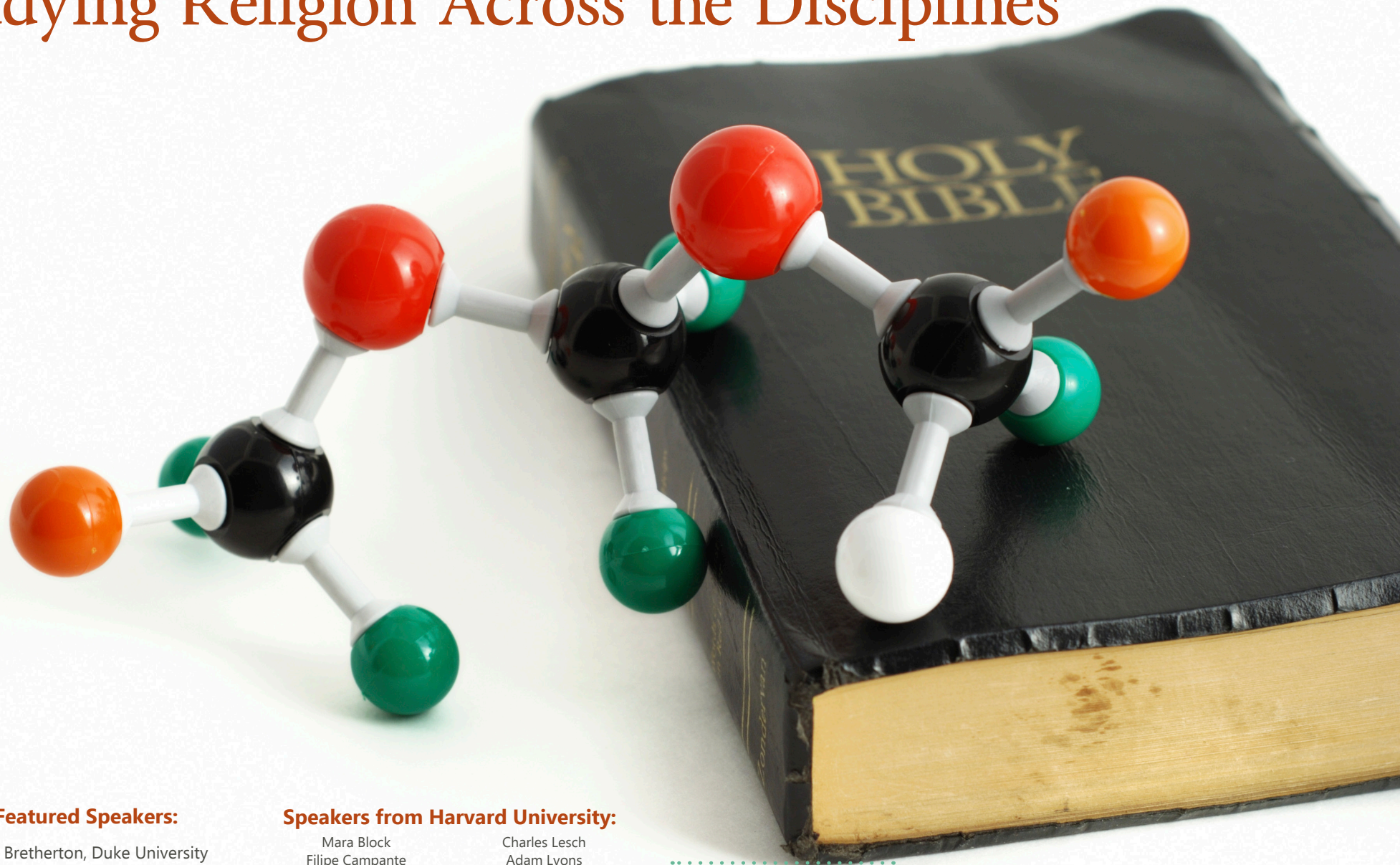


Studying Religion Across the Disciplines



Featured Speakers:

- Luke Bretherton, Duke University
- Edward Modestino, Boston University
- James Nelson, Valparaiso University
- Winnifred Sullivan, Indiana University

Speakers from Harvard University:

- Mara Block
- Filipe Campante
- Charles Carstens
- Eric Chaney
- Cheryl Chen
- Tara Dankel
- Justin Fifield
- Joshua Greene
- David Lamberth
- Charles Lesch
- Adam Lyons
- Diane Moore
- Jennifer Quigley
- Deirdre DeBruyn Rubio
- Suzanne Smith
- George Soroko
- Richard Weissbourd
- Mara Willard

THURSDAY, MARCH 27
 Panel I: Religion, Experience, and the Neurological Sciences

FRIDAY, MARCH 28
 Panel II: Religion, Ethics, and Psychology
 Panel III: Religion, Rights, Ethics
 Panel IV: Religion and Economy

SATURDAY, MARCH 29
 Panel V: Religion, Religious Law, Secular Law

Center for the Study of World Religions 2014 Conference

Studying Religion Across the Disciplines

March 27-29, 2014

This conference attempts to foster a lasting conversation among scholars studying religion across the disciplines of the humanities, social sciences, and cognitive sciences, not only here at Harvard University but in the greater Boston area and nationally as well.

The conference aims to address potentially fertile topics of conversation with cognitive scientists, historians of science, legal scholars, and scholars of economics, business, and government. The focus throughout will be on “translation,” on efforts to find common bases of inquiry, common (or at least mutually comprehensible) vocabularies, and sustainable relationships that will hopefully endure beyond the conference proper.

Thursday, March 27th

Religion, Experience, and the Neurological Sciences

4:30–6:30 pm

Friday, March 28th

Religion, Ethics, and Psychology

9:30–11:30 am

Religion, Rights, Ethics

2–4 pm

Religion and Economy

4:30–6:30 pm

Saturday, March 29th

Religion, Religious Law, Secular Law

9:30–11:30 am

Thursday, March 27th

Religion, Experience, and the Neurological Sciences

4:30–6:30 pm, Common Room, CSWR, 42 Francis Ave.

“Religious Experience and the Philosophy of Perception”

Cheryl Chen, Senior Lecturer on Philosophy, Harvard University

Suppose you are looking at a bowl of fruit, in good light. We ordinarily think that the experience you are having *justifies* your belief, say, that the bananas in the bowl are ripe. Some argue that *religious* experiences might similarly provide rational support for religious belief. We will examine different philosophical accounts of *ordinary* perceptual experience to see if they shed any light on the case of *religious* experience.

“The Neuroscience of Religious Experience”

Edward Modestino, Research Assistant Professor of Neuroscience and Religious Cognition, Boston University School of Theology

Studying the neural correlates of religious experience/cognition may reveal their functions within human experience. Neuropathologies [temporal lobe epilepsy, obsessive compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, frontotemporal dementias, Parkinson’s (PD), etc.] provide models which permit dissociating subtleties of religious cognition/experiences. Our lab uses PD to do this. Using known deficits in religiosity in left-onset vs. right-onset PD patients, we are using resting state fMRI to examine the default mode network correlations with neuropsychological/religiosity measures. Additionally, we plan to use fMRI to examine impulsivity (delayed/temporal discounting) with/without religious primes, congruent/incongruent primes to semantic controls and religious phrases, and categorization of experiential vs. doctrinal religious knowledge.

Respondents: **Mara Block**, PhD candidate, Harvard University; and **David Lamberth**, Professor of Philosophy and Theology, Harvard Divinity School

Friday, March 28th

Religion, Ethics, and Psychology

9:30–11:30 am, Common Room, CSWR, 42 Francis Ave.

“Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason, and the Gap Between Us and Them”

Joshua Greene, John and Ruth Hazel Associate Professor of the Social Sciences, Harvard University

There are two kinds of moral problems: “Me vs. Us” and “Us vs. Them.” There are two kinds of moral thinking: “fast” intuitive thinking that is efficient but inflexible, and “slow” moral reasoning that is flexible but inefficient. Progress depends on matching the right kind of thinking with the right kind of problem. I’ll discuss the ways in which religion, as a moral device, helps solve the “Me vs. Us” problem while (sometimes) exacerbating the “Us vs. Them” problem.

“Epistemological Reflections on the Dialogue between Psychology and Religion” by **James Nelson**, Associate Professor, Valparaiso University

The modern dialogue between psychology and religion began over a century ago with high hopes on both sides, but the reality of conversation has not lived up to the initial expectations. Why has this happened? This paper attempts to shed light on the puzzle by considering the epistemological issues involved in the psychology and religion dialogue, including (1) the kinds of knowledge that can be produced by such a dialogue, and (2) the epistemic virtues of the interlocutors. This analysis can help us enhance the quality of the conversation among religious practitioners, scholars and psychologists.

Respondents: **Justin Fifield**, PhD candidate, Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University; **Richard Weissbourd**, Lecturer on Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education; and **Mara Willard**, Lecturer, Harvard Divinity School

Friday, March 28th

Religion, Rights, Ethics

2-4 pm, Common Room, CSWR, 42 Francis Ave.

“Contract, Covenant and Debt: Expanding Conceptions of Democratic Citizenship”

Luke Bretherton, Associate Professor of Theological Ethics and Senior Fellow, Kenan Institute for Ethics, Duke Divinity School

Through the prism of debates about debt and usury the paper contrasts gift-based or covenantal conceptions of citizenship with those that undergird contractual, rights based conceptions. This contrast serves as the basis for examining the thesis that contractual and rights based conceptions of citizenship are premised on collapsing distinct patterns, habits and forms of relationship into the exchange of equivalents. The constructive argument focuses on the need for social contract and rights based conceptions of citizenship to allow for more expansive conceptions of reciprocity and to include a broader range of forms of sociality. Why this is so necessary becomes apparent when we consider the relationship between democratic citizenship and debt.

“Are Society and Religion Coextensive? Durkheim, Levinas, and the Sacred Dimensions of Modern Social Solidarity”

Charles Lesch, PhD candidate, Department of Government, Harvard University

What is the contribution of religion to social solidarity? Political theorists like John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas often examine religion through the lens of conflict and accommodation. In this paper, by contrast, I will use an original reading of Emmanuel Levinas to argue that religion has cognitive and motivational resources critical for social cohesion. Unlike Emile Durkheim, who emphasizes the ritual absorption of the self into the collective, Levinas draws from Maimonides’ negative theology to stress the dignity and inviolability of the individual. Culling from Judaism’s moral metaphors of sacrifice and hospitality, he offers an innovative new framework for reconciling life in large-scale, diverse societies with the characteristics of genuine moral personality: an awareness of vulnerability, a willingness to sacrifice for others, and a responsiveness to ordinary injustices.

Respondents: **Tara Dankel**, PhD candidate, Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University; and **Diane Moore**, Senior Lecturer on Religious Studies and Education, Harvard Divinity School, and Senior Fellow, Center for the Study of World Religions

Friday, March 28th

Religion and Economy

4:30-6:30 pm, Common Room, CSWR, 42 Francis Ave.

“Does Religion Affect Economic Growth and Happiness? Evidence from Ramadan” **Filipe Campante**, Associate Professor of Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School

We study the economic effects of religious practices in the context of the observance of Ramadan fasting, one of the central tenets of Islam. To establish causality, we exploit variation in the length of the fasting period due to the rotating Islamic calendar. We report two key results: 1) longer Ramadan fasting has a negative effect on output growth in Muslim countries, and 2) it increases subjective well-being among Muslims. The evidence indicates the effect of Ramadan operates at least partly by changing beliefs and values that influence labor supply and occupational choices beyond the month of Ramadan itself.”

“Religion and the Rise and Fall of Islamic Science”

Eric Chaney, Assistant Professor of Economics, Harvard University

This paper documents a sustained decline in the quality of intellectual production in the medieval Islamic world using information on thousands of authors. I show that this decline roughly coincides with an increase in the proportion of books written on religious topics and with authors employed in religious occupations. These findings are consistent with historical evidence that this decline was driven by institutional changes that decreased the relative payoff of producing books on innovative and non-religious topics.”

Respondents: **Charles Carstens**, PhD candidate, Harvard University; and **Jennifer Quigley**, ThD candidate, Harvard University

Saturday, March 29th

Religion, Religious Law, Secular Law

9:30-11:30 am, Common Room, CSWR, 42 Francis Ave.

“Religious Law and the Visual Secular”

Suzanne Smith, Lecturer in History and Literature, Harvard University

When we encounter something that we take to be “secular” in the visual arts, on what basis do we assign secularity to the person, event, or phenomenon being represented? What do we look for when we look for the secular? Here, I attend to the question of how artists have imagined the “visual secular” in the context of representations of religious law. What, if anything, do such representations suggest about the relationship between religious and secular law? I approach these matters with reference to several works of art, with the aim of opening up questions about visual secularity as it pertains to the study of law and religion across the disciplines.

“The Politics of Blasphemy Laws: The Post-Communist European

Experience” **George Soroka**, Lecturer on Government, Harvard University

State-sponsored atheism ruled in this region for decades, but after 1989/91 much of the post-communist world witnessed a resumption of religious life, in some cases quite vigorous. With new found freedoms, however, came new found expressive constraints. Utilizing a series of illustrative vignettes and case studies, this talk explores how blasphemy (or their close cousin, hate-speech) laws came about in Eastern Europe, the institutional tensions (both domestic and transnational) associated with them, and how they are variously implemented today.

“Law’s Religion; Religion’s Law”

Winnifred Sullivan, Professor, department chair, Department of Religious Studies, Indiana University and Affiliate Professor of Law, Maurer School of Law

This paper will consider the challenges of translation between legal studies and religious studies, in scholarship and in the classroom. How does each imagine the other and the other’s object of study? Are they simply ships passing in the night or is there a possibility of serious engagement? What is a defensible legal anthropology of religion today?

Respondents: **Deirdre DeBruyn Rubio** and **Adam Lyons**, PhD candidates, Committee on the Study of Religion, Harvard University

All sessions are free and open to the public. RSVPs for particular sessions are greatly appreciated but not required. For more information or to RSVP, please email:

cswr@hds.harvard.edu



Center for the Study of World Religions