

# editorial

Welcome to the May 2024 edition of the BASR Bulletin. I am grateful to Theo Wildcroft for giving me the opportunity to write this issue's editorial to discuss the upcoming BASR annual conference at the University of Leeds on September 2-4, 2024.

This year's theme is an increasingly important one in the scholarly study of religion: 'Reckoning with the Past.' This will allow our conference to cover themes such as the decolonisation of the study of religion, anti-racist education and education about the slave trade; in addition to the history of religious studies and colonial impacts. Simultaneously, religious institutions are also reckoning with their own problematic histories, which we're sure to explore in this conference. The study of religion has always thrived as an interdisciplinary endeavour and this conference is no different – if your research touches upon these themes, we encourage you to submit a proposal and get involved with the proceedings. Before departing the conference, be sure to take the opportunity to explore the many wonderful things to see at the city of Leeds – I've been based here for the past two years and can attest to its brilliance.

Once again, we are working with CenSAMM, allowing us to broaden the scope of the conference to issues pertaining to apocalypticism, millenarianism, and environmental concerns. We are also receiving support from the Hibbert Trust and are grateful to both for their enthusiasm and support. Collaborations such as these are essential as we continue in precarious times for Higher Education.

On that note, it is important to note the elephant in the room. As Stephen Gregg mentioned at last year's AGM, we are increasingly keen to receive offers to host our annual conference from BASR members – thus far, the vast majority of BASR conferences have been organised/hosted by committee members and their respective institutions. This is difficult to sus-

tain. Yet conferences are part of the lifeblood of the BASR – it is not only important to the discipline and our research community, but also its nurturing of future generations of scholars. Attending BASR conferences has been instrumental in my own career, and I know that I'm not alone in that regard. Beyond that, hosting the BASR is a great opportunity in itself – so please do speak to a BASR committee member if this interests you!

Teaching and learning can often be sidelined in academia in favour of conversations surrounding research, but these are also utterly essential to the future of our discipline. The study of religion works best when making a public impact, and our students are often our largest public. This year's conference will include a Lightning Talks panel for Masters students/early postgraduate researchers to present brief talks on their on-going or recently completed projects.

The contents of the bulletin speak to the vibrant community we have within the BASR and the work we do – including conference reports, teaching and learning activities, Meet the Members reports, and, sadly, reflections on departed colleagues. The recent announcement of closures at the University of Kent is a sobering reminder of the ongoing challenges we face; yet, as current affairs demonstrate, our disciplines are needed more than ever. I suspect these conversations will be prominent when we gather in September to seek collective ways forward. Please do share the CFP far and wide (along with the #BASR2024 hashtag) so that we can ensure as broad and lively conversations as possible.

I look forward to welcoming you, with my co-organiser Mel Prideaux, to Leeds in September!

Aled Thomas  
University of Leeds

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## 2024 BASR TEACHING AND LEARNING FELLOWSHIP

Each year, the BASR Exec awards a single Teaching and Learning Fellowship to a colleague in recognition of their contribution to the student learning experience in the study of religions. This Fellowship includes an award of £300 plus a funded place at the BASR Annual Conference. The expectation of the person receiving this Fellowship is to write a short piece reflecting on current issues/ experiences of teaching Religious Studies in HE for the BASR Bulletin and help the Teaching and Learning Rep on the BASR Exec, Steffi Sinclair, organise the teaching and learning panel for the 2025 BASR conference. However, there is a lot of flexibility in how this could be approached.

If you would like to be considered for the 2024 BASR Teaching and Learning Fellowship or would like to nominate a colleague (or have any questions about this Fellowship), please get in touch with Steffi at [stefanie.sinclair@open.ac.uk](mailto:stefanie.sinclair@open.ac.uk). Your application will need to be supported by a brief statement that outlines the contribution the applicant/ nominee has made to the student learning experience in the study of religions in HE with reference to any of the following four themes:

- Influencing and inspiring students' learning;
- Influencing and inspiring colleagues' teaching;
- Innovation and development of practice;
- Personal reflection on practice.

This statement can be provided either by the applicant themselves or by a colleague supporting the application. The deadline for nominations/ applications is the 21st June 2024. We welcome applications from/ nominations for colleagues at all stages of their careers.

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## TEACHING AND LEARNING PANEL (BASR CONFERENCE 2024)

### *Teaching and Learning in Religious Studies Higher Education: Reassessing Teaching about Religion and the Natural World*

After last year's hugely successful BASR conference on "Environmental endings and religious futures", and in the context of increasingly urgent warnings about the potential effects of anthropogenic global warming, this seems an important time to evaluate and reassess how teaching and learning in religious studies engages with the natural world.

Leading on from last year's discussions, we are inviting proposals for a panel that aims to stimulate discussion around critical, ethical and pedagogical aspects of teaching about religion and the environment in the current age of climate crisis. We especially invite papers that provide critical and/or experience-based reflections on the teaching of religion(s), nature and the climate crisis with a view to furthering the conversation around these and related issues.

Papers might touch on a wide range of themes, for example: whether the climate emergency opens up new opportunities for teaching to engage with students' own subjective responses to nature; what ethical implications arise when teaching about religious responses to science-based predictions of potential impending catastrophe; how the developing climate crisis impacts on wider teaching about religion(s) and worldviews; and how we can develop a curriculum that tackles religion and climate change from a genuinely interdisciplinary perspective.

Please send your proposal along with your title and institutional affiliation to the panel convenors: Dr Stefanie Sinclair (stefanie.sinclair@open.ac.uk) and Dr Claire Wanless (claire.wanless@ed.ac.uk) by 31st May 2024.

## **PRACTICE IN DEVELOPMENT: SPECIAL ISSUE**

### ***LGBTQ+, diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, and faith in development***

This special issue seeks to address the multiple and overlapping issues that emerge between people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and faith actors in the context of international development. We invite papers that critically engage with the current academic debates and practice/policy approaches, addressing the experiences of people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities and faith actors in international development to find constructive paths forward. We approach 'international development' in the broadest sense of the term and view it as processes aimed at bringing about positive social change, be it in the Global South or North. This includes work that may not be perceived as 'development' by those working on it. We are particularly interested in papers from people who are part of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities communities and/or faith communities as well as people from the Global South, racial, ethnic and religious minorities, and other marginalised groups. The special issue will include both full academic articles and shorter practice notes reflecting on learnings from practical work.

For further information, contact Jennifer Philippa Eggert (jennifer@jliflc.com).

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## **CALLS FOR XXIII IAHR WORLD CONGRESS NOW OPEN!**

The calls for individual papers and closed panels & roundtables for the XXIII IAHR World Congress are now open! The deadline for all submissions is 1st December 2024. However, we kindly ask you to not wait until the last moment to submit: we expect an overwhelming amount of proposals and it will be impossible for us to process them all simultaneously. That's why we've introduced rolling admission: your proposals will be reviewed within three months from submission. The sooner you submit, the sooner you will be notified about our decision and you may be eligible for an early bird fee when registering.

To submit a proposal, please register first. After registration you will be prompted to sign in, upon which you will be able to submit a proposal. Upon signing in, you will be able to choose between individual paper submission and roundtable & closed panel submission. When submitting an individual paper, you may (but don't have to) assign your proposal to one of the fifty-one open panels. For both individual paper and roundtable/closed panel submissions, you will be asked to select one of the six streams in the "Options" tab.

Your proposal will be reviewed within three months from submission. You will be notified about our decision as soon as the reviews are complete.

For all information, see: <https://iahr2025.org/>

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## LAUNCH OF THE RELIGION RESEARCH GROUP AT BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON

BASR members Dr Eleanor T. Higgs and Dr. Owen Coggins, with their colleague Dr. Sam Han announce the launch of the Religion Research Group at Brunel University London. Brunel does not have a Religious Studies department, so the new Religion Research Group exists to connect colleagues at the university working on diverse dimensions of religion in different disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, law, history, education, social work, and media studies. For us, 'religion' includes traditions, beliefs, groups, and practices, in plural sociocultural, political, and legal contexts, and in interaction with arts, media, and political movements. Through transdisciplinary research and scholarship, RRG members are engaged with theoretical innovations and in conversation with grassroots organisation and communities. We generate new knowledge about religion, belief, and practice - and we bring critical perspectives to existing knowledge.

From our different disciplinary locations, Religion Research Group members conduct critical, socially engaged, and participatory research with groups and communities in different parts of the world. We are long-standing and active participants in relevant scholarly associations including the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR), British Sociological Association Sociology of Religion group (BSA SocRel), Centre for the Critical Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements (CenSAMM), International Society for Metal Music Studies, and the International Association for the Study of Religion and Gender (IARG). Research projects of RRG members have been funded by the American Historical Association, the American Institute of Indian Studies, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), the British Academy, the Druze Heritage Foundation, the Issachar Fund, the John Templeton Foundation, and the Leverhulme Trust. Current and planned activities include a working paper seminar series, a guest lecture series, and collaborative research projects.

For further information and other enquiries, contact [eleanor.higgs@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:eleanor.higgs@brunel.ac.uk), [owen.coggins@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:owen.coggins@brunel.ac.uk), or [sam.han@brunel.ac.uk](mailto:sam.han@brunel.ac.uk).



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