

PhD Studentship: Religion, Belief and Progressive Localism

Fully-funded Ph.D in Progressive Localism: the search for new partnerships and forms of co-production between local authority, faith sector and third sector actors as a response to ongoing austerity, increased despair and inequality and decline in institutional resources and knowledge.

Three years full-time to start January 2018. The Ph.D scholarship is for a total of £25,170 over three years to cover fees (£4,195 p/a) and maintenance (£4,195 p/a).

2 – 3,000 words proposals are invited from prospective candidates to develop new critical thinking and empirical research around the concept of progressive localism in UK settings. The concept, devised by David Featherstone et al., recognises that policies of 'Localism' have been associated with pushing responsibility for policy and funding away from the centre to local authorities and settings, thus connecting localism with austerity and neo-liberalism. Yet localism has the potential - and track record - for driving genuinely empowered, localised resilience and flourishing. Progressive localism is 'outward looking and creates positive affinities between places and social groups negotiating global processes. These affinity groups and networks are expansive in their geographical reach ... and productive of new relations between places and social groups.' (2011)

We are looking for innovative and empirically based research that critically tests out the ideas behind this concept, addressing issues of power and partnership, leadership and change management, the postsecular, co-production, performative apologetics etc. We are interested in how new policy landscapes create or inhibit an 'outwards facing approach' to working alongside increased diversity, as part of ethical and tactical approaches towards increased engagement, leading to new and sustainable forms and expressions of progressive localism.

The proposal should outline how the candidate would construct a research thesis on this area, addressing issues of research questions, methodology, public impact and publications. A bibliography should be submitted as an appendix.

Background

The Faiths and Civil Society Unit at Goldsmiths, University of London and William Temple Foundation have invested in five fully funded Ph.D studentships to explore the role and impact of religion and belief in modern British life. William Temple was Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1940s whose theological and political thought and leadership led to the creation the post-war universal and comprehensive welfare state (a phrase that he coined).

Both institutions are committed to critical, innovative and interdisciplinary research on trajectories in political, social and economic life, and policy. The new visibility of globalised religion within UK life, coupled with a steep rise of those who identify with 'no-religion' is a phenomenon of 21st century life, redefining key debates in public life; healthcare, education, law, community development, social cohesion, poverty and exclusion, human rights, wellbeing and flourishing.

Four William Temple Scholar studentships were awarded in September 2017. Students will co-design one public impact event each year highlighting their research, as well as contributing regular blogs and social media feeds for both FCSU and WT Foundation platforms.

Deadline for applications: 12 noon, 1st December, 2017.

Successful applicants will be called to interview on 12th December, 2017.

Applications to Thomas Greenwood on T.Greenwood@gold.ac.uk. Further queries to Professor Chris Baker on c.baker@gold.ac.uk.