stick and is often derided and considered fluff. After all, it often involves celebrities - like golf star Tiger Woods - and politicians - like former presidential candidate John Edwards - caught red-handed in embarrassing and incriminating situations. It is the trivial stuff of tabloids and the evening news – not content suited for a robust, academic study, some say. While acknowledging this criticism, the purpose of this paper is to understand American scandal as a concept emerging from a specific culture – steeped in religious Puritan roots – by conducting an explication of the subject. Moving beyond simple definitions of the concept, this paper analyzes scandal as a moral event with religious and political implications that simultaneously enforces social norms and promotes debate about such communal expectations.

Russell Stockard Jr. (California Lutheran University) Disastrous Discourse: Framing of Disaster and Religion in the 2010 Haitian Earthquake

Pat Robertson's offering of a theological interpretation of the January 2010 Haiti earthquake as retribution for an alleged pact with the devil became one of the high-profile stories in the immediate aftermath of the disaster. Despite the criticism from White advisor Valerie Jarrett (Friedman, 2010) and numerous other commentators, Coming so soon after the 7.0 tremors, Robertson's remarks constituted a figurative aftershock in a landscape already horrifically wracked by destruction and misery (Wilkinson (2010).

Interestingly, Christian evangelists weren't the only observers making moral judgments about the catastrophe. The Muslim Congress of Nigeria, while extending condolences to the people of Haiti and urging sound building practices in Nigeria, warned that sins could trigger the wrath of Allah (Odeh, 2010),

The study proposed is an exploratory analysis of conventional media and digital media discourse about the disaster. The study will examine both news and opinion about Haiti. Both international media, largely from the U.S. and Haitian-based communication will be included. This will take place in the context of the history of disasters in the Caribbean, such as the Jamaican earthquake in the 17th century and the Port-au-Prince fire of the middle of the 19th century and in a comparative framework with respect to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (Mulcahy, 2008).

Fothergill's study of the Grand Forks, North Dakota flood does not include religion and spirituality in the subtitle of her book on gender, class, and family in disaster. However, she does treat these issues extensively from an institutional as well as interpersonal and coping standpoint (Fothergill, 2004). In addition to being inspired by Fothergill's approach, the study will also view framing of such stories as missionaries securing "orphans" for adoption by families outside of Haiti as well as indigenous religion (vodun) and Christianity (Thomas, 2004).

The use of blogs and social media was prominent in this disaster and those tools will receive attention in the analysis (Di Massa et al., 2010). Lastly, the notions of community organizations, international NGOs and faith-based organizations and social capital will be examined in the context of religion. How does discourse frame the Haitian people establishing self-help and receiving international aid in the context of religion and spirituality? How do stories in the international media place Haitians in a position of dependency or taking control of their lives? Do these stories and discourse typically occur in a secular or in a religious context? How does the discourse in the mainstream media differ from that in social media such as blogs?

Teemu Taira (University of Leeds) Portrayals of Religion in British Media: summary of findings and methodological reflections

The paper has two parts. The first part summarizes findings of the project examining portrayals of religion in British media. Selection of newspapers and television (2008/9) are compared to the results of similar study of early 1980s. The main question is how portrayals have changed in almost 30 years. Despite many continuing themes the paper will argue that enormous quantitative and qualitative changes have taken place. The references to religion in newspapers have more than doubled in 30 years, but in television the increase is more modest. Portrayals of religion have become more heterogeneous, religion has become a visible part of public discussion and the debate is currently organized around three poles which are both converging and challenging each other: multiculturalism, Christian heritage and secularism. Second part of the paper deals with methodological reflections as well as implications for further studies. The project has employed mixed methods in longitudinal study based on the replication of earlier study. It has used quantitative content analysis and qualitative discourse analysis supplemented with focus group analysis and event analysis. Whilst seeking to replicate the methods of earlier study to enable a comparative analysis the project has been confronted with issues raised by changes in the media. This paper clarifies briefly how these methods have been triangulated and will reflect on these challenges, discuss the implications followed and consider issues raised by undertaking a variety of research methods.

Panel B: Congregations and communities
Room: LG13

Chair: Kimberley Casteline (University of Colorado, Boulder)

David Haskell (Wilfrid Laurier University) Kevin Flatt (Redeemer University College) and Robin Lathangue (Trent University) Measuring the Effectiveness of a Church's Off-line and On-line Marketing Campaign: The Case of the United Church of Canada's "WonderCafe"

In November 2006, in the context of declining membership, the United Church of Canada (UCC) launched an advertising campaign. At a cost of approximately 10.5 million dollars it was hailed as the most expensive marketing strategy ever employed by a Canadian church.

The campaign featured a set of provocative ads that ran nationally in popular, high-profile print publications; it also featured an interactive web site called The WonderCafe. Each of the ads posed a challenging spiritual or moral question then asked readers to go online and discuss the issue at the web site. The leaders within the UCC said the goal of the nationally-publicized WonderCafe print ads and the associated WonderCafe web site was two-fold. They were created to project a positive, public image of the United Church (as the "home of open-minded conversation") and to ultimately convince members of the Canadian population to attend/join local congregations of the denomination.

The purpose of this study was to qualitatively gauge the effectiveness of the WonderCafe ads and web site as a means of promoting the UCC by probing the cognitive processing of viewers of those media artefacts. Through a series of focus groups, a total of 62 religious seekers were asked to view the ads and then the web site. After viewing the ads the participants were asked a series of open-ended questions to determine 1) how the respective artefacts affected their perceptions of the United Church and 2) whether the respective artefacts inspired them to possible action (e.g., attend a United Church service). Similar questions were asked after perusing the web site.

Forty percent of participants described themselves as "no religion"; 40% described their faith as Catholic and 20% described themselves as Protestant (two attending the UCC). Almost three-quarters stated they knew nothing about, and had no opinion on, the UCC.

Qualitative analysis of participant responses determined the following: Over 40% of participants, suggested that the ads got them thinking about the UCC; however, for more than half of those, their perceptions were slightly negative. Further, no ad viewer mentioned a desire to learn more about the United Church and only 8% voiced an interest in perusing the WonderCafe web site now or at some point in the future.

Post web site viewing, almost 80% of participants had positive perceptions of the UCC as an open and accepting denomination in terms of social and religious issues. However, in half of responses and often alongside positive comments about the church's openness were remarks expressing confusion or frustration over the web site's lack of doctrinal information on the UCC. Discounting two participants who regularly attended the UCC, about 15% of participants acknowledged some interest in attending a UCC church service. However, their attendance was always expressed in highly tentative terms (e.g., "If I ever go to a church...") and was never shown to be a pressing desire.

With reference to the results of the analysis, the efficacy and limitations of religious marketing, especially religious marketing that employs the internet, are discussed.

David Michels (Dalhousie University) Little church on the Internet

Popular Internet applications have made sophisticated marketing and communication accessible to even little congregations. Numerous studies have examined individuals' religious activities online, and the growth of online religious communities, but little research has been conducted on the impact of these new technologies on offline congregational life. Additionally, there has been a lack of qualitative research on online religious experiences of adult mainline Christians. My study describes the impact of new online technologies on the experience of congregational life. The respondents were members of a conservative protestant Christian church in suburban Atlantic Canada. I explored the ways new technologies transform traditional religious activities and challenge implicit ideas about participation and belonging.

Through a micro-ethnographic case study, I describe how one small church decided to embrace the Internet as part of their internal communications and outreach strategies to the community. The use of email was supplemented with a professionally developed web presence; a Facebook site; wireless access throughout the church building; digital audio sermons available online; and eventually, live streaming video of the services with online chat. Data were gathered using participant observation, individual and group interviews, archival research, and analysis of print and online content. The online content gathered was official or semi-official, representing the views of the church and pastor and was either accessible to the public generally or just to members and adherents. This study adopts a constructivist/interpretivist approach and data analysis was conducted using a grounded theory methodology aided by Hyperresearch software. The data was drawn from a larger ongoing ethnographic study that explores religious information behaviour of leaders of churches in transition, with particular attention to the impact of the Internet.

It was found that the congregation generally welcomed the engagement with Internet media and accepted its use internally in the contexts of worship, education and decision-making. The use of these media did underscore the digital divide within the congregation, frequently associated with age, as some members did not have and were not interested in having online access. The outward use of these technologies was more divided. Over time questions around the efficacy of these media began to surface, as well as ardent support for this new approach. The question of belonging also arose, as some members were hesitant to consider online participants as members of the community in the same manner as those physically attending.

Although it may be too early to appreciate fully the impact of these new technologies on the future growth of this church, the leadership believes that these technologies will allow them to more effectively engage digital natives. Yet if this strategy is successful, it may require a rethinking of traditional beliefs about belonging and participation in the local as well as global church.

Paul Emerson Teusner (RMIT University) Godcasting: navigating between religious audiences and podcasting communities

In 2006 it was reported that, second only to radio station programs, religious programs are the most popular genre of podcasting. Yet to date very little research has been conducted on religious podcasting, its content, production or consumption. I would like to offer some preliminary findings from data collected in 2006 and 2007 from individuals' and organisations' use of podcasting for religious purposes. In my presentation I will consider how information produced by religious practitioners has been framed by podcasters for online consumption, and its effect on the messages received by audiences. I will also put forward some arguments and questions to consider on how podcasting is working to create and enhance online religious communities, and shape relationships between producers and consumers of podcasted religious content. I will focus particularly on the new role of "podcast priest" and how religious practitioners' roles are changed in this relatively new online medium.

Piotr Bobkowski and Christina Malik (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) The Orchards Church: Branding and theological specificity in church advertising

Mara Einstein has argued that "religion has to be marketed in today's culture in order to remain relevant" (2008, p. 60). One way in which some religious organizations market themselves is through the use of branding. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a *brand* as "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers, and to differentiate them from those of other competitors" (www.marketingpower.com). Strong, favorable brands are associated with favorable evaluations, increased purchase intention, and increased brand loyalty (e.g., Aaker, 1991).

Furthermore, studies suggest that religious marketing campaigns may be more successful when they downplay their religious characteristics in favor of more generic, non-theological attributes (e.g., Einstein, 2008; Hendershot, 2004). For instance, Einstein compared the marketing strategies of two church courses: Rick Warren's Purpose Driven Life with Bill Hybels' Becoming a Contagious Christian. Einstein argued that the success of Warren's course over Hybels' can be attributed, at least in part, to Warren's willingness "to obscure his beliefs" (p. 102) in marketing his product.

The purpose of this study is to test these observations about religious marketing with a controlled experiment. Specifically, we will examine whether religious marketing is more effective when it uses 1) branding, and 2) non-specific theological language.

Study participants will be randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. In each condition, they will be shown a fictitious church web site and asked to rate their impressions of the church. The four conditions will differ with respect to 1) the level of branding, and 2) theological specificity depicted in the church's web site.

The branded web site will feature a specific church name (The Orchards), a logo and tag line, and other brand-specific design elements. The non-branded web site will not feature these branded elements. The theologically specific web site will feature the label "Christian" in the church name, a prominent cross, and several mentions of Christ, Jesus, and God. The theologically generic web site will not feature any of these elements, but will feature more

therapeutic language. Participants will view either the branded/specific, branded/generic, non-branded/specific, or non-branded/generic web site. Data collection will take place during the spring 2010 semester.

It is expected that respondents will react more positively to the branded web sites than to the non-branded ones. Respondents' religious beliefs will be taken into consideration during analysis, and it is expected that those who adhere to more orthodox religious beliefs will react more positively to the theologically specific web sites.

While this study will narrowly test Einstein's observations with a Christian web site, it is hoped that the experiment may be replicated in the future with more religiously diverse stimuli and participant samples, thus building empirical evidence for a broader theory of religious marketing.

Panel C: Brands

Room: LG6

Chair: Knut Lundby (University of Oslo)

Mara Einstein (Queens College, CUNY) Re-branding faith: Advertising as crisis management in the Church of Scientology

Religious marketing has risen over the past two decades due to a confluence of societal changes, notably the personal freedom to determine one's faith and the ubiquity of mass media with its concomitant advertising. Branding—a marketing tool whereby a product is given an identity beyond its physical attributes—is being employed by an increasing number of churches. A recent campaign by the Church of Scientology provides a case study of how churches are becoming increasingly sophisticated in their use of marketing. Beyond simply promoting their products, this campaign uses branding to solve an important marketing issue, specifically improving a sagging public reputation.

The Church of Scientology is in the midst of a growth initiative. Over the last five years, they have doubled their churches and missions, and over the last two years, they have distributed nearly 70 million books and lectures by the church's founder. Two new church-owned facilities have increased publishing capacity to more than 500,000 books and more than 900,000 CDs weekly.

In January 2008 a video of Tom Cruise pontificating on Scientology was leaked to the press. The church claimed copyright infringement and threatened to bring lawsuits against websites that presented the video. In response, Anonymous began a negative PR campaign against Scientology. In March 2009, KESQ produced a multi-segment investigative report about the feud. Three months later, the St. Petersburg Times printed a three-part special report that, like the KESQ pieces, contained allegations of physical abuse.

Partially in response to this negative publicity, the Church of Scientology launched a multi-million-dollar advertising campaign in May 2009 called "Scientology: Know Yourself—Know Life," consisting of three commercials entitled "You", "Search", and "Life." The ads are highly produced using softly lit photography, numerous edits, a gravelly male voiceover, and "New Age" music that swells when "scientology.org" appears on the screen. These commercials use a

combination of blue and brown hues and black and white photography, which gives them the feel of an upscale car commercial and makes them compelling to watch.

Given the communication in the ads, this campaign is a combination of a sales and a branding message. The sales message directs consumers to the website. In addition, the campaign works as a branding effort, meant to position Scientology as hip, upscale, and mainstream by providing new symbols (young people replace Tom Cruise) and a new tagline.

Based on my discussions with The Church of Scientology, the objective of this campaign is to answer the question “What is Scientology?” While this may be true, it is also true that the organization’s ultimate objective is to sell books and CDs. In a 3-page, bullet-pointed fact sheet, only two bullet points address membership. The rest highlights international property holdings and renovations, book sales (including mention of the updated publishing facilities), DVD sales and live events. Thus, “Know Yourself—Know Live” is a not simply an awareness campaign.

Marie Fahlén (University of Gothenburg), Internet as a Medium for Images of Christ – in the Intersection with Young Peoples Reception

The focus of my paper is one specific image of Christ, a poster from 1999 presented by a British Christian organization, CAN (The Churches Advertising Network), on the Internet – and the reception of this image by a group of young Swedish people in a multireligious context. CAN presents itself as an independent ecumenical organisation, consisting of Christian communicators aiming at producing national Christian advertising campaigns of high quality. The visual representation of Christ in the history of the western church has always been in symbiosis with culture. The fact that images of Christ are presented on the Internet indicates, however, a shift from a traditional context of Christian communities, liturgy and the church room. The new medium make possible for people with different backgrounds to encounter a wide field of representations of Christ. The border between sacred and profane has become unclear. The CAN poster illustrate how Christian organisations use Internet as a new arena to mediate the Christian gospel. The fact that this image is sold on CAN:s website, printed on posters and t-shirts, also clarifies commercial aspects. The actual image interprets Christian tradition in a new way, using computer technology. The characteristics of the Jesus figure are joined with an iconic image of Che Guevara. This paper will analyze interpretations of this image starting from qualitative interviews with a group of young persons with different relations to Christian faith and various experiences of Christian symbols and iconographic themes, and discuss what kind of challenges the Christian theology of images, based on the theology of the icon from Nicea 787, face in this new situation. The theoretical perspective is hermeneutic- phenomenological, aiming at a multidimensional understanding of the experience and interpretation of this image.

Sharon Lauricella (University of Ontario Institute of Technology), Making sense of spiritual media: An audience study of “The Secret” DVD, book and website

This paper examines the meaning-making practices, constructions, and ways audiences engage with “spiritual” works. The Secret DVD, created, authored and produced by Rhonda Byrne, together with the accompanying book and website are considered in the context of an active audience seeking spiritual meaning and results. This study hypothesizes that many of those who

have adopted The Secret's spiritual framework have done so in similar ways as those who have committed to an organized religion. Evidence of individuals adopting the set of beliefs as outlined in The Secret is analyzed by means of audience members' narratives published on the DVD and book's complimentary website (www.theseecret.tv). This investigation considers the audience – or believers – of The Secret by means of a uses and gratifications theoretical framework. The audience/believers are considered active participants to the media (DVD, book, website), with the hypothesis that The Secret functions as a set of beliefs that have meaning and purpose for these individuals. A “grounded” theoretical approach (Charmaz, 2006) is employed to analyze the audience and its narratives. Finally, particular attention is paid to how the audience/believers came to awareness of The Secret, how audience members “use” The Secret, and reference to traditional spiritual practices such as prayer, belief, and references God.

Wednesday August 11

11 – 12:30 p.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: Digital religion and identity

Room: LG5

Chair: Gordon Lynch (Birkbeck College, University of London)

Digital and mobile media are transforming the experience and reach of religious communities across time and space. Just as we saw the emergence of new social practices such as marriage proposals over the telephone and the immediate sharing of news about community events via telegraph in the late 19th and early 20th century, so today's new media have vastly increased the opportunities for frequent and immediate contact with the people and groups in our social networks (Carey, 1989; Marvin, 1988).

Not only can we pass along news and information about ourselves and others more quickly than ever before, but increasingly, we see ourselves as creators rather than mere consumers of the content that is found online (Jenkins, 2006). The emergent impulse toward content creation via YouTube, blogs, Twitter feeds, or Facebook sharing has contributed to a restructuring of religious authority. This shift in religious authority was already long underway prior to the introduction of the newest technologies (Campbell, 2007), yet the technologies make certain changes possible, and make their effects more widely visible, than ever before.

Whereas some see the emergence of a vast “networked society” in which democratic action flourishes (Rheingold, 2000), more cautious observers have termed the emergent character of social life as “networked individualism” and have argued that we are seeing a shift from civil society to monadic clusters of close relationships (Wellman, 2000; Gergen, 2008). Such shifts cause those interested in studies of religious life to question how we will relate to one another, and how religious identification practices will come to have meaning, in the digitally shaped environment that is emerging.

In this panel, therefore, we seek to consider the affordances of the new technologies as they are employed in relation to practices of religious self- and group identification. Putting social theories of self and identity in conversation with empirical work and philosophical reflection on new modes of representation made manifest with new media, we consider participation in

processes of self-representation of religious identity through new media, the differing ways in which young people construct identities in relation to online friendship circles, religious identity and online play, and the role of the Internet in changing notions of the subject. The panel is meant to spur dialogue between presenters and the many attending the conference who are similarly exploring the role of digital and mobile media in new practices of religious identification and group cohesion.

Greg Grieve (The University of North Carolina, Greensboro) **Being Liquid: The Zen Buddhist Subject in the Virtual World of Second Life**

Lynn Schofield Clark (University of Denver) **Digital Storytelling and Collective Religious Identity: How Teens and Pre-Teens Constructed the Stories of Temple Israel and Progressive Lutheran for their Publics**

Rachel Wagner (Ithaca College) **Godwired: Religion, Ritual and Virtual Reality**

Rianne Subijanto (University of Colorado, Boulder) **Is Blogosphere a Public Sphere? A Study of Islamic(ist) Discourses in Indonesian Muslim Blogs**

This paper analyzes whether the blogosphere constitutes a public sphere. Several studies on forums, news, debates and websites in the Internet from Laos, Australia to Europe have made an attempt to study if the Internet and its interactivity open up a space for people to engage in the public sphere (Albrecht, 2006; Murphy, 2006; Wright, 2007; Bruns, 2008; Siapera, 2008; Stein, 2008; Mayes, 2009). Eisenstadt (2006) Gole and Ammann (2006) as well as Siapera (2008) specifically link the question of the public sphere with Muslim societies. However, most studies that attempt to challenge the universalistic tendency of the concept of the public sphere quickly look away from Habermas's public sphere and seek to formulate an alternative concept of the public sphere only through the particular contexts, e.g. Muslim societies in diaspora (Siapera, 2008). I would like to argue that the challenge to the theory's universalism can only be answered after we measure the extent to which the Muslim blogs adhere to the requirements of the concept of the public sphere—dialogical type of communication, free participation, objective reasoning, critical-rational debate that push forward political praxis. Doing so will give us the basis to move forward to critically analyze the alternative form of the public sphere at work in the Muslim blogosphere, and to revise the theory itself.

This paper takes the Indonesian Muslim blogs affiliated with the community of Indonesian Muslim bloggers called "Muslimblog 2.0" as a case study. It only focuses on Indonesian Muslim blogs because centered in the concept of the public sphere is its relationship with the creation of the nation-state. The very subjectivity of the bloggers as an Indonesian will give more validity to see the construction of the public sphere within the Indonesian context, despite its virtual imaginaries. The paper will be presented as follows. First, the blog posts and their replies are content analyzed to measure the degree to which they constitute the Habermasian public sphere. Six variables are used for this: reasoned opinion expression, disagreement, topic, sourcing, engagement and equality (Stromer-Galley, 2007). Next, because the content analysis demonstrates that the Indonesian Muslim blogs do not constitute the Habermasian public sphere, I conduct a textual analysis on 20 blogs. By focusing on "the domestic issues" that are

commonly discussed in these blogs, I attempt to explore in-depth what is “private” in “public,” and vice versa. Finally, I discuss how blogosphere is involved in expanding and constructing an alternative public sphere especially among the Indonesian Muslims.

Panel B: Scripture and methodologies

Room: LG12

Chair:

Jan van der Stoep (Ede Christian University of Applied Sciences) Rethinking the culturalist turn

For a long time religion and media have been studied as two separate spheres: ‘religion and media’. Some scholars have developed an instrumentalist point of view that studies the way in which religion uses the media for its own purposes. Other scholars have chosen a phenomenological approach in which the effect of the media on the content of the message is the most important. Yet another approach is the culturalist view that makes us aware of the interconnectedness of both spheres. It studies ‘religion as media’. At the same time, culturalist theory focuses on how meaning is produced and reproduced in the complex interplay between various actors.

In this paper I will defend the importance of the culturalist turn in the study of media, religion and culture. At the same time, however, I will hold that culturalist theory has its own limitations and must be aware of its own ideological bias. As long as one studies religion as mediation, everything is fine. But when one tends to claim that religion is just mediation, theoretical problems arise.

A first problem is that one cannot study the social construction of meaning without also taking note of the internal logic of the symbolic field itself. As Pierre Bourdieu (1990, 1996, 2000) has argued, symbolic discourses are not just ways to legitimize power, they also have their own internal structure and coherence. This is important because the logic of the symbolic order also affects the way in which actors position themselves within the field of power. In my paper I will demonstrate that the analysis of religious discourse, and of the language games people use to give an account of themselves, is of great empirical value.

A second problem is that culturalist theory is itself religiously biased. It is a typically post-ideological way of thinking that has its own framework of understanding. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as one is willing to admit that one is not just a neutral observer. On the other hand, however, religious and ideological traditions cannot be viewed as timeless essences and are deeply affected by the way in which meaning is constructed in the media. The work of Don Ihde (1990, 2002) seems to be helpful in this regard, because it focuses especially on the interrelationship between constructivist and hermeneutic strands of thought.

Michael Thorn (York University) Sodomy, Abomination and the Struggle for Human Rights: Queer Readings of Genesis and Leviticus in Contemporary Religious Media Sources

According to some religious groups in the West those passages that are often interpreted as condemning homosexuality in the Hebrew Bible, in the Christian Bible and in the Qur'an are being misunderstood. However, in contemporary public debates surrounding homosexuality, especially those in which the issue of gay rights versus religious freedom takes precedence, this point is seldom, if ever, addressed. That is, while many conservative religious leaders argue that full recognition of civil rights for LGBTQ people is tantamount to denying freedom of expression and practice to certain religious groups who believe homosexual behaviour is sinful, what is not being addressed is whether it is even justified to label homosexual behaviour sinful in the first place. This point is neglected in spite of some interesting common ground that has been found in biblical exegesis between many progressive religious groups and a pro-gay minority in fundamentalist and evangelical communities.

In light of this, I will explore how three key texts from the Hebrew Bible have been reinterpreted from a queer point of view: the first being the story of Sodom and Gomorrah, as told in Genesis 19:1-11, and the second and third being Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, two texts which call a male lying with a male an abomination. These passages are important because they are shared by both Judaism and Christianity, and because they have influenced Islam, even to the point of there being an alternative version of the Sodom and Gomorrah story in the Qur'an. Using contemporary media sources, including published books, internet documents and audio-visual sources, this study will utilize a Foucauldian discourse analysis rooted in the relationship between knowledge and power to tease out the common ground that has been found by progressive religious groups and some pro-gay fundamentalist and evangelical groups. This common ground rests on an acknowledgment that even if sacred texts are to be taken literally (as most pro-gay fundamentalist and evangelical groups still maintain) they nevertheless require a particular kind of socio-historical context to be properly understood and applied.

The importance of a study such as this is crucial. Currently in Britain a number of religious leaders are concerned that the Labour Party's proposed Equality Bill will prevent some religious groups from turning away potential applicants even if the lifestyles of these applicants conflict with the religious beliefs of the groups involved. Recently in Canada, and currently in the United States, similar arguments were, and are being made to oppose the legal recognition of same-sex marriage. In these debates, where fundamental human rights are at stake, to ignore the biblical foundation of the beliefs of those who seek to deny human rights to certain groups is to ignore the very place where an actual solution might be found.

Paul Soukup (Santa Clara University) Communication media and the development of theology

The history of Christian theology correlates with the history of communication as Christianity made use of almost any available media (rhetorical expression, the written word, the decorative arts, and any combination thereof) to both propagate its beliefs and to reflect on them. While people typically associate Christian theology with the written word, other expressions of theology emerge in every period of Christian history. A media ecology approach to communication study provides an important perspective on Christian history and Christian theology.

Peter Horsfield (RMIT University) “Literacy, writing and branding: media and the episcopal takeover of Christianity.”

This paper explores an instance of the important role played by media in the shaping of Christianity. Early Christianity was a diverse movement, with a number of significant streams of interpretation and media practice created by the imaginative adaptation of the message of Jesus to different cultural contexts. By the end of the fourth century, one of those interpretive streams had become dominant and domineering, the one that aligned Christianity with the logos stream of Hellenistic philosophy, and structured hierarchically under the control of male bishops appointed by male bishops, hegemonically represented and enforced politically as the only true and acceptable representation and embodiment of the message of Jesus. This paper explores the role of media and its cultural embeddedness in the success of this particular cultural interpretation over the others, one which dominated Christianity for more than half a millennium and has continued to this present time. In particular it looks at the appointment as bishops of men who had held positions of secular authority and carried into the religious realm aspects of that social authority and its cultural power. This included extensive knowledge, facility, experience and access to resources of writing and the cultural systems of writing. That social capital was utilized extensively to establish this particular cultural version of Christianity against others in a number of ways advantageous to their cause: to build networks of political, social and economic influence both within Christianity and between Christianity and the wider culture of the Empire; to build and muster public opinion in support of their positions; through the hegemonic “branding” of this particular version of Christianity as “catholic” or “universal,” thereby hiding its particularity; using the liberties of action of writing to construct the opinions of others as deviant or heretical; and by excluding others from participation in written discourse through exclusion, suppression and destruction of their writings. Examples will be given to illustrate the complex interweaving of religion with the culture of media systems and technologies that can be seen even today.

Panel C: Japanese New Religions in the Media

Room: LG6

Chair:

Benjamin Dorman (Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture) Starstruck: Celebrities and Spirituality in Postwar Japan

The horrific sarin gas attack perpetrated by members of Aum Shinrikyō on the Tokyo subway system in 1995 drastically changed Japan’s postwar religious landscape. After the extent of Aum’s crimes became apparent, much of the media engaged in highly critical reporting of religion in general. While the Aum affair had a significant impact on religious groups themselves, it also affected the ways in which media reported religion and spirituality. Popular television shows that had featured segments on unexplained phenomena and “super powers” were unceremoniously pulled off the air in the wake of the incident. Religious or spiritual ideas were no longer considered as entertainment: they became broadly associated with social deviance and danger. It took years before programs of this type returned to television, and figures such as celebrity fortune teller Hosoki Kazuko and clairvoyant Ehara Hiroyuki were among the leaders of the post-Aum resurgence of spirituality that appeared on television and in

other media. But before Aum's descent into violence, it was one of a number of new religious movements that developed in a period of social change whereby increasing numbers of young people expressed dissatisfaction with many aspects of Japanese society, including the postwar education system and work ethic. Many sought spiritual satisfaction outside the traditional structures of religion as established religions struggled to maintain adherents with the advent of rapid urbanization. Esoteric practices associated with Tibetan Buddhism, Nostradamus's prophecies, and New Age ideas imported from the West were part of the milieu of new possibilities, and groups like Aum borrowed freely from the spiritual potpourri. Popular television programs featured "spiritual celebrities" like the foreign entertainer Uri Geller in the 1970s, or the Japanese housewife, Gibo Aiko, who performed "spirit readings" on television in addition to publishing a large number of books in the 1980s and 90s. Celebrities working in the mainstream media, such as the famous comedian-actor-director Kitano "Beat" Takeshi, revealed a strong interest in examining such ideas and the people who promoted them. While the activities of these individuals were generally considered acceptable at the time, the highly publicized cases of other media personalities like Sakurada Junko and Yamazaki Hiroko revealed another side of celebrity involvement in spiritual and religious activity. Both women became members of the Korean-based Unification Church and were married in mass wedding ceremonies. The Unification Church raised interest among Japanese people partly because of the high level of critical coverage by the media. Using these examples, this paper examines the fragile and contested nature of celebrity involvement and endorsement of religion and spirituality within the context of this fertile moment in postwar Japanese history.

Clark Chilson (University of Pittsburgh) Buddhist Philosopher vs Partisan Politician: Depictions of Ikeda Daisaku in Mainstream English-Language Media

Since 1960 Ikeda Daisaku (b. 1928) has led the Sōka Gakkai, a Buddhist lay movement and one of the largest religious organizations in Japan. He is also the founder and current president of Sōka Gakkai International, an organization that claims over a million members in more than 100 countries. He teaches, inter alia, that people can change their lives by changing their karma, most notably through the Nichiren Buddhist practice of reciting *namu-myōhō-rence-kyō*. In addition to promoting change in the lives of individuals, Ikeda has also attempted to effect social change in numerous ways: through his dialogues with leading intellectuals, which he later publishes; with peace proposals to the United Nations; through the schools he has founded, including two universities (one near Tokyo and the other in Aliso Viejo, California), and, at least in the past, through electoral politics. The last of these methods has been by far the most controversial. In 1964, Ikeda founded the Kōmeitō or Clean Government Party. Although Kōmeitō and Sōka Gakkai led by Ikeda officially split in 1970, because Kōmeitō's strongest supporters have continued to be Gakkai members, some political observers suspect that Ikeda has continued to wield great political power outside of public view. In this paper, I examine the portrayals of Ikeda in mainstream English-language media. Depictions of him will be compared to show which types of activities are treated negatively or with suspicion and which not. It will show that when Ikeda is represented as teaching Buddhist philosophy or advocating for peace through the United Nations or by meeting with world leaders, he has been portrayed laudably or with neutral language. In contrast when he is represented as engaging in Japanese domestic politics, he is depicted in negative terms. Portrayals of Ikeda in mainstream media suggest two possible biases that influence depictions of him and perhaps religious leaders in general. First, they suggest that

some journalists have an implicit assumption about what type of person a religious leader, particularly a Buddhist one, should be and what he or she should do. Second, they suggest that religious leaders are more likely to be depicted negatively when they are seen as attempting to effect social change through partisan electoral politics rather than through non-partisan activities, regardless of the effectiveness of the former compared with the latter for achieving religious-based goals.

Erica Baffelli (University of Otago) **New Religions and Media in Conflict: the Case of Kōdansha jiken (Kōdansha affair)**

The group Kōfuku no Kagaku (lit. the ‘Science of Happiness’, but from 2008 the group has also used the English name ‘Happy Science’) was founded in 1986 by Ōkawa Ryūhō. In early 1990s the group underwent a radical change in terms of its doctrine, which became more markedly Buddhist and which transformed its leader, previously seen mainly as a teacher, into the reincarnation of the group’s chief deity, known as El Cantare. The success of the group at the beginning of the 1990s was based on a combination of efficacious management strategies linked to a flexible doctrine and efficacious use of media. Even though the data regarding the audience could have been altered and the figure of 5.5 million members, indicated by the group in 1992, appears somewhat improbable, it is undeniable that the sudden increase in the number of the members occurred within a short space of time and, as numerous articles testify, the group received wide media coverage during that period. The massive advertising campaign in 1991 contributed to the rapid and sharp increase in membership, but also attracted attention and criticism from both scholars and the media. In particular, between the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992 a series of critical texts appeared (Yakushi’ in 1991; Yonemoto and Shimada 1992) and several newspapers published articles attacking the group or holding it up to ridicule. The first critical articles started appearing in May 1991 and - in tones similar to those used for scandals involving celebrities - mainly focused their attention on the donations the members were invited to make to finance the advertising campaign and the event in the Tokyo Dome, or they accused the group of resembling a company rather than a religious organisation. Then, a number of articles published by the magazines Friday and Genzai, published by Kōdansha, triggered a violent reaction at the hands of the group. The members staged demonstrations against the publishing house and blocked the telephone lines of the Kōdansha offices for five days by sending protest faxes (Astley 1995). The group also published a few texts against the publishing house, such as Kibō no kakumei (The Hope Revolution). The Kōdansha jiken, or Kōdansha affair, ended with a legal suit that lasted for several years. This paper investigates the Kōdansha affair and the tension between the group’s extensive use of media in early 1990s and the attempt at de-legitimisation carried out by the press in the same period.

Panel D: Western politics

Room:LG13

Chair:

Kevin Healey (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) **New Media and the Future of Religious Politics: The American Context and Beyond**

This paper represents the concluding argument of my dissertation, “The Spirit of Networks: New Media and the Changing Role of Religion in American Public Life.” The central thesis is that new media tend to generate debates about the sincerity and authenticity of elites, and that religion serves as a central cite of struggle in such debates. Due to increased commercialization and the decline of professional journalism, however, such debates typically reinforce the conservative status quo while sidelining “prophetic” critique on behalf of social justice. In this paper, I review several case studies from the Bush and Obama administrations that demonstrate this overarching thesis, and then explain the implications of these developments beyond the American context.

Several incidents from the Bush administration suggest that new media might help to sever the tie between religious conservatives and the Republican Party. The Terri Schiavo incident, GOP sex scandals, and legal cases involving “intelligent design” were driven by sources such as instant messages, e-mails, blogs, or political websites. These cases caused “trouble on the right” by prompting evangelicals to question the sincerity of GOP leaders’ commitment to conservative social values. However, cases in which religious progressives attempted to exploit new media to their advantage—for example, the United Church of Christ’s “Stillspeaking” campaign—demonstrate the continued tendency for traditional media sources to set the terms of debate and exclude prophetic social critique.

Media coverage of the 2008 election further demonstrates the complex interplay between traditional and new media, and the tendency for mainstream sources to exclude prophetic social critique. Coverage of the “pastor problems” of Barack Obama and Sarah Palin was driven by new media sources such as YouTube and blogs, but cable news sources influenced the framing and interpretation of the circulated material. Opponents mobilized videos of Jeremiah Wright to question the sincerity of Obama’s rhetoric of racial unity. Meanwhile, Palin managed to avoid serious scrutiny of her religious associations—including her relationship with the radical “spiritual warfare” movement. Supporters portrayed Palin’s faith as authentic and benign, and dismissed videos of Palin and her former pastors as irrelevant. While Obama’s victory bolstered religious progressives to some degree, it also generated a racially-charged backlash in the form of the Tea Party movement, many members of which hold Palin in high regard.

These developments have important implications beyond American borders. At stake in the American context is the productive tension between democratic liberalism and prophetic social critique—a tension that produced laudable results during the administrations of FDR and Johnson. As this tension dissolves into what Taylor calls “flat” notions of religious authenticity, “small-p” prophetic critique falls by the wayside. Meanwhile, a disturbing resonance emerges between neoliberalism and “capital-P” prophetic rhetoric and religious “apocalypticism.” Palin’s nomination and popularity among white evangelicals reflects this resonance and symbolizes the influence of a global network of radical evangelical movements. I argue that the emerging new media environment in the United States—characterized by a decline in professional journalism—contributes to the increasing strength of trans-national Christian Right organizations.

Radia Amari (University of Colorado, Boulder) **The physical and mental Muslimah: the west’s liberal secular understanding of Islam**

Who is the Muslim woman? Is she “oppressed” or does she possess “agency” qua “agency”? How are her discourses dismissed in favor of her corporeality within “western” discourses to answer the abovementioned questions?

This paper focuses on North American (i.e. U.S. and Canadian) media forms and their role in constructing the Muslim woman’s identity. Through textual and discourse analyses of the Los Angeles-based Muslim Girl magazine and Little Mosque on the Prairie, a Canadian television comedy in its third season, I contend that the discourse surrounding Muslim women in the “west” is one that must be performed vis-à-vis liberal secularism. In other words, the Muslim woman’s “individuality” must be invoked in order for her and her religious tradition to gain legitimacy. Also of interest is a discussion on how embracing a dominative normative can be used to subvert, change, and (re)signify it.

This research is performed in order to engage questions such as how gender constructions have multiple and contesting constitutions. It also is interested in problematizing labels like “the authentic Muslim woman” and “authentic Islam” and terms like “agency” and “oppression.” This is all done within a framework that furthers the idea that the media aid in developing ideas that then become values internalized by their audiences. The question then becomes how is this accomplished and what are the effects.

Rose A. Dyson (Independent Scholar) Canadian Public Policy and the Media: A new Paradigm for Human Existence and Ecological Integrity

This paper will focus on the impact of communications technologies on cultural practices and traditions in Canada and consumerism as an increasingly dominant religious practice. The implications for global peace, non violence and a sustainable future will be considered by examining how these technologies are currently being addressed in public policy on culture, education, health and safety in Canada. Traditional approaches to media production and distribution are undergoing massive disruption and change in a digital age. This volatility opens up new opportunities to re-examine chronic problems in policy development and stagnation at a time when economic, environmental and health related challenges demand a more holistic approach for a variety of reasons including the issue of finite resources.

Discussion will focus on how communications technologies are now employed in advertising industries to target children; ways in which films, television programs, video, computer games and the Internet fuel the use of violence as a form of entertainment and how this is resulting in increasing evidence of collective desensitization, youth gang violence, cyber bullying, consumer driven lifestyles and militarization of society at large.

These trends are at odds with educational goals that discourage the use of violence as a form of conflict resolution, materialistic value systems, unhealthy eating habits, peaceful co-existence and spiritual well-being. It will be demonstrated that unimpeded proliferation of popular culture as entertainment for profit driven purposes, laced with themes of violence because they sell well on a global market and translate easily into any language, will have to change, if we are to encourage transformation and sustainable development on either a local, national or global basis.

Reference will be made to new media models and policies adopted in other countries but still largely resisted in Canada.

Wednesday August 11

2:30 – 4 p.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: Media Witnessing: An instable, fragile, ambiguous, and yet intractable practice of modern communication

Room:LG12

Chair: Jolyon Mitchell (University of Edinburgh)

Amy Richards (Calvin College) The Fragility of Witnessing: A Comparative Ethics Approach to Truth Claims in Christian Practice and Frontline Journalism

In this paper, I analyse the shared concept of bearing witness in Christian practice and frontline journalism. Not all journalism is associated with the claim of bearing witness, but frontline reportage of extreme and extraordinary events, such as genocide in Rwanda or bombings in Baghdad, is increasingly associated with the concept of bearing witness. This paper is a comparative ethics approach to bearing witness through lived experience as a way of making and authenticating truth claims. Christian social ethics and frontline journalism share a phenomenology of presence, the understanding that embodied presence testifies. The Christian martyr and the frontline correspondent face risks involved in being there, live-on-the-scene. It is by being present, amidst dangerous, volatile and contested situations, that witness bearers derive their credibility and their potentiality to render the situation different. Bearing witness is an inherently fragile mode of communication given that the witness bearer begins within a contested situation and truth claims are staked on mortal risk.

Günter Thomas (Ruhr-Universität Bochum) The Instability of Witnessing: Exploring the Complexities of the Christian Tradition

In an important and widely received paper on various types of witnessing the cultural theorist Aleida Assmann contends that that religious witnessing is best characterized by strong and eventually irrational convictions – convictions set in stone that provide the basis of religious terrorism. Over against this claim, I explore aspects of witnessing at the root of the Christian tradition that display quite opposite features to Assmann’s characterization. The argument put forth will be: Religious witnessing shares with other types of witnessing an irritating co-presence of instability and fragility and the emergence of “driving convictions” – because the witness itself becomes a medium. It is this inbuilt complexity which differentiates witnessing from other forms of knowledge and observation. Only a subtle reading of religious witnessing will help to develop an illuminating interdisciplinary category of analysis.

Johanna Sumiala (University of Helsinki) The Ambiguity of Witnessing: Constructing Witness positions in the YouTube performance of the Finnish School Shootings

In this paper, I discuss media witnessing by analysing the visual construction of the relationship between mediatized violence/suffering and witnessing in the context of new media. The analysis focuses on the media performance of the two Finnish school shooting events (Jokela, 2007 and Kauhajoki, 2008) on YouTube. The study combines ritual communication analysis framework with visual analysis. In the paper special focus is given to the different types of encounters established between the YouTube video clips and spectators. The paper presents a typology of three witness positions potentially activated in these visual encounters: i) a sympathetic, ii) an empathic and iii) a bystander position. Finally the paper argues that bearing witness always has ethical implications embedded into the practice of communication. The three types of witness positions are discussed here against the idea and the concept of the mediatized witness and the new media.

Panel B: Historical research

Room: LG5

Chair:

Anne MacLennan (York University) Broadcasting Intolerance and Enthusiasm: Early Religious Radio Programming

An essential element of Canadian radio broadcasting in the 1920s and 1930s, religious broadcasting became a focus of opinion and policy formation. In the 1920s, the first roster of Canadian broadcasters was almost all independent and private. Many of the early stations were owned and operated by those who had interests in newspapers, manufacturing radios, and railway companies. At the other end of the spectrum, religious and other small but devoted broadcasters often valued their messages over regulation. Their enthusiasm to broadcast religious messages to a larger population beyond their congregation made religious broadcasters less likely to respect the guidelines set for Canadian radio stations. In 1924 Dr. Davies of the Victoria City Temple moved his ministry and its radio station along the dial without a license. The poorly financed and independent stations that were prevalent in Canada throughout the 1920s and 1930s were less likely to suffer serious penalties. The key to the continued existence of such stations was the lack of complaints from the audience or, in a more positive sense, community support. The radical views of religious broadcasters such as the International Bible Students garnered early attention that became central to the development of a sense of the place of policy and the medium within Canadian culture. The place of religious broadcasting in Canada was still being negotiated during the Second World War. As commentary in languages other than English and French were forbidden, sentiments about religion ran high in the 1930s, and radio provided a platform for the expression of a variety of opinions. Increasingly divergent views would be censored and not tolerated over the air. Speeches were submitted to the CBC as a prepared text in advance, as was required by regulation. Eventually the suspension of a variety of religious programs by the CBC occurred due to the contravention of the regulation prohibiting abusive comments about any religious group. Complaints directed the attention of CBC to every denomination as they each, in turn, were offended by the comments of other religious groups. The place of religion of the air developed slowly in its first decades.

Colum Kenny (Dublin City University) “The media and non-Christian culture in Ireland: case-studies with James Joyce, Buck Mulligan, Samuel Beckett, Moses and other Jews.”

This paper will examine aspects of the media coverage of two key legal cases that pitted Jews against Christians in the Irish courts, one during the year 1906 and the other during 1937. Both involved issues of high cultural sensitivity, the first being an application to end a religiously 'mixed' marriage and the second being a defamation action that resulted in part from racial stereotyping.

Drawing on contemporary newspapers and periodicals, as well as on the correspondence and works of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett who were familiar with a number of the central participants, the author explores attitudes towards Jews as well as the contrast between straight news reporting and the freedom of columnists to give vent to their prejudices.

While daily newspapers tended to cover the two controversial cases within the norms of conventional court reporting, the key nationalist organ 'Sinn Féin' became at the time in 1906 a platform for the expression of strongly anti-semitic opinion by the future Irish senator Oliver St John Gogarty. The latter was a friend of James Joyces and is featured by Joyce in *Ulysses* as a key character named Buck Mulligan.

Gogarty himself later became the defendant in the second of the two cases under consideration in this paper, a case that attracted media attention beyond Ireland. His earlier articles reveal a strain of anti-semitism in European nationalism which the new Irish Free State, founded in 1921, managed to contain. The plaintiffs in that second case were the grandsons of the respondent in the first, Morris (Moses) Harris.

The Jewish community in Ireland has always been a very small minority of the population at large, which is overwhelmingly Christian and mainly Roman Catholic in culture. The coverage of these two cases by daily and other newspapers provides an opportunity to raise questions about the role and performance of the media and to examine public attitudes towards the position of such a minority in a population emerging from its colonial past to independence.

Duncan Koerber (University of Toronto, Mississauga) *Denominational Newspapers, News, and the Print Public Sphere in Upper Canada in the 1830s*

As the newspaper business grew in the 1820s and 1830s in Upper Canada, secular newspapers became an important part of colonial life. In response, religious leaders started publishing denominational papers to communicate with their congregations, attract new followers, and influence public debate about a key public issue, the separation of church and state. Anglican leaders in particular made a number of attempts to start newspapers. Archival evidence from two separate cases, one in 1831 and in 1838, reveals that Anglican officials felt pressured to enter the newspaper business and to publish in a secular way.

This paper presentation argues that these two cases, along with supplementary evidence from the newspapers of other denominations, reveal a growing, powerful discourse of news that suggests the 1830s saw the start of a transition towards modern journalism in Canada.

Jenna Tiitsman (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and Auburn Media) **How to Make the World: Communication Technology and Rhetorics of Progress in the Construction of Global Space**

In 1858, a headline in a small American newspaper announced—in all capital letters and with multiple exclamation points—the end of distance and the end of war. The occasion for this apparent radical reshaping of global geopolitics was the successful laying of the Atlantic telegraph cable from Ireland to Canada. Such grand claims, issued by the Oneida Community of upstate New York, were familiar to a group founded on the belief that Christ had already returned and that moral purity could be realized through their particular brand of communism. What is surprising is the regular and highly technical reporting on the telegraph cable by the Oneida community for the previous seven years and then their nearly absolute silence when the cable failed after only 23 days. In this paper, I offer a reading of the Oneidan biweekly paper, the *Circular*, from 1851-1860 that demonstrates how the cable functions as a strategic metaphor for their religious experiment in moral perfection and communal living. I argue that the Oneidans used the Atlantic telegraph cable to frame their religious practices within the vein of the powerful American trope of progress and deployed the rhetoric of progress to integrate their isolated community into broader conversations of scientific discovery and American identity. In so doing, they advance a uniquely American reconfiguration of the classical conception of utopia in favor of the now-here of progress over the no-where of an inaccessible future. The Atlantic Telegraph cable, lauded by the Oneidans as the eradicator of distance and the guarantor of global peace, functioned for only 23 days. However, after seven years of detailed and technical reporting on the telegraph, the only mention made of this failure in the Oneida paper, *The Circular*, was that the cable was “not yet in a condition for every-day business.” The Oneidan’s refusal to report adequately on the failure of the cable betrays two critical significations of the telegraph for them: an imagination of the parallel between their spiritual accomplishments and the technological innovation America had readily claimed as its own and their concrete investment in utopia as a realizable project in history. The Oneidans used the telegraph as a powerful analogy for their own innovations in religious life and, in so doing, asserted themselves as a part of a particularly American myth of progress. Their use of the trope of progress posited their isolated religious community as an integral part of America’s place in a nascent global communications network and as the means by which this network extended into the spiritual realm. Such an imaginary eschewed the modern understanding of utopia as temporally and spatially inaccessible. The Oneida Community believed that the Atlantic telegraph had already brought a lasting global peace. For Oneidans, technological progress located the arrival of a utopian future within the horizon of the present. This is a story of particularly American self-imagination that continues to play across contemporary lines of a world cut and cabled by communications technologies.

Panel C: Film

Room: LG6

Chair: Alf Linderman (Uppsala University and the Sigtuna Foundation)

Merin Xavier (York University) **Sufism on my iPod: The Globalization of Modern Sufism, Trends in Contemporary Film and Musical Culture**

The following research project seeks to explore the topic of the globalization of modern Sufism directly through the exploration of contemporary film. In doing so, the project will attempt a thorough deconstruction of the themes and concepts of Sufism as evident in the film *Bab'Aziz: the Prince Who Contemplated His Soul* (2005). The film is by the Tunisian director Nacer Khemir. The film was part of Khemir's desert trilogy that includes the *Wanderers of the Desert* (1984) and the *Dove's Lost Necklace* (1991). *Bab'Aziz: the Prince Who Contemplated His Soul* is the story of the mystical journey of Bab'Aziz, played by the character of Parviz Shahinkhou, a blind Sufi dervish on a journey to a conference of Sufis in the desert, which takes place every 30 years a significant number in Sufism. The blind dervish is accompanied by his young granddaughter Ishtar, played by Maryam Hamid. In order to entertain her on this long and arduous journey Bab'Aziz tells Ishtar a story of a Prince, who when having discovered the Divine in his soul had become lost to the material world. In the end we come to discover that the Prince of the story is none other than Bab'Aziz. Thus this tale within a tale manages to incorporate various musical (Qawwali), artistic, poetic (Jalal al-din Rumi) and folkloric traditions of Sufism within a tapestry cinematic beauty. Thus what I wish to expound in this research project is to deconstruct the themes of the Sufi tradition as found in the film. I will present an understanding of Sufism through the film itself. In the process I desire to explore, if possible, a very pressing and difficult question posed within modern Sufism and among various practicing Sufis; that is how one contends with the use of various aesthetical manifestations of Sufism as only modes of entertainment, rather than important ritual and sacred practices. Such was the case with the great Qawwali singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. Qawwali is a form of zikr (remembrance of Allah) practiced in Sufi circles of the Chistiyya tariqa (order) in Pakistan and South Asia; but this trance inducing ritual of zikr is sacred music. In the early 1990's Qawwali music was discovered by Hollywood and was used in films such as *Dead Man Walking* (1995) by director Tim Robbins at the outcry of many Muslims in Pakistan who revere sacred Qawwali music. Such cases, similar to those of viewing whirling dervishes at concerts for pure pleasure, have put the inclusive and open attitudes of Sufism into a contentious sphere, merely due to the misuse of its various rituals and sacred practices. What is one to make of the infusion of Sufism with the notion of art for art sake, especially at the outcry of Sufis themselves? Can one come to reconcile these various points of views of the sacred and the profane? And in final analysis what is the role of film, especially popular film in understanding Sufism and bridging this divide? For instance the film *Bab'Aziz: the Prince Who Contemplated His Soul*?

Scott Preston (York University) *Disenchantment, Reenchantment and the Contemporary Supernatural Horror Film*

The untaught peasant beheld the elements around him and was acquainted with their practical uses. The most learned philosopher knew little more. He had partially unveiled the face of nature, but her immortal lineaments were still a wonder and a mystery. – Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, 1831

Scientific progress is ... the most important fraction, of that process of intellectualization which we have been undergoing ... Let us first of all clarify what this means in practice. Does it mean perhaps that today we have a greater understanding of the conditions under which we live than a Red Indian? Hardly. ... The savage knows incomparably more about his tools. ... It means

something else—the knowledge or the belief that, if one only wanted to, one could find out any time; that there are in principle no mysterious, incalculable powers at work. – Max Weber, 1918

Given the striking similarity of language in these two quotes, one might suspect Max Weber of deliberately paraphrasing Mary Shelley in his now-famous lecture on science and modernity. But even if this similarity of language is only a coincidence, it is telling nonetheless. Today Shelley's novel about a young scientist who discovers the eternal mystery of life only to give birth to a monster stands as our most imitated horror narrative. And Weber, in seeking just what it meant to be modern, isolated the loss of wonder and mystery that accompanied the rise of the scientific and the rational worldview. Frankenstein evokes a world where scientists pull back nature's veil and uncover all of the mysteries of life. At the outset of the nineteenth century, Mary Shelley's generation, the Romantics, witnessed both the excitement and the anxieties stirred by this project. A century later, Weber declared that the project had reached its conclusion. "There are in principle no mysterious, incalculable powers at work." Science had finished its task. The world by 1918 was now "disenchanted."

The juxtaposition of these two passages, one taken from popular literature, the other from the intellectual study of modernity, illustrates the central insight of my paper. Simply put, the horror genre is one long aesthetic response to the disenchantment of the world and the dilemmas engendered by this process. Charles Taylor contends that these dilemmas or "cross-pressures" typify modern Western life, and reach back to the Mary Shelley's lifetime. "A very common experience," says Taylor, "is that of being cross-pressured between open and closed perspectives." (555). "Open" for Taylor means being open to the possibility that something beyond this world exists. Horror then can be read as an index of western cultural history since the beginning of modernity. My paper contributes to the 2010 Conference on Media, Religion and Culture by situating the contemporary supernatural horror film as genre with religion on its mind, as a response to the disenchantment of modern life, as—in a word—reenchanting. Over the last decade, the notion of reenchantment has captivated intellectual discourse, featured in books by Simon During, Jane Bennett, James Elkins, and Michael Saler & Joshua Landy, to name a few. Extending their work, I will show how the term can be used to open up new paths of inquiry in the study of popular culture.

Sofia Sjö (Åbo Akademi University) Faith, Doubt, and Sex: Representations of Women Ministers in Contemporary Nordic Film

Religious characters have always been relatively common on film. Some of the first films ever made had a religious storyline and the interest in religious themes and characters have continued through the years, inspiring studies in the field of religion and film in turn. As many other characters in the movies, religious characters have, however, been prone to stereotyping. They are far from always represented in a negative way, but certain character types are common, such as the power hungry priest, the evil nun, the confused minister and the solemn monk. Though these characterizations naturally do not in a direct manner reflect attitudes in the real world, they are still suggestive and worthy of attention. As religions change so do, however, conversely religious characters. Consequently when women ministers have become more common, these characters have also found their way into films and given us a fairly new religious character in turn. In the Nordic countries, where women ministers are fairly regular, a number of recent films

have focused on female characters in this role. In this paper I will explore a few of these films and investigate what kind of issues that are commonly connected to the women ministers in the films and how the matter of gender comes across in the stories and in regard to the characters roles as ministers. Comparisons will be made with a couple of Nordic films with male ministers in the center to better be able to grasp the gender structures in the narratives. A final question that will also be reflected on is what the films possibly suggest about the position of women ministers in contemporary society. The method used in the study is a narrative analysis combined with insights from discourse analysis. The theoretical framework is a combination of feminist film theory and modern theories on religion in a changing world. The paper will show how women ministers grapple with some of the same problems as female characters on film in general, but also how they express some interesting both similarities with and differences from male ministers on film, something that points to noteworthy ideas about women ministers in the stories. The main hope with the study is to focus attention on an as yet relatively sparsely discussed religious character in the field of religion and film and the gender issues related to this character and to underline the need of looking to film for an understanding of attitudes and ideas in regard to religion in the society of today. The goal with the paper is, however, naturally not to present a conclusive analysis of the films or women ministers on film, but rather hopefully inspire more studies to be made on the topic.

Tomas Axelson (Högskolan Dalarna Sweden), Narration, Visualization and Mind. Movies in everyday life as a resource for utopian self-reflection

The aim of this paper is to analyze how people in late modern society characterized by de-traditionalization, use moving images as a cultural resource for the construction of meaningful subjective world views. As a theoretical concept with several dimensions I am especially interested in the dimension of the “sacralization of the self” which I want to relate to media theory (Woodhead & Heelas 2000: 344). Eric W. Rothenbuhler is emphasizing the focus of the self as a core aspect in contemporary media society when he labels the individual self as one of “the sacred objects of modern culture” (Rothenbuhler 2006: 31).

In the paper I want to discuss the need for case studies which I feel is necessary in order to undertake a critical investigation about ‘the self’ and how consumption of fiction film is interconnected to spectator’s creation of self images, but also in what ways film engagement elicits self-reflection (Giddens 1991, Axelson 2008, Vaage 2009a). The paper will use empirical data to illustrate as well as theoretically develop perspectives on how the audience uses fiction film in every-day life for the construction of the self, but also for the construction of more profound and long-lasting ideas and the quest of being part of a moral community (Brereton 2005, Jerslev 2006, Klinger 2008, Mikkola et al. 2007, Vaage 2009b).

I hereby wish to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the complex interplay between moving images and non-visual meaning-making processes (Winnicott 1991, Marsh 2004, Ware 2008).

Some empirical findings support a conclusion that moving images creates a transitional space for the human mind, with the capacity of transporting the spectator from real life to fiction and back

to real life again, helping the individual with an ongoing process of transforming the self, dealing with who you actually are, and who you want to become (Axelson 2008, Vaage 2009b).

Panel D: Teaching

Room: LG13

Chair: Alexandra Boutros (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Ryan Torma (Luther Seminary) To Ning or not? Exploring Ning as a platform for teaching media, religion and culture online

During the Fall semester of 2009, Luther Seminary offered a course, "Gospel & Global Media Cultures," which explored the intersections of media, religion and culture with graduate students preparing for pastoral and ministerial careers. This course was offered online with no required face-to-face components. In an attempt to embed the opportunities and challenges presented by digital social networking tools into the learning environment, this course was developed using the Ning social networking platform rather than the school's learning management system. This paper explores the benefits and challenges for teaching and learning that were presented in using Ning as the course platform.

Paul Godkin (Conestoga College) Journalism students at an Evangelical university as an interpretive community

This proposal suggests a case study approach to examining the journalism program at a Christian faith based university. The religious orientation of the school could be characterized as Evangelical. The study will argue the students form more of an "interpretive community" rather than codified professional practice. The study uses mixed methodology including in-depth interviews and survey data. The research applies Schmalzbauer's (1999) analysis which identifies three ways journalists of faith reconcile their spiritual and professional lives. While Schmalzbauer looks at elite journalists with far more substantial experience contemplating the relationship between their faith and their work, this study would be concerned with what motivates the students to become journalists and how they envision the impact of their faith on professional practice. It would explore questions such as how likely they are to embrace a positivistic stance and whether they would be most comfortable working for faith based media. This study uses a similar approach to Schmalzbauer. Within a university setting a number of journalism students participate in in-depth interviews to explore how they reconcile their faith with their intended profession. Their responses would be categorized and discussed in view of the three bridging mechanisms identified by Schmalzbauer. The study is further supported by a quantitative survey instrument. The questions are based on a Baylor university study surveying American religious attitudes. Further are taken from another major survey by Weaver, Randal, Beam et Al (2007) which looks at the political, ethical, and religious values of practicing American journalists. The interview and survey questions would give particular emphasis on probing what motivates these students to pursue a career in journalism. Using existing survey questions provides a basis of comparison with already existing data.

Stephanie Tara Schwartz (University of Ottawa) Point and Click Punk Rock, Poetry and Pedagogy: Contrapuntal Methodology for Teaching World Religions

What do punk rock, slam poetry and graphic novels have to contribute to the study of world religions? This paper will discuss the use of YouTube and popular online media technology in an introductory “Religions of the World” university course taught this past Winter 2010. The Internet offers immediate access to works such as Omar Majeed’s documentary *Taqwacores: The Birth of Punk Islam*, lyrics to Saul Williams’s spoken word piece “The Tao of Now” and frames from Joann Sfar’s graphic novel *The Rabbi’s Cat*. These works respectively can be used to teach the complexities of Islam for American Muslim youths, the Buddhist notion of liberation from samsara through poetry and the study of the Talmud through the lives of a family of North African Jews and their cat. Paired with textbook materials and scholarly articles these examples from popular culture can offer a visceral and layered introduction to religion as a part of human experience.

Edward Said’s contrapuntal methodology (*Culture and Imperialism* 1993) reads together materials presumed to be binary opposites in order to reveal their silenced interconnections. The ethic behind this methodology is an imperative to listen to marginalized or oppressed voices. Said’s work offers a surprising connection to Jonathan Z. Smith’s discussion of the taxonomy of world religions (“A Matter of Class...” 1996). Smith argues that despite its tendency to divide and conquer human religious experiences, the categorization of world religions can also lead to fascinating comparisons. Islam (category – religion) and hip hop (category – musical genre) seem to have nothing to do with each other. A look into al-Tabari’s history of the fourth fitna gives us the story of two brothers al-Amin and al-Ma’mun performing poetry competitively before their father Caliph Harun al-Rashid in the 8th century CE. In a second year undergraduate course, rapper beefs between Jay-Z and Nas offer a comparison that is immediately accessible to the MySpace generation. The result of this combination of categorization and comparison is a surprising intellectual discovery about the study of world religions – battle rap in the history of Islam.

This paper will discuss how Said’s contrapuntal methodology can be used in university curriculum to effectively teach the messy interactions between religion and culture. Popular online media can be wielded as vibrant teaching technology when paired with more traditional scholarly resources offering the element of edifying surprise for both professors and students.

Wednesday August 11

4:30 – 6 p.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: Authority and enclaves

Room: LG5

Chair: Merin Xavier (York University)

**Heidi A Campbell (Texas A&M University) Creating Religious Digital Enclaves:
Negotiation of the Internet amongst Bounded Religious Communities**

Since its emergence the Internet has been rejected by a number of fundamentalist and conservative religious groups as a source of contamination and moral pollution. However, as the Internet has become more embedded in every day life a rising number of websites and social

networking forums linked to these groups can be found. This upsurge in user participation and website providers creates both challenges and possibilities, as traditional authorities seek to create Internet policies that protect their community values and unique identities in the face of these new power brokers online.

This paper explores the challenges encountered by conservative religious groups in relation to their response to the Internet, namely Jewish Orthodox groups in Israel. The emergence of many new Orthodox websites in the past few years has created a shift in information access and expressive behaviors within these tightly-knit and often closed communities. The result is a conflict for these bounded populations concerning the growing utility and affordances of the Internet, raising the research question: What tensions emerge for religious stakeholders and Internet entrepreneurs as they negotiate their use of the Internet in light of their offline communal affiliations? We argue that current Internet use within the Israeli Orthodox community highlights a new dynamic being created between traditional and new sources of authority in these communities in an information age. It also illustrates tensions the Internet generates for bounded communities trying to maintain traditional boundaries while presenting their unique identities online.

This article focuses on three areas of contest at the heart of bounded religious communities' interaction with the Internet: social control, authority, and communal boundaries. This is achieved through investigating how webmasters, content providers and rabbis associated with religious-oriented web sites in Israel negotiate their use of the Internet in light of their offline affiliations. In-depth interviews with 19 individuals associated with four key religious Israeli websites (Kipa.co.il; Koogel.co.il; Bhol.co.il and Aish.com) allows us to highlight key issues related to their personal beliefs about the Internet, their respective website's perceived mission, and their understanding of the role they play in constructing a religious web presence. This further allows us to elucidate the motivations and strategies used by individual stakeholders in these Orthodox websites. Finally this leads to a discussion of the tensions and possibilities emerging between offline Israeli Orthodox communities and groups seeking to create space for Orthodox engagement online.

Jorie Lagerwey (University of Notre Dame) By The Gods of Kobol and The Island: Battlestar Galactica, Lost, and how Narrowcasting Is Changing Religion on TV

In *Redesigning Women*, Amanda Lotz argues that beginning in the late 1990s, “female-targeted cable networks and female-centered dramas [illustrated] a new plurality and multiplicity in the stories being told about women’s lives on U.S. television, particularly in dramatic genres.” (7) Lotz credits the proliferation of cable channels created for female audiences with discovering and beginning to exploit “the female niche” market and for spreading this trend in gender representation to the mainstream of the broadcast networks. “This narrative environment,” Lotz explains, “reflects changes in the status of media targeted to women and variation in the dominant stories told about their lives.” (7)

Building from Lotz’s conclusions, I will argue that cable narrowcasting strategies have similarly helped create a larger number of religious themes and characters as well as more nuanced and contentious representations of religion on television in the first decade of the twenty-first

century. Unlike representations of women in the 1990s, however, images of religion and the religious have increased in number on the broadcast networks, but not necessarily in variety or complexity as they have on cable. This essay will explore the distinctions between cable and broadcast programs in that regard as well as how religion is gendered and raced on cable versus broadcast.

Battlestar Galactica and Lost, two science fiction shows that premiered, one on basic cable, the other on a broadcast network, in 2004, will serve as my primary texts for comparison. Each puts a religious conflict at the core of its premise, but represents the gender and racial identities of its faithful characters in very different lights. The traditionally masculinized genre remains such in Lost's broadcast network battle between faith and reason, between two white men, John Lock and Jack Shephard. Their conflict also reiterates the masculinization of religious doubt or conflict in the broadcasting context. In contrast, the narrowcast domain of cable, as well as its history of targeting female audiences, allow Battlestar to place religious authority (and the ability to doubt or question that authority) in its central female characters and to play with religious/racial identity by displacing race from skin tone to a character's biological status: human or robot.

Finally, just as Lotz's female-centered dramas migrated from cable to broadcast networks and increased and rendered more complex the set of available representations of women, so these religion-centered dramas, Battlestar Galactica and Lost, have altered representations of the religious on cable and broadcast. Lost exemplifies the representational limitations inherent in a broadcast system that requires many millions of viewers for success, while Battlestar illustrates the possibilities of narrowcasting for opening the airwaves to a greater quantity of more intricate representations of gendered and raced religion. Above all, however, the shows illustrate the changing status of religious themed television and a new variety in the dominant stories told about faith in the US.

Kennet Granholm (Stockholm University) The Role of Popular Culture in "Mainstreaming the Alternative" and "Undeviating the Deviant"

Sociologists of the 1970s described the esoteric and the occult as deviant phenomena, often defining it as dealing with knowledge not accepted by mainstream, orthodox scientific or religious institutions. As the concept of deviance has become unfashionable in academia, more neutral terms such as alternative religion and spirituality have come into use. Nevertheless, the premise is still that of the existence of "traditional" and "normal" forms of religion – maintained in the institutions of "world religions" – which these alternatives are compared to. By defining religion as existing in normative institutions and dealing with "ultimate concerns", the significant impact of popular culture and religion in the function of entertainment and pastime is relegated to a lesser status than it perhaps should. Just because popular culture-religion does not (necessarily) inform peoples' lives in the same way as traditional religious institutions do, it does not mean that no influence exists. Rather, I would like to argue, the entertainment-religion of popular culture is both based on profound religious sentiments – although drawn from a cultural reservoir of knowledge and material and not necessarily profound for the creator(s) of the work – and in turn informing the religious identities, sentiments and practices of the popular cultural consumer. It would appear as being primarily the "alternative" forms of religiosity, those lying

outside the traditional, orthodox religious institutions – as well as unorthodox and critical interpretations of traditional religiosity, which are most readily appropriated and represented in popular culture. With the undeniable cultural and societal protrusion of popular culture we are thus observing a post-secular situation where "the alternative" is becoming mainstream – the "deviant" is becoming normalized – and consequently can no longer really be described as either alternative or deviant. This situation also puts pressure on scholars of religion to adjust their theories, methods, approaches, and indeed fundamental outlooks when researching their subjects.

In my paper I will discuss how the increasing protrusion of seemingly unorthodox religious motifs, practices and philosophies in popular culture in essence has made the alternative something of a mainstream phenomenon and "undeveloped" the deviant. I will provide examples from various forms of popular culture, such as film, TV, novels, popular music, and comic books, and position them within a historical framework in their origin outside popular culture.

Paul Emerson Teusner (RMIT University) Practising what we preach: rhetoric and reality of Web 2.0 and the distribution of religious authority online

This presentation will explore how authority is distributed among religious bloggers and their readers, with a particular focus on a Protestant movement known as the “emerging church”. This paper will highlight findings from data viewed in religious blogs in the years 2006-2008, of online posts and conversation concerning the authority of religious offices and personalities, and comments and concerns of and by bloggers who receive high “authority rankings” in search engines such as Google and Technorati.

While Web 2.0 and its applications has been heralded by some as the great democratising force in Western culture, giving voice to the otherwise silenced in many of our institutions, including politics, journalism and religion, this presentation will argue that who has the power offline still has power online. Moreover, while the authority of traditional religious offices, such as the episcopacy or the academy, may be overtly challenged by bloggers and their audience, the social factors that are favoured by these places of authority (gender, age, class and ethnicity) are equally favoured in Web 2.0 as they are in the offline world.

Panel B: Religion and the News: Past, Present, Future

Room: LG6

Chair: Diane Winston (University of Southern California, Annenberg)

Judith Buddenbaum (Colorado State University) Religion and the News: Past

This presentation will provide a brief overview of the history of the coverage of religion in American news media, with emphasis on the transition from religious journalism to religion journalism that occurred during the Penny Press era as a result of the work of James Gordon Bennett, Sr. Under Bennett, who is generally considered the father of modern religion reporting, religion news in his penny newspaper, the New York Herald, stands at the intersection of an older ideological approach to religion news and modern journalism with its emphases on timeliness, accuracy and objectivity. Like his predecessors Bennett wrote from a religious perspective. Although like them, Bennett freely mixed fact and opinion, his work, while not

objective in any modern sense of the word, was remarkably even-handed. As a Scot and a Catholic in a predominantly Protestant America, he covered religion from the perspective of an interested outside observer. Instead of writing to promote or defend a particular faith, he scrutinized all religions, including his own, for the likely impact of their observable, identifiable behaviors. Where other newspapers had relied primarily on essays and letters provided to them by religious insiders who used religious arguments to make a point, Bennett relied on active newsgathering and a writing style that used facts – names and details – and vivid scene-setting description to make his point. The combination of perspective and writing style employed by Bennett's New York Herald led to coverage that held up a mirror to religious insiders, allowing them see how they and their religion looked to outsiders, while also giving outsiders a glimpse of religious cultures they did not share.

Through active news gathering, the New York Herald's religious stories came to include all of the topoi Mark Silk identified in his 1995 book *Unsecular Media*: good works, tolerance, hypocrisy, false prophecy, inclusion, supernatural beliefs and declension. That broadened coverage paved the way for both the soft features and event-oriented stories associated with religion pages as well as the hard news and critical commentaries that by the latter half of the 20th century were a regular part of religion news coverage. Over time Bennett's innovations in reporting and writing style, perspective and content became standard, but the move away from an older more passive and ideological approach to religion reporting was slow and uneven. Therefore, this presentation will also provide a brief overview of the ways Bennett's innovations found their way into mainstream newspaper coverage of religion. Because Bennett's religion journalism was controversial in his own time and some of the points raised by his contemporary fans and opponents can still be heard today, the presentation will conclude with a consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of Bennett's approach to religion reporting as they apply to contemporary newspaper coverage of religion.

Stewart Hoover (University of Colorado, Boulder) Religion and the News: Present

Throughout the latter half of the 21st century, journalism about religion remained a particular kind of challenge. This was so even in the United States, the most objectively "religious" of the Western industrial nations. In fact, the U.S. seemed to suffer from a special kind of problem with public discourse about religion. For journalists and journalism, this revealed itself in received understandings both of the nature of religion and of the ways it was best to be represented in the media. Perhaps under the influence of the long-standing assumption of "secularization," religion was typically thought of as being of fading importance, and certainly not as significant as topics such as politics, defense, business, or sports. This understanding of the importance of religion also extended to conventions of coverage when it was covered, with religion stories typically limited to coverage of institutions or of scandals, or of the standard rites and holidays of the various religious calendars. Religion also was segregated in the media, confined to a "church page" in most papers, and to feature coverage in electronic media. This limited view also influenced the stereotype of the religion reporter her- or himself in the newsroom. Religion was not widely respected as a beat, so the reporters covering it also needed to fight for attention and respect. A final problem for religion journalism in the last century was its singularity. That is, religion was thought of as a bounded, even hermetic, beat, and thus received attention on its own terms only when a given story was judged to be about "religion" itself. That meant that religion's

role in other major stories: those dealing with politics, business, science, etc., was underplayed and that trained religion specialists rarely got to cover them. As one religion writer put it, "...if the Second Coming were to occur tomorrow, it would be assigned to a politics reporter and the religion writer would be asked to do a sidebar on implications for the religious community...." The situation actually began to change later in the century, and many of these stereotypes and criticisms of the religion beat began to lose their currency. However, the events of 9/11 seemed to change this picture. In the years since, there has been a marked increase in the presence of religion in both entertainment and news media.

This paper will look critically at the question of how much has really changed and how. It will begin by re-assessing the traditional criticisms of traditional coverage, and then move to an analysis of how the picture might have changed for the process of decision-making about religion journalism and for the people who cover the religion beat. This era has also seen the emergence of entirely new platforms for religion news, including in the digital media. The paper will consider this larger context in its assessment.

Debra Mason (University of Missouri) Religion and the News: Future

Most online religion news experiments in the first decade of the 21st century failed. Whether mimicking print news content or assuming that "if you build it they will come" — most large-scale efforts to capture a perceived interest in or need for religion news failed. Beliefnet, the first major online site intended to bring diverse religion news to national prominence—independent of a traditional media outlet—struggled with bankruptcy and layoffs its first 8 years. Beliefnet, now owned by News Corp., eventually retooled itself as primarily a site for lifestyle-related spirituality and stories about popular culture. Themed blogs became the primary vehicle for religion-related political, popular culture, environmental and other topic news on Beliefnet. By 2005, the economic crisis and declines in print media meant few newspapers had qualified online and religion specialists to build robust online religion sections to replace shrinking print religion sections. In the few mainstream media markets in which user-generated content was included, none effectively integrated user-generated content and professional religion journalism.

By the decade's end, most mainstream media outlets had either repurposed their religion beat specialist as a blogger, as is the case at USA Today, or they relied on wire service content, calendars of events and occasionally resource banks of religion-specific information for displaying limited religion news online. But even with this presentation, most audiences would find it hard to locate religion news. One review of home pages for every U.S. daily newspaper showed fewer than 10 percent had any home page link or sub-link to faith and values news. By the end of the decade, some clear trends of what was and wasn't working in digital religion news emerged, but there largely remained a sense of confusion among those seeking to improve the public discourse around religion. Also, throughout the decade, foundations and venture capitalists played a vital role in creating alternatives to mainstream media, with significant dollars going to religion sites such as Patheos.com. Another, Religion Dispatches, is a progressive-leaning e-magazine managed by religion scholars and funded by the Ford Foundation. So far, the site has had little success at engaging the general public in large-scale or diverse ways, although it is popular among core supporters such as religious studies scholars and liberal intellectual elites. Religion Dispatches was one of several examples of sites that relied on

a cohesive and like-minded audience in its support. By 2010, the religion beat was also represented at large news sites such as the Huffington Post and Politics Daily. But both in and outside of the United States, cohesive audience sites—single-faith or single issue sites—were unique in attracting significant public audiences and participation. Participation or the ability to create a sense of community and conversation was key to the serendipitous success of the Washington Post-Newsweek online collaboration, On Faith. With a small staff but big name celebrity public religious figures engaged in conversation around intriguing questions, the site relied on conversations and engagement to become one of the most successful online experiments in religious news.

Magali do Nascimento Cunha (Universidade Metodista) Religion and the News: Outsider

The predominant coverage on Latin American religion still expresses the 16th century imaginary of the “civilized” Christians who arrive to save the “pagan” land. Two centuries later, 19th century American Protestant missionaries, carrying out their nation’s vision of manifest destiny, continued to pursue this imaginary. Today, this affirmation still can be corroborated if attention is paid to stories appearing in the mainstream USA news media: news on Latin America is primarily about Christianity, especially institutionalized Roman Catholicism, as the region’s only religion. This perspective silences news on other religions as well as non-historical Christians. When they are mentioned in news stories, it is usually in articles about traveling (description of exotic aspects of a site), unusual situations or cases that involve criminal scandals. This paper analyzes this process through a study case on the coverage of papal visits to the continent spanning from Pope Paul VI’s trip in 1968 to Benedict XVI’s 2007 visit. A combined methodology that draws on content analysis and discourse analysis will explore how Latin American religion is constructed through these narratives. The study will focus on coverage from the New York Times and from Time magazine. The Times has reporters in both Latin America and the Vatican, Time, however, features longer, more in-depth as well as more analysis on the region.

The paper will make a contribution to journalists, students and scholars interested in Latin American religion. It will help them to work from a broader perspective, and tell stories that escape the traps created by stereotypes, conventional wisdom and the collective imaginary. However, two challenges remain: to consider the cultural dimension that permeates both “so-called” relevant as well as ordinary stories and to include the perspective of plurality and diversity in identity in news narratives.

Panel C: New media, politics and empowerment

Room: LG12

Chair:

Kyong Cho (University of Illinois, Chicago) Online religious community: A discourse analysis of Christian discussion forums

The present study addresses a concept that is central to many religions around the world: community. The study of new media and religion in the past one and a half decades has steadily moved towards asking and answering questions about how religion is lived out in a mediated

environment, with issues of ritual and mediated institutions as topics of inquiry. The present study seeks to research a more fundamental aspect of religion in the context of a mediated environment. The study of religious online community provides a context for discussions on virtual institutions and mediated sacraments or rituals. The fundamental aspects of religious community will be called into question with the study of religious online community. As social scientists, it is our duty to challenge normalized assumptions of religion in hopes of confirming or altering our understanding of them. To that end, the present study seeks to answer the question: what constitutes online religious community? In undertaking the task of researching the constituting elements of online community, the author's hope and expectation is that the study will provide a basis for continual research on religion-online and online-religion, lending the field further credence and potential for insight. The present study analyzes the discourse of two online Christian discussion forums. It primarily utilizes Fernback's definition of community, which extends community beyond physical proximity as a requisite and importantly incorporates the process of shared meaning. The study employs discourse analysis as defined and undertaken by Van Dijk and Fairclough. Two areas of discourse are analyzed for each discussion forum. The discourse of administrators yield insights into the structure of mediated community, including statements of belief, rules and conduct, and prerequisites for registered membership. The discourse of registered members yield insight into the dynamics of online religious community among members. Threads are selected that deal with contentious topics for the purposes of studying online community within the context of a particular ideological bias. Analysis of the discursive elements of threads shed light into the cultural and societal norms in the context of religious online community. These cultural and societal norms in turn give us insight into the specific constituting elements of online religious community, to which we may compare offline religious community. Further research will build upon our knowledge religious online community and assess its relationship with religious offline community.

Christian Taske (Notre Dame Today) Global Grassroots Political Empowerment: Is the Obama Digital Campaign a Model?

Barack Obama ran a campaign for President based upon the promise of change. Deep within his presidential race was an explosive technological change – the power of the digital network.

The Obama election represented a 'perfect storm':

- *A charismatic candidate truly committed to grassroots involvement* (from his history as an activist on the streets of Chicago);
- *The critical need for widespread grassroots action* because the candidate (with a strange name) was unknown; and
- *Dramatic and effective use of digital tools* that empowered the campaign and allowed a sense of 'ownership' by millions of volunteers and voters

This paper explores the inner dynamics of the Obama campaign and explores whether this campaign may be a case study for grassroots citizenship participation globally.

The Obama campaign can be examined from four distinct angles: organizational strategies; grassroots ownership; technology components; and financial responses.

Organizationally, the campaign staff had minimal hierarchy and stressed, instead, local initiatives. Over 96 percent of the 6,000 employees were under the age of 30; most were under 25. Thirteen million people signed up for the campaign and the campaign mailing list has morphed into a governing support group called “Organizing for America”.

While he was ‘professorial’ often in his campaign speeches, Obama could also be personal and connect with people and their concerns; he treated citizens like adults and was ranked ‘credible’ by many Americans. This added to the grassroots feel of the campaign. Volunteers felt a deep sense of commitment and ownership. Internet networking allowed much feedback from supporters.

The technology components of the Obama campaign built on an earlier presidential primary campaign of Howard Dean. For example, the Dean campaign used the meetup software to organize local campaign meetings through Internet queries based on postal zip codes. By inserting your zip code you could be connected to local campaign events. This helped structure the local-event emphasis for Obama. The campaign developed a mailing list of 30 million names; they had an effective Web site; they used streaming video effectively, especially on social networks; and a huge computer data base maintained the campaign heartbeat – constantly updated as volunteers made phone calls and home visits.

All of these components of the Obama campaign resulted in a financial response that continually fueled the campaign resources. The campaign raised \$750 million, much of it on the Internet. Most donors were retirees and students. Near the end of the campaign they were adding 10,000 new donors every day.

This paper examines the varied components of the Obama campaign and explores whether this model may be useful in many types of grassroots empowerment campaigns globally.

Frances Forde Plude (Notre Dame College, Cleveland) m-powerment for women: the role of mobile telephones in inclusive development

Over twenty years ago the respected scholar Heather Hudson wrote of the role of telecommunications in rural development in her book *When Telephones Reach the Village*. Since that time an explosion of mobile phone technology has allowed empowerment at the grassroots level in developing nations around the world.

India, for example, is the world’s fastest-growing cellular phone market and this sector represents 2% of India’s GDP. In one month, in 2008, eight million new subscribers were added in India.

After two extensive field trips to India, I have become convinced that this is an empowerment tool, especially for women. I came away from these trips with the conclusion that *the mobile telephone is the computer of choice for poor people around the globe*.

This paper will explore:

- Mobile phone data in developing nations, especially India
- Unique applications like telemedicine, e-learning and grassroots banking

- Women's role in the production of, and uses of, mobile phones
- How churches can empower the poor, especially women, by supporting appropriate mobile technology government policies

Data show a dramatic change world-wide among women and their concept of self. In his study of the global Information Age, especially in Volume II, *The Power of Identity*, Manuel Castells tracks the power of the self-construction of identity among women globally. One factor is that globalization has played a major role in the growth of women in employment around the world, adding to their economic power, and resulting voice in patriarchal family structures. Castells also cites data concerning the explosion of grassroots women's movements – with technology empowering networking and much localized diversity among these movements.

One of my Harvard dissertation advisors, Ithiel de Sola Pool, published a significant book entitled *Technologies of Freedom*. Pool notes: "Computers, television, radio and satellites are technologies of freedom as much as the printing press was." Pool did not live to see the mobile phone become a virtual computer, but in his earlier work *The Social Uses of the Telephone* he clearly appreciated the power of the phone to effect cultural change.

An interesting aspect of m-powerment is the interest of nonprofit groups in using this technology in supportive ways. The cellular telephone industry, like other communication firms, is a corporate enterprise. However, nearly two dozen cellphone-based projects have sprung from NextLab at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The goal of the group is "to bring cellular technology to the 90 percent of people who fall outside of the marketing plans of most phone companies." He notes: "The same device that powers teenage texting in the United States can be adapted to help farmers in Mexico and illiterate women in India." There are other examples of this nonprofit thrust. This paper urges religious groups to assist in such projects.

This paper is itself empowered by the vision articulated by Cees J. Hamelink in *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications*.

Hinda Mandell (Syracuse University) The Holocaust in health care, and Obama and Madoff as Hitler: Themes in 2008-09 current events

On Sept. 30, 2009, Rep. Alan Grayson of Florida joined those who had previously – last summer – couched their concern with and opposition to health care reform by comparing it to Nazi Germany, the Holocaust and Hitler's eugenics program. This time, however, Grayson was not an opponent of health care reform. Yet he did argue that the current health care system in the U.S. represented its own type of Holocaust. This is hardly the first time that a comparison to the Holocaust has emerged in public discourse last year. In fact, Obama opponents have painted a Hitler mustache on his photographs, and victims of Ponzi schemer Bernard Madoff have likened him to Hitler, because he too, they argued, systematically destroyed Jewish wealth. This study examines how the "Holocaust theme" has emerged in public discourse this past year through an analysis of newspaper articles. I situate the study within a broader context of the memory of Holocaust in American life. My goal is to understand why this historical event continues to be referenced by opponents of Madoff, Obama and health care reform who use the Holocaust metaphor to show why the issue/person they oppose is morally dangerous.

Thursday August 12

9 – 10:30 a.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: Electronic and online

Room: LG5

Chair: Johanna Sumiala (University of Helsinki)

Anjali Chauhan (University of Lucknow) **The Electronic Media's Perception of the Kumbh Mela**

The Kumbh mela is the most popular Hindu fair which is known for its gigantic form. Its a legendary event , the origin of which can be found in the Rig veda.It is organised after every twelve years in four different cities of India namely Nasik ,Ujjain ,Allahabad and Haridwar,at different astrological constellations . It is believed that when the demon and the gods were at war over the pot of 'amrit' , it is at these places that the drops fell down . Eversince people come to these spots for a holy bath .With time the magnitude of the fair kept increasing so much so that it was given entry into the Guinness book of world records for largest human gathering on earth for a sacred cause. Numerous rituals are performed by common me and saints on this occasion. Participation in this mela is supposed to bestow immortality and purges oneself of all sins.The fair is marked by events like 'peshwai' and the 'shahi snan' which are the showcase of the mela.

The Indian media witnessed a revolution in the last decade due to globalisation and the ICT revolution. This colossal fair has thus received the attention of the media who is trying to impress the major population by covering the event widely.This year 2010 the Kumbh Mela was organised in the holy city of Haridwar , which is also the epicentre of all Hindus. The present paper is an outcome of the Anthropological fieldwork conducted in the city.during the mela. It shall discuss issues like who were the media covering the event , what kind of programmes were shot and how well they were able to convey the religious performances , ideologies, sentiments and cultural traits of the Kumbh mela.

Florence Pasche Guignard (Université de Lausanne) **Worshipping God(desses) on Video Sharing Websites**

This contribution will examine how video sharing websites (VSW) are used as media for sharing diverse religious beliefs and practices, in particular that of "praising" which consists traditionally in glorifying a deity (or several of them) through song and music. In VSW, the ritual or devotional act of praising takes on new forms which include the use of specific and carefully selected images added to a soundtrack. Believers (individuals or groups) of different religions use VSW in this purpose. Thus, a large diversity of original material is available and easily accessible for research. This type of media allows to combine sound, images and sometimes texts in order to form particular expressions of worship, praise, prayers, ritual formulas or sacred narratives. These usually differ from what is usually prescribed and practiced in traditional religious places and times for worship outside the cyberspace (churches, temples). Taking on a perspective of comparative study of religion, we will seek to highlight how users of different faiths express and share their respective practices of worship on VSW, both secular (YouTube, Dailymotion, etc.) and religious (Tangle, KrishnaTube, YouTubeIslam, etc.). Examining musical

video clips made by Christian, Hindu, Muslim and Wiccan adepts, we will pinpoint the striking similarities of their format despite their dissimilar content. In addition to the video clips themselves, a great deal of information can be retrieved from the use of significant pseudonyms by users, the descriptions of the videos, the tagging by keywords, the links to other websites and, most importantly, from the comments on the video left by other users. Users posting videos or commenting on them are not necessarily religious experts or officials. VSW provide a place for discussion and debate with co-believers and with other users whose comments may sometimes be very offensive against religious beliefs and practices. Thus, a large amount of material can be easily accessed in order to understand why some users make these “praise” videos and why they share them with millions of other users. Great methodological challenges are raised by such material because it questions traditional categories and classifications used in the field of comparative study of religions such as individual vs. group practice and it forces researchers to move away from textocentric approaches

Mona Abdel-Fadil (University of Oslo) Saving a Marriage from the Tight Grip of In-Laws: Islam Online Arabic Challenges and Accommodates Popular Concepts of In-Laws

Islam Online Arabic (IOL) provides advice and counselling to married couples on how to solve various marital problems. One such problem is the relationship to in-laws. IOL acknowledges that a married couple’s relationship to one another can be greatly influenced by the relationship to the in-laws. Hence, IOL provides practical guidance to husbands and wives on this issue. Arab proverbs, films and TV-soaps often portray in-laws (especially the mother-in-law) in worst-case-scenario images, as both evil and interfering. In this paper, I will illustrate how IOL engages in a dialogue with such popular concepts of ‘in-laws from hell’. Moreover, I will demonstrate how IOL deals with the relationship to in-laws in a seemingly paradoxical manner. On the one hand, IOL appears to be moderating the negative image of image of in-laws and promoting good relations. On the other hand, IOL seems to be arguing that in-laws should be kept at a safe distance from any important decisions of a married couple. Similarly, IOL challenges popular concepts of in-laws serving as mediators when a married couple are in dispute. In sum, I argue that IOL appears to be making a strong case for the autonomy of a married couple as a decision unit, while simultaneously refuting elements of popular negative stereotypes of in-laws in the Arab world.

Panel B: Communities at home and transnational

Room: LG12

Chair: Erica Baffelli (University of Otago)

Kimberly Eberhardt Casteline (University of Colorado) Media and Religion in the Lives of Ghanaian Pentecostals in Diaspora

In *The New Shape of World Christianity* (2009), historian Mark Noll reveals the current state of global Christianity with a few telling statistics: more Presbyterians attend church in Ghana than in the Presbytery’s founding country of Scotland; more Anglicans attend church in South Africa than Episcopalians in the United States; and the largest congregation in Europe is led by a Nigerian Pentecostal pastor. Ghanaian Pentecostalism specifically, is expanding exponentially and being exported via immigrants to North America and Europe. However, in spite of the

growing prominence of African Christianity, James Ferguson (2007) points out that “Africa” is a highly negative category in conventional understandings of the global world order that is inescapably linked to underdevelopment, poverty, and war. Thus for many Africans, the way to escape the low global status of being “a poor African” is not by working towards the progressive improvement of the nation-state but rather by leaving the continent all together. In Ghana, throughout the ubiquitous church services and prayer camps, one of the most sought after blessings is for a successful visa application.

This project involves one specific group of successful immigrants to the United States—Pentecostal pastors—and investigates why these religious leaders leave a country in which the pastorate is highly respected; how they adjust to life in the United States; and how they position themselves in relation to Western discourses about Africa, Christianity, and Pentecostalism. This paper reveals the significant role of media and religion in the lives of these pastors as they navigate the challenging environments they face in diaspora.

Nabil Echchaibi (University of Colorado, Boulder) Transnational Masculinities in Muslim Televangelist Cultures

In recent years Middle Eastern satellite television has prominently featured a new generation of media personalities who, in the face of a crisis of authority in Islam and a climate of semantic disarray, are creating public deliberative spaces to revalorize their religion and redirect individual energies in the service of an Islamic revivalism that is not concerned with the militancy of political Islam but more with the Islamicization of modernity. This is indeed the face of a rising popular Islam that uses the oratorical passion of sermonizing to encourage public participation, civic engagement, and eventually asks Muslims to shed the sternness of punitive religious discourse and embrace the permissiveness of a forgiving and life-relevant Islam. What is striking about this emerging culture of media proselytizing is the gendered nature of the discourse it promotes and its implications for the construction of masculinities in transnational spaces such as the pan-Arab world. Indeed, most of these Muslim televangelists are young men who capitalize on their privileged gendered position in society and use it to promote an arguably progressive religious discourse while re-inscribing normative gender values. Aided by a dynamic transnational television culture, their media performances cross national boundaries and increasingly target what they perceive as a homogeneous Arab Muslim audience.

By focusing on the programs of Amr Khaled and Moez Masoud, two of the most popular televangelists on Islamic television, this article will analyze how masculinity is constructed and negotiated in what is largely promoted and perceived as an alternative form of liberation piety. Both Masoud and Khaled represent a major shift from the politicized masculinity of Islamic extremists and potentially provide a blueprint for a less essentialized notion of gender norms. The goal here is to evaluate whether this new mediated religious discourse has spurred a critical and transformative public debate about gender roles in Muslim societies or whether the charismatic aura of these religious celebrities ultimately obfuscates social change along gender lines and re-appropriate a traditionalist patriarchal discourse.

This article will examine what I call ‘transnational Muslim masculinity’ and trace its cultural reproduction through specific media narratives in satellite Islamic television. It will demonstrate

how these televangelists draw on historical memory, scriptural texts, and local/global cultural experiences to generate new discursive sites around the various roles of men in society such as in the family, in the workplace, in religious communities, and in social relationships. For many years, Muslim conceptualization of gender roles within the ideal of the Islamic Umma (global community of believers) followed a traditional pattern that assigned men and women to separate spaces of public versus private. Arguably, the discourse embraced by these televangelists challenges the binarism of more traditionalist views on masculinity and femininity and re-inscribes gender roles within the larger project of religious and social revivalism.

Sam Stevens (University of Otago) Independent New Zealand Church and the Internet: production, visibility and changing ritual

In recent years various independent churches in New Zealand – such as City Impact Church and Life – have increased resourcing to develop an extensive and sophisticated online presence which both reflects the demographic make-up of existing and potential church members’ and shows an awareness of the need to follow broader trends in internet use by continually updating content.

The paper will discuss specific churches’ motivation for the shift online and the strategies they have employed to enhance their presence. Comparisons will be made with the online presence of (numerically larger) institutional churches and the difference in production values, as they appear on various websites.

Some commonality is evident: websites are mostly aimed at enhancing the profile of the group; they are seen as a tool for recruiting new members; or for fulfilling more practical “notice-board” type functions. However, discussion will also cover the extent to which “mainstream” and independent groups have maintained static, “brochure” sites, or moved to formats which emphasise high accessibility and which make extensive use of flashing content, links and “backlinks”.

This paper seeks to discuss ways in which internet content augments the dyadic, “in-church” experience for followers; internet based communication ties in with existing traditional electronic media and material culture; the way in which informal, inter-denominational networks of independent churches have arisen as a result of internet use; non-religious content and styles of presentation are incorporated into religious communication systems.

Observational content on resourcing and production will be underpinned by discussions on cultural visibility, which is potentially enhanced through use of modern communication technologies, and the extent to which online forays are indicative of a desire independent churches to challenge their position of religious and social marginality.

The paper's material is based on wider research which examines changes in religious practice due to internet use, and whether “mediated” religious forms are representative of new trends in religious media use, or simply a continuation of a varied approach which utilises an array of communication technologies.

The paper will discuss specific communication models in relation to material derived from interviews conducted with media developers from several New Zealand independent and mainstream churches and interdenominational "hub-sites" in 2009 and 2010.

Yoel Cohen (Ariel University Center) Rabbis & Media: A Conflictual Relationship

Mass media are perceived by rabbis as threatening the Jewish value system. As moral leaders rabbis legitimise – and delegitimise – mass media. Rabbis are themselves updated about events from the media both generally and regarding current religion-related developments. Rabbis increasingly recognise the opportunities which mass media channel offer as alternative 'pulpits'. The media is an additional channel to spreading the rabbi's religious message even if this tends to occur much more in the religious media than in the secular Israeli media. The media play an important role in building mutual perceptions between religion and secular

Little research has been carried out about media and religion in the Israeli context. The Haredi press has been described. An analysis of religion content in Israeli news media, religious and secular, and press, radio and television, was undertaken. The question of Jewish theological attitudes concerning the social role of the media was discussed.

A survey of rabbis was carried out by the author in 2008. 1800 questionnaires were sent and 350 filled ones were received. 97% of non-orthodox rabbis agreed to a great extent or to a very great extent with the principle of the right to know in contrast to 20% of orthodox rabbis. Wide differences could be delineated between the orthodox concerning the right to know between the haredi and modern orthodox, and within the modern orthodox between the mainstream dati leumi and the hardal substream. Thus, 41% of haredi rabbis agreed to a 'great extent' or to 'a very great extent' with the right to know, while 64% of modern orthodox said so. Within the modern orthodox, while 77% of of mainstream dati leumi agreed to a great extent, or to a very great extent, with the right to know principle only 45% of hardal rabbis did. Hardal rabbis (38%) were more inclined to agree with the right to know to a 'certain extent'.

95% of orthodox rabbis said that the press damage religious values to some extent, to a large extent or to a very great extent. Within the orthodox, haredi rabbis were more inclined (64%) than modern orthodox (32%) to say that the press damage religion to a very great extent. Yet, even 39% of modern orthodox rabbis agreed that the press damage religious values to a large extent. In the case of television there was a significant increase in modern orthodox rabbis (56%) saying that television damages religious values to a very great extent. Similar findings were found for radio, the theatre, cinema and Internet. The criticism of rabbis also extended to how religion is covered, and religious sub-systems like rabbis and God.

Panel C: Disaster and salvation

Room: LG6

Chair: Yasmin Jiwani

Aliaa Dakroury (University of Ottawa) The Message—Al-Resalah: Muslim voices in the Western Media: is there a possibility?

In an interview with the Syrian born and Hollywood infamous director Moustapha Akkad, he explained that his 1977 movie *The Message—Al-Resalah* (originally *Mohammad, Messenger of God*) was mainly intended to enlighten the west about Islam, its Prophet, and its core principles: “I did the film because it is a personal thing for me. Besides its production values as a film, it has its story, its intrigue, its drama. Beside all this I think there was something personal, being Muslim myself who lived in the west I felt that it was my obligation my duty to tell the truth about Islam. It is a religion that has a 700 million following, yet it's so little known about it which surprised me. I thought I should tell the story that will bring this bridge, this gap to the west” (<http://www.arabiyat.com>).

In fact, the above mentioned quote summarized to a great extent the problematic articulated in this proposed paper: the extent to which media can play a key role in bridging the gap between Islam and the west—or Islam in the west. *The Message* movie is the first English movie depicting the life and time of Prophet Mohammed and the rise of Islam in the early 7th century A.D. where he was told to carry a “message” to his people to worship only “one” God, and abandon the idolatrous life. To what extent the movie has successfully achieved this goal? What are the major conflicts that emerged during the preparation of this attempt on the one hand, and after screening it on the other? What are the most similar contemporary attempts to bridge this gap?

Looking at the conference theme, and in investigating the notion of conflict versus dialogue between Islamic and the western Civilizations, especially in regards to cultural production, this paper will analyse *The Message (Al-Resalah)* movie drawing a critical comparison between its production and the recent release of the animated movie *Muhammad, the Last Prophet* (2004) directed by Christine Huda Dodge. Particularly, it will highlight the importance of producing such attempt in the post-September 11 society documenting that the 2004 movie got permission from the Muslim scholars of both the Azhar and the Shi'ite Council of Lebanon in 2002 to produce the movie. Interestingly, and despite the importance of the 1977 *Al-Resalah* movie, it was banned to be screened in any Egyptian cinema after *Al-Azhar* memorandum which objected the fact to represent any of the ten companions—*Sahabah*—of the Prophet in the film. Similar decision has been made by the Lebanese Shi'ite Council. Despite that, the paper argues that Akkad movie was a pioneering effort to bridge the differences between Islam and the west in the 1970s. As he documented the resistance of Hollywood to make a movie on Islam that he had to seek fund from outside the United States. Finally, the paper will highlight the importance of the recent media technologies to reach a larger audience, from different cultures, and hence, became an influential tool to disseminate true information about Islam and the Prophet: A pressing issue that occupies a central argument for Muslims living in the west especially the September 11.

Jolyon Mitchell (The University of Edinburgh) Searching for Truth and Reconciliation through Film

At the heart of this illustrated paper is the question: How far can films help in the search for truth and reconciliation?

In order to answer this question I analyse both feature and documentary films relating to the truth and reconciliation process in South Africa. My current plan, which will evolve as my research

develops, is to begin by briefly laying out the historical and cinematic context in which these films were produced. I use the film versions of *Cry the Beloved Country* (1951 and 1995), based upon Alan Paton's 1948 novel, as a starting point for my discussion. I go on to draw upon films such as *Cry Freedom* (1987) and *Sarafina* (1992) to reflect upon some of the ways in which the apartheid regime was depicted cinematically.

From there I consider in greater detail both portrayals of and responses to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I compare and contrast Western films such as *Red Dust* (2004) and *In My Country* (2004) with largely locally produced productions such as *Zulu Love Letter* (2004) and *Forgiveness* (2004). In the light of my discussion of feature films I turn my attention to how selected documentaries (e.g. *The Long Night's Journey into Day*, 2000) have covered the search for truth and reconciliation. In each of these films I consider the role of religion.

While my argument is currently structured chronologically my aim is to investigate the different ways in which such films about South Africa's recent history might be able to contribute to the process of searching for truth and building reconciliation. This is not to suggest that through skilful portrayal of the truth and reconciliation process audiences can be turned into more peaceful or forgiving citizens. My overall aim is rather to tease out the 'ambivalence of the sacred' (Appleby, 2000) as depicted in these cinematic contexts. It is not my intention in this paper to endorse the notion that dramatic and powerful films be understood as transforming the beliefs and actions of passive audiences. Many scholars correctly highlight the dynamic and productive capacity of different media users who inhabit what Jenkins describes as 'participatory culture' (2006). With this in mind my objective is therefore not only to analyse the content of these films about South Africa, but also to investigate the creative roles of the audience and the media producer in this process, as well as the increasing tendency for these roles to converge.

This illustrated paper is part of a wider research project in which I investigate the role that media and religion play in promoting peace. There are a number of reasons why this is a vital topic to investigate. These include the need to learn more about how, first, to help prevent future ethno-religious conflicts; second, to counter the downward spiral of revenge and the escalation of violence; and third, to contribute to the search for truth and reconciliation, conflict transformation and the building of sustainable peace.

Yoonmo Sang (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) A Trope of Asian Female Identity on the American Drama, *Lost*

Lost, a global hit program on ABC, deserves more attention from various aspects. It is not only a commercially successful program but also a work dealing with unique and experimental television narratives. One of the significant characteristics of this program is that the personal narratives of the characters make the program's narrative multi-faceted and rich. Yunjin Kim, a Korean actress who plays Sun, is positioning herself well as an indispensable character in the development of the drama. Her exotic and mysterious character serves a traditional trope of Asian female identity, and represents an erotic dimension of Asian women. Given the fact that she is representing a Korean woman in the drama, this research attempts to analyze Korean women's representation in terms of gender and ethnicity in *Lost*. More specifically, this study tries to answer the question of how a Korean woman is portrayed in the global hit drama, *Lost*. For this purpose, this research conducts a textual analysis of several episodes of the drama

paying particular attention to the issue of gender and ethnicity. Several specific episodes were selected for the analysis and those episodes contained a significant portion of scenes showing the Korean actress and her husband. The title of one sample episode, for instance, is her new born daughter's name, Ji-Yeon. Selected episodes were viewed on Hulu (www.hulu.com) from January 25-February 17, 2010. Through the repeated portrayals of Sun's passive attitude to her husband, audiences may be exposed to artificially formulated images of Korean women. As time goes by, the narrative of Sun changing her passive attitude to life is continuously introduced and the relationship between Sun and Jin also positively changes. However, throughout the seasons, the overall image of Sun did not escape the stereotype of Asian women. In conclusion, Sun represents a stereotyped image of Asian women in the context of Confucian culture. However, to some extent, audiences can see a woman who is challenging the patriarchal norms and notions set upon her. Further research in this topic would include in-depth discussions about Western culture's bias against Asian women.

Panel D: Teaching and tradition

Room: LG13

Chair: Peter Horsfield (RMIT University)

Colum Kenny (Dublin City University) "Belief and Communication: the rationale for a broad interdisciplinary module at the School of Communications, Dublin City University."

This paper will explore critically how and why staff from a number of faculties at Dublin City University and from two of its linked colleges (St Patrick's and Mater Dei) have collaborated in the delivery of an innovative, interdisciplinary module on media, religion and culture, which since 2005 has been available as an option to third-year undergraduates within the School of Communications at Dublin City University.

The teaching philosophy that informs Belief & Communication (Module CM364) is that all students benefit from an opportunity to reflect constructively on important cultural and social trends. The weakening of traditional forms of faith, the emergence of multiculturalism and the international re-emergence of some religions or sects as social forces are factors that require an intellectual response that fosters critical thinking and equips students with insights and techniques for future challenges in a complex world. The inclusion of such a module on a communications course is unusual in Ireland and the United Kingdom and was achieved despite some scepticism. However, it has proved to be popular with students, both Irish and those visiting from the United States.

The main areas of expertise of the staff who have agreed to teach the module are (1) Journalism and Broadcasting, (2) Film Studies, (3) Biology and Human Identity, (4) Psychology (5) Cross-cultural Education, (6) Philosophy, (7) Nursing. This mix of disciplines provides a challenge in terms of the module's overall coherence. Assessment is by a single research essay.

Whether a student is a 'believer', agnostic or outright atheist, s/he is equally welcome on the course. Unlike some religious modules in traditional university settings, the Belief & Communication module is founded on no particular spiritual perspective, but on the simple belief that it is good to have an open space within which to think and to search for truth. As Mahatma

Gandhi said, “A ‘No’ uttered from deepest conviction is better and greater than a ‘Yes’ merely uttered to please, or what is worse, to avoid trouble.”

Francis Coffey (David Bauer Quest Program) Mass Media Competencies Essential for Reading Scriptures?

What teacher over 30 hasn't gone to students for help with new communication technologies? But have educators pushed on with what they learn to extend such skills and competencies into culture and more particularly, the religious and the spiritual. Culture also includes pedagogy and its institutions. For instance, might they help youth develop skills for setting up a shrine or place of prayer in Second Life (see Klink, MIT Conference, 24-26 April, 2009), a video game developed on a moral logic, or a blog inviting such experience? Most uses of technology in or for religion have been strictly instrumental and utilitarian, used for transfer and controlled by authority. But a few have seen the spiritually, morally, religiously transformative power of communication technology. Perhaps the earliest were those using images (Morgan, 1999, 2004)), and more recently, McLuhan and his disciple Babin (1977). Others, like Schofield Clark have traced links to the religious in media uses involved in developing identity (2002, 2003, etc.). Martin-Barbero focused on it is part of a strategy for building community (1997). M. Hess has mined this and other developments for implications in formation of religious leadership (2005, etc). The topic here is the organization of learning experiences for more general audiences, ones that would give a media competency or mastery permitting engagement with the religious and spiritual. This approach is centered on student media productions.

A more proactive and productive approach to media literacy has been sketched by H. Jenkins and his team at MIT's Comparative Media Center (Jenkins, 2009). Unlike his effort which is to describe and justify such an approach in primarily socio-political terms, the purpose here is to trace how the semiotic dynamics of engagement with the religious necessarily requires such media competencies. Engagement with sacred texts will be taken as the critical examples. According to C. S. Peirce, signs (essential to all communication) work only as they direct and give critical discrimination of 'what would need to be done in order to clarify the content of the sign'. Unlike 'uses and gratification theory' where the response is the term of communication, semiotic finds it as the medium which leads onward to the object of the sign, this triadic movement constituting communication. Scriptures themselves confirm the implication of such 'media uses': all claim to be efficient in a way that honours their truth. Such access to sacred texts and the religious by 'media production' will insure the fecundity, transformation and dialogue incorporating material from different religious traditions, worldviews and moral visions foreseen by holy texts themselves. More and more, the media and its productions are critical platforms where such dialogue can be practiced. The presentation will include a brief indication of critical media competencies involved in access to religious, spiritual and moral dimensions within such a context of interfaith encounter and plurality of social-political interests. This list of competencies will be informed, among other sources, by two initiatives in Toronto area schools working with the presence of the religious in media formats and contents. The concluding theoretical notes will show how the logic of this study confirms Durkheim's strategy of identifying the religious by reference to its specific and singular contribution to social reality (as 'social cement'), such cementing also being provided by the media and the implicit religious

dynamics it harbours. From a religious perspective, transcendence is uncovered in the immanence of media.

Guy Marchessault (Saint Paul University) Ways in which media, religion, and culture can be taught within university curriculum

I have taught media, religion, and culture courses at university level for nearly twenty years: first cycle, second cycle (Web courses and direction of Master dissertations), and third cycle (direction of a Doctoral student). What did I learn from this experience?

First, it is very difficult to present relevant reflections on religion and media to the students before they get a basic formation on media itself. So, according to me, the first cycle is not the best place to introduce a systematic approach to this. The best presentation a professor can do is to offer one or two "light" courses, mainly on history of relations between media and religions, or on the different languages used by both "cultures"; this type of courses could be of particular interest for future journalists.

In other respects, the second and third university cycles are good timing to promote relevant courses and research on these topics. There are very few researchers around the world trying to put forward new scopes on those questions: a few ones in United States, a few others in Europe and in other continents. Their approaches are mostly sociological.

My consideration will put emphasis on the problem I met in French Canada, within a climate of intense secularization. On one hand, the Christian main institutions are too weak now to reorganize their communication planning on new perspectives. On the other hand, large part of the population does not want to hear anymore about the question of religion. So there are very few potential students for my courses in French Canada.

So much so that the interest for religion, media, and culture in French-speaking population comes mostly not from Canada or North America, but... from Africa.

It is why I began second cycle Web courses on Media, Religion, and Culture. I gave those courses six times (five different courses), in French. Most of the students were Africans. I had to stop giving courses, because... these people lack money to pay for their formation. That has been my dilemma over the last four years: to find money for them.

The five different themes I worked on with my students were: 1) the potential danger of audiovisual image for monotheist religions; 2) the uneasy encounter between religion and media cultures, on historical and language perspectives; 3) witnessing to one's faith in the media today; 4) how can a religion be present in entertainment media; and 5) what does remain as impact of the media coverage of Pope John Paul II international travels. The first four of these themes have already been published in books; the last one is in preparation.

What is the future of media, religion, and culture in the university curriculum? Probably mostly in research, with occasional second cycle courses and publications and third cycle Doctoral thesis.

Stephen Garner (University of Auckland) Whale Rider and/or the Passion of the Christ? Lessons from Aotearoa-New Zealand in teaching religion and media with local and global voices

“The Bible in Popular Culture” is an undergraduate course taught for the past four years by School of Theology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. The course explores biblical themes, images, and metaphors in contemporary film, music and cultural arts through which religion and culture intersect, and does this by focusing upon both the local context of Aotearoa New Zealand and the wider Oceanian and global contexts.

In developing and teaching the course, a number of issues particular to the context the course have had to be addressed including: the depth of religious knowledge possessed by students, the diversity of students in class, the secular nature of the university, Aotearoa-New Zealand’s bicultural and multicultural contexts which directly shapes curriculum, and the interaction of local and non-local media.

The paper presents some of the ways in which these and other issues were addressed in the course, which stressed how local cultures are affected by globalization, the ways in which the Bible might play a part in, impact on, and critique popular culture, and how different cultural and regional contexts impact the reading of Biblical texts. In doing this, the course begins to equip students to look critically at the interaction of religion and popular culture from the ‘underside’, and to recognize the role that local voices play in that process.

12 – 1 p.m.: Meeting with CMRC Steering Committee and participants regarding organization of future activities

Thursday August 12

2:30 – 4 p.m. concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: Virtual worlds

Room: LG5

Chair: Amy Richards

Ann Hardy and Nicholas Corban (Waikato University) World of Warcraft and an ethics of Care

Recent scholarship on online game playing argues that the activities of players cannot justifiably be described as taking place in a fantasy realm separate from the offline world. Rather, according to Hemminger & Schott (forthcoming), participants in such games as the immensely popular World of Warcraft are thought of as creating, in Soja’s term (2001) a ‘third space’ which has some of the qualities of material existence at the same time as being a mental, symbolic construction - yet exceeds both familiar types of social location.

Such typification contests the ‘magic circle’ (Huizinga, 1950) and ‘liminoid ritual’ (Turner, 1982) metaphors previously used to position the intense involvement of online players in role-

playing games as being akin to the inhabitation of a ‘sacred’ space (Azeroth et al.2008) while also opening the way for investigation of other elements shared by both formal religious systems and many late-modern practices of meaning-making. In particular, the dynamics of community formation and the consequent development of ethical codes for online player behaviour are interesting for scholars who see online activity as encouraging new forms of socialisation (cf. Galarneau, 2009).

For those who do not engage in them, online games such as World of Warcraft, organized around conquest and looting, are readily stereotyped as productive of unhealthy socialisation into dubious value systems, but in-depth engagement with players tends to find informants who speak approvingly of the demands made on them for reciprocating generosity during game play and are of the opinion that responding to such demands is a form of ethical education (Hemminger & Schott, forthcoming, Stam & Scialdone, 2008).

This article reports on a project comprising both in-depth player-interviews and participant-observation, in which processes of ethical reflection around World of Warcraft play are the focus of research. The informants have a variety of relationships to institutional religion and their own identity positions are complex since several play through multiple avatars, with different sets of capabilities and potentially, different value systems. Some respondents speak of the game as re-enchanting their lifeworld through immersion in mythologically-based quests; others are content to employ the protocols of conquest and acquisition which, Rettburg (2008) argues, emanate from the ‘corporate capitalist’ ideology shaping the game’s field of possibilities; while yet others describe developing a range of personal skills with application in other areas of their lives. All of them nevertheless, have had to develop positions on the issue of caring for others: what does it matter if one helps, exploits or destroys other players in a game that appears to have only an attenuated connection with ‘real’ life? In particular, how do players negotiate differences between religious and online value systems in such circumstances?

The configurations of space, identity and value in collaborative online gaming are multiple and interwoven. In considering how decisions on the ethics of game play traverse the boundaries of offline and online worlds this project also makes a contribution to ongoing discussion about the shifting locations of contemporary religiosity.

Jose Vallikatt (RMIT University) Church without Pews: Mythology in World of Warcraft and Social Religiosity

Myths of the modern world together with modern technologies and popular culture is challenging the traditional social institutions and is opening avenues for new modes of self realization, self expression and participation in a community. It is relevant to investigate if the massively multiplayer online role playing games like World of Warcraft saturated with religious mythologies in some way turn to be locus of new religious experiences and expressions. Depending on the theories of Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade on myths and through a textual analysis of the game geography of World of Warcraft this paper would open scope for researching into the influence of MMORP games in social religiosity.

Ken Derry (University of Toronto) and Tony Michael (York University) “Tony Stark Wants to Save the World”: Superhero Films and Biblical Approaches to Crisis

Our presentation aims to be the first systematic application of Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence's theory of the Bible and American myth to the study of religion and film. We will do so by considering five superhero films released over the past four years: *Iron Man*, *Superman Returns*, *Punisher: War Zone*, *The Dark Knight*, and *Watchmen*.

In texts such as *The Myth of the American Superhero* and *Captain America and the Crusade Against Evil*, Jewett and Lawrence examine the links between the Bible, popular culture, and American political thought. In particular they argue that a specific Biblical response to crisis—which they term “Zealous Nationalism”—has been transmitted historically in America by indigenous forms of popular entertainment such as Indian captivity narratives in the 17th century, cowboy westerns in the 19th and 20th centuries, and superhero comics in the last half century. This worldview has long dominated the way in which Americans understand what America means, often with catastrophic results. Opposing such a perspective is that of “Prophetic Realism,” which is also biblically derived but which appears only as a minor note in American popular culture; it is notably absent, according to Jewett and Shelton, from superhero narratives.

The two competing worldviews are biblically supported as follows. Taking the law into one's own hands—i.e., vigilantism or Zealous Nationalism—is about redeeming the world by the destruction of one's enemies, who are always viewed as personifying evil. This view of redemption has been adapted from biblical conquest narratives and apocalyptic literature in which good and evil are easily delimited. The second view, Prophetic Realism, is about supporting the judicial process wherein one humanizes one's enemies and attempts resolution of conflict through a democratic process. This approach is about redeeming the world by impartial enforcement of the law; it can be seen as having derived from Old Testament prophetic writings (especially Jeremiah and Isaiah), as well as the New Testament teachings of both Jesus and Paul.

Using *Superman Returns*, *Iron Man*, and *Punisher: War Zone* as examples, we will argue that most recent superhero films fall clearly into the category of Zealous Nationalism. In contrast to Jewett and Shelton's position, however, we will also show that superhero films can deviate from this pattern. Specifically, *The Dark Knight* is very much a proponent of Prophetic Realism, while *Watchmen's* position on how best to respond to crisis is more complex and at times self-contradictory, especially when considered in relation to the original graphic novel. Given the immense popularity of superhero films—particularly among university-age students—we believe that it is critical to consider the ways in which such films may potentially impact viewers' worldviews.

Stephen Garner (University of Auckland) Symbols, swords and spandex: Religious authority in comic books through the lens of the ‘warrior nun’

Contemporary comic books and graphic novels are rich in imagery and characters drawn heavily from existing religious and spiritual traditions, often mixing and matching these traditions in interesting and novel ways. Sometimes this religious borrowing integrates material directly into mainstream comic books, where Judeo-Christian angels and demons exist alongside characters like Superman or religiously-framed concepts of redemption or final judgement are explored

using these characters (e.g. Waid & Ross' "Kingdom Come"). At other times, a whole new world is created where religious issues such as suffering and theodicy are explored (e.g. Straczynski's "Midnight Nation"), or existing religious and ideological systems are critiqued (e.g. Rushkoff's "Testament").

In doing this the creators of these narratives are involved in the act of creating, or 'sub-creating' as Tolkien puts it, cosmologies. These cosmologies integrate physical and metaphysical dimensions, and in doing so construct authority and belief systems in these new or existing worlds. As such, both the worlds created, and the stories told within them, communicate attitudes about religious authority to the consumers of these narratives.

In contemporary comic books one example of religious authority being communicated is through narratives oriented around the figure of the 'warrior nun' (e.g. "Warrior Nun Arealia"; "The Magdalena", and "The Sisterhood"). Drawing predominantly from Roman Catholic traditions these figures function both as dutiful agents of religious authority and institutions, and as active critics of the religious institutions they represent. This paper will explore the relationship between cosmologies and religious authority in comic books with particular reference to the 'warrior nun' motif.

Panel B: A sense of Space

Room: LG6

Chair:

Curtis Coats (Millsaps College) Paradoxes of Desire: Exploring Existential Tensions of New Age Tourists in Sedona, Arizona

The notion of "return" has long been a feature in the practice of pilgrimage. Many pilgrims "return" to a sacred Center and then "return" home to the secular periphery – refreshed and renewed. Further, the fascination with the "primitive" has long been a preoccupation of the "civilized." The growth of "spirituality," and, in particular, "spiritual tourism," couples these longings for "return" and "the primitive" into a set of mediated practices, meanings and paradoxical longings. Tourism has always afforded interplay between the spatial concepts, Home and Away, Here and There. Often this interplay is laden with additional meanings and desires – Center and Periphery, Mundane and Exotic/Extraordinary. Adding "spiritual" as a descriptor, i.e. spiritual tourism, offers another layer of meaning, one engaging time – namely Modern and Primitive/Ancient. Each of these layers directly influences constructions of Self and Other. Spiritual tourists are able to explore the periphery and Center, encounter the "ancient," and dwell in the extraordinary in ways that prove to be deeply meaningful. Further, they are able to do this with the comfort (and conflict) of always returning Home, which is at once safe and terrifying. This paper will tease out these paradoxes using the specific case of New Age tourism in Sedona, Arizona. Drawing on participant observation and in-depth interviews with tourists, I will explore how Self and Other are constructed through the tense negotiations of Home and Away, Modern and Primitive.

Linda Billings (George Washington University and NASA Astrobiology Program) Nature and Spirit in Extraterrestrial Environments: the Fiction and Nonfiction of Space Exploration

Where, and what, is “Nature” in outer space? This paper will explore fictional and nonfictional conceptions of extraterrestrial nature and consider their functions and meanings. Two opposing concepts of nature in outer space are persistent: the idea of outer space as a “place” to be conquered and exploited for economic gain, and the idea of outer space as a pristine environment to be preserved as such. Historically, the “dominionist” view has held sway in the aerospace community of space scientists, space flight engineers, and space policy officials. During the Reagan and George W. Bush administrations, the exploitation of space resources for profit was an explicit goal of space policy. In space law, outer space is characterized as a place to preserve “for peaceful purposes.” The discourse of space law and policy encompasses disagreements over what activities may be legally permissible in space. Some space scientists have proposed the preservation of certain pristine extraterrestrial environments – on Mars, for instance – as “planetary parks,” with a status similar to national parks on Earth. The mainstream media tend to propagate the hegemonic view of outer space as an arena for national contests and the expansion of human civilization, yet popular interest in outer space tends to focus on the possibility of extraterrestrial life and encounters with alien “others,” and the subordinate narrative of space exploration as a spiritual quest or “saving grace” is persistent. Are the political economy of space exploration and the search for meaning in space exploration irreconcilable – or not?

Monica Emerich (Independent Scholar) A Slower Shade of Spirit: Sustainability, Media and ‘The Slow Movements’

Fast world, meet “The Slows.” The genesis of the Slow Food Movement has spawned a range of like-minded practices, including Slow Money, Slow Thinking and Slow Medicine (Badaracco 2010). These movements take a dim view of social and economic trends that focus more on a speedy gain than on the quality of the experience. The Slow Movements assume that the race among technologized, modern societies to improve the quality of life often result in denying basic human needs for bonding, tradition, and relationships with Nature in the guise of offering us more time, more leisure, more money, etc. “Slow” aficionados, which include celebrities such as Britain’s Prince Charles, are quick to point out that “more” is a “hologram of the proverbial carrot,” as an editor of a natural foods magazine put it—you grasp only to find you actually hold nothing. The human body, slow proponents argue, has not evolved to accommodate the speed that modern lifestyles demand and that media promote across the range of daily lived experience, in the ways in which we communicate, eat, travel, work, and play and more. What we lose is our deeply meaningful and sustainable, even spiritual, roots. The effects are a globally experience impoverishment of mind, body and spirit, they say. There is, however, nothing slow about the Slows’ battle of resistance. They’ve captured interest globally and media from Martha Stewart Omnimedia to Prince Charles’ public relations machine are enchanted. This paper uses ethnographic and discourse analysis to investigate the deeper meanings laden in the idea of slowing things down and the way in which lifestyle media construe “Slow” to mean a better way of life.

Yuri Obata (Indiana University, South Bend) Conflicting discourses about nuclear weapons: After President Obama’s vision

The world needs few reminders of the devastation of nuclear weaponry, which destroyed the people, landscapes and cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the World War II. Despite the well-known catastrophic effects, however, nuclear weaponry is still used as a definitive response to conflicts and as a different sort of weapon in political contests and negotiations. In 2009, U.S. President Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize for his plan to create a world without nuclear weapons. But what was less noticed by the world's media was that his travel to Japan right after this announcement did not include a visit to Hiroshima or Nagasaki. In truth, a U.S. president has not visited Hiroshima since 1945. Not only that, but it is questionable whether U.S. citizens are fully informed about nuclear weaponry—its effects and deployment—because that information about this disastrous technology could create discursive conflicts, particularly for politicians who are unwilling to risk losing their constituencies' support by appearing to be against “progress” and technology. This paper discusses the paradox that comes out of the mediated discourse about nuclear weaponry. It is a phenomenon that is, at the same time, both anti-progressive in its destructive capabilities and framed as the very vision of modernity, replete with technological and scientific promise. There is an ambiguity between the global enthusiasm for living “green” lifestyles and protecting Nature from human pillage and the proliferation of nuclear technologies that essentially threaten the mother earth that the eco-movement is trying to protect.

Panel C: TV and film

Room: LG12

Chair: David Haskell (Wilfrid Laurier University)

Dina Volaric (University of Sydney) Professor Dawkins goes to Australasia: A big fish splashes into a small media pond

During March 2010 Professor Richard Dawkins, evolutionary biologist and prominent atheist visited Australia and New Zealand. Over the space of a week he gave a number of public lectures about the latest research regarding Darwin's theory of evolution and how it informs our understanding of the development of life on our planet. He also discussed possible explanations for human religiosity. During the same period Dawkins was subjected to a range of media reports: Feature length articles in newspapers as well as television and radio broadcasts. This study assesses how different media agendas distorted Dawkins' message by comparing the content of his lectures with the content of different types of media coverage. It argues that the lectures can be considered as Dawkins' intended messages by showing that the content of the lectures is stable across different deliveries, while the content of various media reports diverges widely depending on the medium and the reporter. In conclusion the study uses Marshall McLuhan's Tetrad of media effects (1988) to analyse how various media act as conduits for the transmission of complex arguments. It concludes that, paradoxically, the oldest and newest mediums – book publishing and the Internet – are less likely to distort complex messages than broadcast media such as newspapers, radio and television.

Mei Li Siaw (East West Center, University of Hawai'i, Manoa) Reclaimed, Resilient, Redoubtable: Yasmin Ahmad's Film (Re)Imaginations of the Malay-Muslim Woman in Malaysia

This paper discusses the works of the late Malaysian filmmaker Yasmin Ahmad in terms of how they depict and redefine Malay-Muslim women for a contemporary Malaysian audience. Few artists have challenged Malaysian socioethnic and sociocultural norms as lyrically and as consistently as Yasmin did in her relatively brief yet celebrated career, both as an independent feature filmmaker and as creative director of the advertising agency appointed by the government-owned oil and gas company, Petronas. I examine Yasmin's oeuvre against the backdrop of recent developments in Malaysia's complex multicultural society, identifying the ways in which her film characters and their inter-ethnic relationships interrogate common societal assumptions about being Malay, Muslim, and female amidst the rising tide of political Islam and racial-religious communalism in the country. A brief clip or two from Yasmin's work will be shown and discussed, taking into account the scope of the films in their original media (free-to-air television or cinema), as well as the continuing public discourse surrounding these films as they are taken up for discussion by various groups ranging from religious authorities to fan bloggers to critics and supporters alike in the local and regional film and advertising industries. My project is informed by the work of contemporary Malaysian scholars and activists such as Zainah Anwar, Farish Noor, and Sharon Bong. I also rely on the ideas of Paul C. Adams to articulate how televisual and online media produce virtual gathering places and alternative focal points for the (re)imagining of identity in a society where day-to-day interethnic relations and religious expression are increasingly being regulated by the state.

Omar Anas (Jawaharlal Nehru University) PEACE TV: The Remaking of Islamic Public Sphere in India

In a changing social order with capacity to work as a unit on a planetary scale, Islam as major cultural, religious and political construct has brought many local and regional Islamic actors to remake traditional Islamic public sphere. The transformation of Public Sphere in Muslim societies from a traditional prayer places, Madrasas, and religious and traditional festivals, Islamic televisions have come to replace most of them with Salafist channels across the Islamic world. Islamic televisions like Al-Nas, Iqra (Middle East) and PEACE and Q TV (South Asia) are being widely watched. Day to days' religious discourses in Muslims streets in Asia and Arab world are shaped and reshaped by 24 hours religious broadcastings of these channels. Sectarian and intellectual differences and tensions have found new spaces apart from Mosques, Madrasas, Qazas, and traditional religious settings. Given the financial and technological limitations, many religious discourses are facing challenges from technically equipped and media savvy preachers of Salafists channels. South Asian Muslim streets where earlier major Sufi trends have enjoyed largest following are now full of CDs of Dr. Zakir Naik, Dr. Asrar Ahmad and many others who frequently appear PEACE TV a Dubai based Islamic venture. The man behind PEACE TV Zakir Naik is equally popular among English speaking global Muslim audiences and emerging Muslim Middle class in India. Religion has attracted large audiences in India and PEACE TV is first religious channel started by any Indian cleric. This has not only disturbed traditional public spheres like Dargah, Khanqah, it also has affected Islamic groups like Jamat Islami, Tablighi Jamat, and Muslims from Shia, Bohra, Khoja and other communities. Launched in 2006, PEACE TV has invoked many controversies in very short period of time. The popularity of PEACE TV forced many religious authorities to rethink their existing participation in Islamic Public Sphere and respond emerging challenge from PEACE TV's Salafist discourse. Media religion interplay in the Muslim society has brought the role of media in question as well as brought the religion

per se at vortex of global mediascape. This proposal aims to study PEACE TV's role in remaking of Islamic Public Sphere in South Asia and particularly in India. Based on primary sources, the proposal aims to study media religion interplay in Muslim streets in India.

Panel D: Interreligious dialogue and communication

Room: LG13

Chair: John Ferre'

Mahmoud Eid (University of Ottawa) The Canadian Muslim Women in-between Multicultural Society and Stereotypical Media

The presence of Muslim women in Canada began in 1871 with five Muslim women of European descent. Legislated changes to the Immigration Act in the late 1960s have resulted in the growth of the Canadian Muslim community; Muslims in Canada today number more than 750,000. In today's multiracial, multicoloured, multicultural, and multireligious Canada, the real issue facing the media is how well they will adapt to that change. There remains a gap between the ways in which laws treat minorities—as full-fledged, equal citizens—and the stereotypical representations in the media. Since September 11, 2001 (9/11), negative portrayals of Muslims as the enemy of the West and the source of terrorism have had an increasing presence in the Canadian media. Specifically, Muslim women are represented in Canadian media as outsiders; as distant Others whose religion promotes values that are against Canadian values. Thus, Islamic practices are seen as “backward”, third-world practices and values that have been imported into Canada, instead of being uniquely Canadian. Despite Canada's official multiculturalism policy, the 9/11 tragedy resulted in harassment of, and discrimination against Muslim individuals and communities, particularly veiled women, with regard to employment, education, and other rights.

This paper investigates the discrepancies in the ways Canadian laws treat Canadian Muslim women as a minority and how the Canadian media represent them. It draws on Homi Bhabha's (1994) framework of Third Space which suggests that as we expand our organizational definitions to include subject positions like race and gender, we find new self-identities constituted in these “in-between spaces”. The paper explains such framework in relation to John Millar's *Observations Concerning the Distinction of Ranks in Society* (1793), Niklas Luhmann's *The Representation of Society Within Society* (1987), Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), and van Dijk's *Ideology* (1998). The paper concludes that the media-constructed images of Canadian Muslim women do not reflect the multicultural policy in Canada, nor the true identity of Canadian Muslim women. When merged with events of terrorism, the media's portrayal tends to use specific stereotypes in their representation of Canadian Muslim women. By analyzing and evaluating this portrayal, the paper identifies the parameters set by the Canadian media about Canadian Muslim women in terms of their role in society, the exercise of power, cultural backgrounds, and identity. This blurred picture about Canadian Muslim women in the media results in a variety of feelings, opinions, attitudes and behaviors for Canadian Muslim women. These sentiments are rarely heard, or even correctly understood, by the rest of the Canadian society through the media or social institutions. The paper provides considerable explanations of such sentiments that result from living under the stress of terrorism images attributed to Muslims. These sentiments include various aspects of Canadian Muslim women's lives in terms

of various levels of settlement and integrating into Canadian society, and the exercise of all Canadian rights.

Anthony Palma (University of Toronto, OISE) **Media Coverage of the 2007 Faith-Based Schooling Debate in Ontario**

From September to October, 2007, the Province of Ontario witnessed an important debate about the future of Religious Education (R.E.) in public and private schools. The debate involved a political election campaign, heavily influenced by the media, in which 'faith-based schooling' emerged as the leading policy issue. The debate influenced perceptions of Religious Education across Canada. This paper examines the form and content of the media debate in retrospect, with a view toward explaining why Religious Education is a contentious issue for both secular and religious Ontarians.

Natasha Gerolami (Huntington University) **The Dogmatic Image of Communication: Deleuze, Religion and Transformation**

In many ways, high hopes and ideals are embedded in communication and information models. Communication and the dissemination of information have frequently been seen as a means to establishing such grandiose things as understanding, peace, and emancipation. One common ideal in theories in communication is that communication will lead to understanding between diverse people, the end of prejudice, and the establishment of common values. The implications are that increased speed, efficiency, and reach of communication will simply move us closer to our utopian ideal. All we need, therefore, is better communication systems. In this paper, I employ the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze to explain the limitations of thinking of communication in this manner and suggest that religious writings can help us develop a new approach in communication studies. Deleuze has a very idiosyncratic way of categorising communication theory. He highlights a number of different tendencies or movements in communication and information theory such as the emphasis on commonality and the centrality of the subject. Other theorists have noted some of these trends in communication theory. For example, communication models, which come in many forms, have a tendency to be teleologically oriented and emphasise commonality. Communication models generally do not analyse communication, per se, but instead focus on the importance of achieving something greater such as a united community, democracy, or justice. There is always an attempt to look for the essence of communication, to clean up the messiness of social interaction, and to reduce difference to commonality. If the goal of communication is to establish commonality (i.e. understanding through like-mindedness), it requires us to overcome rather than celebrate difference. The implication of communication models based on commonality is that difference is viewed as failure. Communication models can be critiqued for the same reason that Deleuze critiques the "dogmatic image of thought" (i.e. they do not permit us to think of new concepts or new ways of thinking or creating new ways of living rather, they merely facilitate the repetition of dogma and concepts that are no longer relevant to contemporary times). We need therefore to consider different ethical models in communications studies that do not simply involve the dissemination of information and fixed meanings but also that can account for ethical situations in which the transformation of the self (rather than merely the representation of the self or self-realization) is paramount. If self-transformation is at the heart of the dilemma of effective

communication then reference to religious writings, where self-transformation is paramount, seems to be one obvious avenue that has not been adequately pursued.

There is increasing hope that interfaith communication will help stem religious conflict. In my paper, I investigate minor movements in religion, particularly the Baha'i faith, that have also been concerned that we not simply repeat dogma but understand the need for transformation. The implication would be that the communication of information about religion alone would not be sufficient. I would therefore like to investigate the ways in which communication theory is inimical to the ethical life and religious experiences that emphasise transformation. I would begin by looking at the Baha'i writings also knowing that certain themes in Zen Buddhism, such as the writing of Dogen, and Christian mysticism will also help to shed light on the question.

Friday August 13

9 – 10:30 concurrent panel sessions

Panel A: Social Networks

Room: LG5

Chair:

Brian Bantugan (St. Paul University Manila) The NEST (Network of Engendered Spirituality Talk) of "Othered" Men: A Comparative Cross-cultural Mapping of Non-heterosexual Spirituality in Cyberspace

Integrating the spiral dynamics theory of Dr. Don Beck into a modified network structure analysis approach that is more organic, process-oriented and longitudinal in representation, the study attempted to achieve a cross-cultural mapping of the interactions in two selected forums of non-heterosexual men that discussed similar issues on spirituality. Using threads from www.downelink.com and www.guys4men.com with high activity networks involving Filipino non-heterosexual men, the research revealed that both networks are pushed into activity by authoritarian superhubs. However, a more individualistic and task-oriented superhub (in the global network) allowed for more decentered (superhub-detached) interactions within a network than in a "social-oriented superhub"-focused network. Ownership of the forum thread network was made more manifest by the superhub in the global network and by the community of hubs in the local network. The greater intensity of the spirituality exchanges in the local networks reveal a more spirituality engaged but more conflicted and antagonistic community of non-heterosexual men. Both networks, nonetheless, highlight that "othered" men in real life also "other" "othered" men in cyberspace. There is as much inclusion and exclusion in seemingly more empowered virtual alternative, if not subversive, communities.

Denis Bekkering (University of Waterloo) The Struggle for Religious Authority in Dynamic Web 2.0 Environments: The Case of Todd Bentley

This paper contributes to the understanding of religious authority on the Internet by examining how religious authority is established, upheld and debated within participatory Web 2.0 environments. In a recent study, Heidi Campbell criticizes what she views as a widespread assumption that the Internet primarily facilitates challenges to religious authority. Examining

references to various types of religious authority in a sample of single-authored Christian blogs, Campbell demonstrates that the authors overwhelmingly supported traditional concepts of Christian religious authority; a somewhat unsurprising finding considering that 62% of the blog authors worked within Christian organizations. While each blog in Campbell's sample represents an online space constructed to prioritize the religious opinions of a particular individual, the impetus towards interactivity characteristic of Web 2.0 has led to an increase in online spaces encouraging multiple voices. Following the work of Douglas Cowan, we can consider these participatory areas as "contested spaces," within which users seek to establish and defend their particular points of view.

With this in mind, this paper extends Campbell's work by examining the maintenance of, and challenges to, religious authority in dynamic Web 2.0 arenas centered on the controversial Christian faith healer Todd Bentley. In April 2008, Todd Bentley garnered international attention due to his popular healing revival in Lakeland, Florida, which abruptly ended in August of that year following increased media scrutiny of Bentley's miracle claims, and his admission of an extramarital relationship. As Stephen Hunt has argued, it was the perceived moral failings of the preacher that led to the collapse of the charismatic authority that his followers had ascribed to him. Following a period of silence, the embattled Bentley announced his return to active ministry in May 2009, accompanied by an aggressive expansion of his ministry's online presence, including a revamped website. Like the blogs in Campbell's study, Bentley's site presents a singular viewpoint, in this case supporting all aspects of Bentley's authority. Yet, the site also contains links to the ministry's presence on the popular social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. These social networking sites represent both an irresistible opportunity for reaching new people, as well as a potential source of challenges to Bentley's authority by visitors. First, this paper demonstrates how Bentley's ministry and his supporters attempt to control online discourse by removing user comments that question the preacher's authority. On the ministry's Facebook site, this is accomplished through the surgical removal of individual comments, while on YouTube, Bentley's supporters often remove the ability of users to comment on videos featuring the preacher. Using tools drawn from the fields of discourse and frame analysis, I then examine the discussion and debate regarding Bentley's authority in the commenting area of a single YouTube video featuring Bentley. Although the anonymous comments underneath the video initially appear chaotic, this paper identifies broader discursive frameworks within which individual commentators operate. Particularly notable is the importance of the Bible as a source of authority within the commenting area, against which all other claims of religious authority are measured.

E. Nezih Orhon (Anadolu University) Social Networking Sites and Social Voyeurism: Example of Turkey

According to Colin Wright, social networking "represents the latest stage in the Omnopticon (everyone watching everyone) stage of social interaction that modern societies have entered. Within social networks, you are able to represent yourself however you like, manage your reputation and personality, and create niches that weren't there before. What social networking means to me personally is a way to reach audiences that might be inaccessible to me in real life, whether because of age or socioeconomic status or geographic hurdles. It's also a way to explore and find out more about different ideas and cultures." At the same time, Danah Boyd and Nicole

Ellison define “social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.”

Today, social networking is considered as one of the most important phenomena. For instance, according to ComScore’s 2009 reports reflects Turkey has the third most engaged online audience in the world, with 30 hours spent online each month in the ranking after USA and Canada with 29.7 average hours per visitor per month. Similarly, because of its young population -over half of the population under thirty years old- Turkey appears to be one of the leading countries for social networking, such as Facebook and friendfeed.

In relation to the fact stated above, the meaning and purpose of social networking gains new meanings within the population. While some individuals consider social networking as a way of surveillance for gender related issues, some others consider it platform for questioning values. In Turkey, there are even examples from television shows, which they use social networking sites as a way of assessing social relations and social values of those individuals –especially for females- who take part in those television shows. In relation to these developments, this study intends to analyze and reflect how social networking sites in Turkey are considered as means of social voyeurism and tools for assessing values.

Mohamed Ben Moussa (Concordia University) Local and global networks of meanings and solidarity: Comparing Islamic and leftist social movements’ use of the Internet during the 2009 Gaza conflict

The impact of the Internet on collective action and, specifically, on social movements has been widely studied in the last fifteen years (Castells, 1996; Cerulo, 1997; Diani 2000, 2003; Downing, 2001; Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2004). Commentators have highlighted many aspects in which the Internet has shaped communication among and within social movement organizations (SMOs) as well as transformed the way these SMOs engage in action. In the context of Muslim countries, however, this area of interest has received scant attention so far. Moreover, existing studies that concentrate on the use of the Internet by Islamic-oriented groups and organizations rarely situate this use in the larger socio-political contexts of Muslim countries where secular and religious civil groups compete over influence within very fragmented and highly polarized public spheres.

The present paper examines the role of the Internet in collective action within Islamic countries by focusing on the case of Morocco. Drawing on social movement theory (Habermas 1981, 2008; Mellucci 1989, 1996; Tarrow, 1998, 2002; Diani 2003), as well as on radical democracy theory and the concept of ‘agonistic’ public sphere (Laclou and Mouffe, 1984; Mouffe, 1993, 1999, 2000b), the paper investigates the impact of the Internet on three distinct social movements, namely the Islamic, the Alter-Globalization and the Amazigh (Berber) movements. It compares the way these movements appropriate the Internet to mobilize actual and potential constituents, create networks of solidarity and reinforce collective identities. Using both feature and framing analysis, the paper concentrates on fifteen websites belonging to various organizations within these three movements. These websites were downloaded during the 2009

Gaza war, a highly mediated event during which the Internet was heavily used by all party involved for mobilization and propaganda purposes. The paper compares the way Islamic-oriented and secular movements used the Internet to frame the conflict and mobilize support for the Palestinians, and highlights patterns of similarities as well as important variations in the way the studied movements have used the Internet to frame the conflict and mobilize actual and potential constituents. It is argued that whilst the majority of social movements have benefitted from the internet, albeit to varying degrees, to build alternative public spheres, Islamic-oriented movements remain the most adept in exploiting the Internet's potential for mobilization, community building and identity construction. In addition, the paper argues that one of the key implications of the Internet for collective action is that it has allowed social movements, particularly Islamic-oriented ones, to develop "networks of meanings" (White, 1992) that are contributing to building and enhancing transnational collective identities at the regional and global levels.

Panel B: Virtual Worlds

Room:LG12

Chair:

Kerstin Radde-Antweiler (University of Bremen) "Research between Worlds." Methodological Considerations on Virtual 3D Environment Research

Like Dawson and Cowan suggested in the year 2004, the Web is changing the face of religion worldwide. This is why the way in which religious behaviour, communication and also performance is conceived and practised has also changed. The Internet for example showed that lively and dynamic debates about religion and rituals are not restricted to the institutionalized churches but also happen within the individual realm: the phenomena of individual belief. Apart from representations of the institutionalized religions such as the Catholic Church or different Islamic groups etc., the Internet reveals religious discussions and self understanding not only from religious experts, but also from the individual believer – in the emic perspective, 'the amateur'. In contrast to the predominant theologies that describe what a believer of a specific religion has to believe, the analysis showed that there is a large range of variations in the religious self understanding of individuals. With the emergence of Virtual Worlds a further step towards a completely new field of research has been done, since they offer a new environment to meet, communicate and in contrary to the World Wide Web also to perform religion, the so-called Online-Religion in a virtual reality, irrespective of geographical and real-life body conditions. In contrast to the primarily two-dimensional context of the World Wide Web Virtual Worlds represent a growing three-dimensional area of the Internet, in which each individual is represented by an avatar and can interact with others. Previous analysis made clear, that Virtual Worlds are more than virtual playgrounds, but can be deemed as an enhancement of real-life possibilities on an economical, a social and also religious level. The qualitative survey of Jakobsson from 2006 for example disproves Turkles thesis that Virtual Worlds are merely a simulation of real-life social action. But in contrast to the increasing importance and influence on the religious discourse, until now the research area of so-called "Virtual Worlds" has mostly been excluded, sometimes even banned from scholarly attention. Consequently there has hardly been any reliable studies covering this field of research except for a very few surveys done by US scholars. But on the other hand the change of media also causes changes in the methods of

analysing religious behaviour or rituals in the field of Internet, Virtual Worlds and Games, which haven't be discussed in the academic field so far. In this paper I therefore try to put the focus on the question of how such a medium compound is changing also the research and the researcher itself or to put it in a central question: do we need a specific methodological tool or better toolbox for analysing religion and rituals online? In this context I'll try to give a kind of overview of the various possibilities of research within Virtual Worlds – of course not understood as a complete spectrum but more as a beginning of a necessary list or catalog! - and then exemplary deepen some methodological characteristics and also the problems of the methods I used in my own research on wedding rituals in Second Life.

Paul Emerson Teusner (RMIT University) New thoughts on the status of the religious Cyborg

This presentation considers philosophical and sociological notions of the religious Cyborg as they are played out in the real-life experience of Christians online. A discursive analysis of Australian Christian bloggers, who claim a membership to, or concern with, the “emerging church” movement, will form a case study to illustrate the theme.

The idea of a religious Cyborg, as introduced in 1996 by Brenda Brasher, involves a call to consider Cyborg as a socioeconomic and cultural entity, rather than as a physical state as we have seen in medical science and science fiction. For Brasher, religious Cyborgs are humans whose use of technology to create social environments shapes their understandings of self, the world, and the other. This presentation will be an exploration on the evolution of the conceptualisation of religious Cyborg against the development of Internet technology (including Web 2.0), the evolution of Internet cultures and recent debates in religious sociology.

Sociologists, theologians, and cultural theorists involved in the twenty year old tradition of research into religion online have always debated about the future of Christianity, and whether the Internet will lead to a rebirth of a spirit-filled people, or to the ultimate demise of organised religion. Many now agree that online forms of religious community serve more as a complement than as a replacement to religious expression and communion in the offline world. For many Internet users, the virtual provides a space to explore new forms of religious expression that can be carried into life offline, and for them the virtual church offers a glimpse for what “real” church could be like. For the same people, however, there are elements of “real” church that cannot be replicated online. So they seek a harmony in their online and offline religious experiences.

I propose that the use of Web 2.0 applications, such as blogs and wikis, facilitate this search for harmony, rather than promote a separation between online religion and offline religious practice. Consequently I argue that the increasing popularity of these Internet tools to express a religious identity and seek connections with others has impacts on how people participate in religious institutions in the real world. Specifically, this presentation will explore how bloggers connect online life in a highly technologised society with traditional notions of religious life and community participation.

Panel C: Struggles and public spheres

Room:LG6*Chair:***Patricia Bustamante (Porticus Fellow) Approaches to a study on the Re-existence of an indigenous community in southern Colombia: The indigenous Nasa (Páez), their worldview and their practices communicate, in the context of armed conflict in Colombia**

Colombia lives a situation of internal war for over 50 years. In this situation, the Indigenous people are in the midst of the confrontation of the different actors of the armed conflict: National Army, guerrillas and paramilitaries. The Indigenous Nasa people, along with other indigenous Colombians, have established an important process of pacific resistance through a struggle that they call “consistency community”. This is a collective presence alive, active and standing in the decisional process in Colombia, generating an image of unity and political maturity of the national territory and against international public opinion. The Nasa people (Paeces) are among the largest indigenous populations of Colombia (about 200,000). Most of them are in the Cauca (region located in the southwest of the country), but many live in neighboring regions. The Object of my study are precisely the indigenous Nasa located in the department of Cauca. They have worked to consolidate their cultural, political and religious practices for their social interaction, articulating communicative practices, at the same time, to stimulate a process of peaceful civil resistance.

After an experience of ethnographic work in the Cauca during one year, the idea is to present the advances about my principal research objective: To identify the practices of re-existence of the Nasa indigenous people, from their world view and from their communicative actions, against the dominant society in the context of armed conflict in Colombia. Hopes to underline how the interaction between the different dimensions of community life of the Indigenous nasa people, constitutes a relational system located in a particular territory (physical, social, political and symbolic) that allows, according to our hypothesis - firstly, consolidation of the Nasa as a people, within their communicative and cultural processes (including the relationship with the land – ‘pacha mamma’) and, secondly, dialogue with the Western world the "mestizo" population, it is the mostly in Colombia but at the same time, the resistance as a communicative dimension of the worldview and the ancient religion of the natives in Colombia. Hopes also to show how the interaction and intercultural processes are deeply marked by the meaning of “the collective”, where the “We”; could be understood as a communicative subject who lives, and survives in the midst of armed conflict. And it is precisely this dynamic of reciprocity that seems to strengthen the identity of indigenous peoples and to consolidate the community, which could lead to a category of analysis: the re-existence.

Priscila De Matos and Marcus Vinicius De Matos (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) Alternative media, Human Rights, and Religion: a case study on the campaign ‘SPEAK out for environmental sanitation in Marabá (PA)’

This paper examines the relation between alternative media, human rights and religion in the SPEAK Network campaign ‘Speak out for Environmental Sanitation in Marabá’. Promoted by students linked to the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Brazil (IFES/ABUB), at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), and supported by evangelical churches of the city, the

campaign mobilized religious youth groups from all regions of the country. The instrument used for this was a media product designed to simultaneously bring information, propose political reflection, and activities such as lobby, and sending post-cards to authorities – a flyer that includes a detachable postcard, called the 'Pray & Post' card. The aim of the studied campaign was the CEO of Brazilian mining company 'Vale do Rio Doce', to whom the postcards were addressed. The students claim that the mining activity promoted by the Vale Cia., located in the Amazon region, has generated most of the environmental problems of the city, such as the pollution of rivers and damage to population health. The logistics and capillarity of the campaign was carried out by the SPEAK Network, an evangelical advocacy network, and included mailing the 'Pray & Post' cards to supporters and visits to churches and local groups of IFES/ABUB. The network is organized through the Internet, bringing together young people on e-mail groups, virtual communities and blog-site. This case study is focused in an intersection of three subjects: the concept of alternative media as described in Latin-American studies; local experiences of media as an instrument for advocacy in human rights causes; and religion as means of identity and political mobilization. The theoretical framework discusses the work of Latin American author's such as Raquel Paiva and Muniz Sodré. The relation between media and advocacy brings up questions about globalization, state, and the constitution of the 'third sector' in Brazil. Also, it raises questions about the role of religion to youth political mobilization. The case analysis challenges theoretical frameworks as it relocates local and national revealing the potential of alternative media for advocacy in human rights. Furthermore, the case leads to reflections on the legal aspects of regional invisibility in Brazilian mass media as the campaign allowed a local youth group, with no space in the mass media, to give national dimensions to challenges they face in everyday life.

Abdus Salam (Islamia College (University)) Conflicting Images of Muslims in Post-9/11 American Literature

The literature of a people validly reflects the way they look at the world and the manner in which they use their language. It also signifies the endeavours of enlightened individuals to mould the heart and minds of the multitudes in line with their own convictions. Even in today's age of media, the above-mentioned role of literature remains unaffected because, unlike media channels which prompt reflexive responses to reported events, literature generates deeper and more stable impacts in the form of lasting impressions. Since the advent of Islam, Muslims have never ceased to be important for the West and have been variously depicted in English literature from time to time. However, after the tragic incidents of 11th September, 2001, there has been a dramatic change in the world's focus on them, both in nature and in magnitude. Both as ummah—the formal Arabic word for the global community of Muslims—and as individuals, they have suddenly found themselves among the protagonists of English literature in general, and that produced in the North American Continent in particular. The proposed paper aims at discussing the different images of Muslims and Islam in the English literature of North America produced after 9/11, focusing on their nature, types, causes, consequences and the way they differ from the depiction of Muslims and Islam before the drastic disaster of nine-eleven. It also intends to contrast the literature authored by Muslim Americans about themselves (for instance, Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*) with that written by non-Muslim Americans about them during the period in focus. It intends to highlight the gap this contrast signifies, and suggest the ways to bridge this gap by minimizing biases in literary creativity, thereby exploring

the possibility of using the artistic tool of literature for achieving cross-cultural understanding and global harmony.

Marta Axner (Uppsala University) Studying a Secular Public Sphere: Concepts and theories for a sociological understanding of religion in the mediated public sphere

A number of theoretical standpoints are available for understanding changes in the place and importance of religion in the public sphere of late modern society. The intersection between religion, politics, media and society require a multidimensional approach. This theoretical paper aims to present a theoretical framework and useful concepts by addressing the following questions: What does it mean that the public sphere is described as secular in a late modern society? What does it mean that religion is (or should be) a private matter? Should mass media be understood as an arena or an agent in relation to religious change? Drawing on theories from sociology of religion and religious studies as well as media theory and political science, this paper will present concepts and theories for a coherent understanding of these issues.

12 p.m. – 1:30: Closing plenary session

1:30 – 2:30: Lunch

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