

Construction and disruption: The power of religion in the public sphere

Tuesday 12th – Thursday 14th July 2016

Lancaster University

Keynote speakers:

Professor Gordon Lynch (Kent University)

Dr Abby Day (Goldsmiths & Kent University)

More speakers to be announced

The last twenty years has seen a crisis of trust in major public institutions, from politics and media, to banking, to health, social care and education. Alongside this crisis has been a renewed visibility of religion in society, with religions often offering critical but contentious voices, as well as being key but contested contributors to political activism and welfare service delivery.

In this context, prominent theorists such as Jürgen Habermas, Slavov Žižek, Charles Taylor and Manuel Vásquez have suggested that religion may hold the key to reenergising the public sphere. Yet religions are just as often seen as disruptive, as engulfed in similar crises of trust, as undermining shared values, or as presenting challenging practices. With societies now becoming more secular, more religious and more plural all at once, claims abound that one group or another is being favoured or presents a threat. This tension is further complicated by contested developments in the understanding of religion: some scholars have broadened the category of religion to include ostensibly secular ideas and practices; others have suggested that religions are acting less like states, with large bureaucracies and loyal citizens, and more like markets that cater to consumers, with belief less likely to be based on dogma than modes of belonging or self-expression; others still suggest that future success for religions will require greater recognition of ethnic minorities, women and LGBT communities.

The purpose of the conference is to examine these and other characteristics of contemporary religion in order to achieve a greater understanding of its constructive and disruptive impact in the public sphere. What are the key categories, discourses, contexts and institutions through which this question can be explored? How do practitioners navigate these characteristics?

The conference welcomes a wide range of topics relating to religion in society and hopes to encourage a space where different faith perspectives can come together.

Possible topics could include (but are not limited to) the following:

- Religion constructing or disrupting the public sphere

- Religion and politics
- Religion and media
- Religion and economics
- Religion and health and social care
- Religion and education

To deliver a paper, please send an abstract of no more than 250 words, alongside a biographical note of no more than 50 words. We will also be accepting a limited number of panel proposals. To deliver a panel, please send an abstract of no more than 500 words alongside a biographical note of no more than 50 words for each contributor.

Please send abstracts to the attention of the conference organizers: Emily Winter (Lancaster University), Dr Roger Haydon Mitchell (Lancaster University), Dr Anderson Jeremiah (Lancaster University) and Tim Stacey (Goldsmiths) at: socrel2016@gmail.com

Abstracts must be submitted by **11 December 2015**. A limited number of bursaries are available to support postgraduate, early career, low income or unwaged SocRel members to present at the conference. Please visit www.socrel.org.uk for instructions, and to download an application form, and submit your bursary application along with your abstract by **11 December 2015**.

For further details, visit the SocRel website: www.socrel.org.uk. For further details about the BSA visit www.britsoc.co.uk.

*****All presenters must be members of Socrel.**

Selected authors will be asked to contribute to an edited volume.

Key Dates:

Abstract submission opens: 12 October 2015

Early bird registration opens: 12 October 2015

Abstract submission closes: 11 December 2015

Decision notification: 27 January 2016

Presenter registration closes: 15 March 2016

Early bird registration closes: 3 June 2016

Registration closes: 24 June 2016

Registration to attend the conference is now open. To register please click [HERE](#). Please note that after Friday, 3 June 2016, a £50 late registration fee will apply to all bookings.

Should you have other questions about the conference please contact the conference organisers at socrel2016@gmail.com.