

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR)/ Religious
Research Association (RRA)

Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, Oct. 31 - Nov. 2. 2014

"Revisiting Gender and Religion"

-- CALL FOR ABSTRACTS --

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Session on:

Religious Cultures and Gender Cultures-

What is different about gender across religious cultures?

In social science approaches, religion is predominantly examined as an important source of hegemonic cultural beliefs: religion is conceived as a key factor in shaping gender arrangements and roles, for example, religious doctrines that legitimate unequal treatment of women and the control of their sexuality. In these approaches, religion is understood as an independent variable, while gender is the dependent variable. However, the session we propose introduces religion as a variable that is contingent on culture; consequently, the focus is on the effects of the cultural construction of gender in religious gender arrangements and beliefs—it is also culture that shapes gendered action and thinking in the religious sphere.

Following Eisenstadt's multiple modernities approach and Alexander's strong program in cultural sociology, culture is assumed to be a structured set of symbolic representations and codes of meaning. Religion is a social field (among others) that mirrors this prior symbolic horizon and its institutional crystallization, for example, notions of equality, justice or autonomy versus community, etc. Following *Ann Swidler*, culture is defined as the publicly available symbolic forms through which people express and experience meaning in the religious field and its various forms of social organization and through which modes of behavior and outlook within a community can be shared in different religions. Through this approach it will be possible to narrow down culture's causal significance for gender inequality in multiple religious contexts.

Against this background we invite colleagues to submit abstracts for theoretical and empirically based papers, with individual case studies that focus on the intersection of gender, religion and culture and deal with the question: what is different about gender relations across religious cultures? Papers on the following topics are particularly welcome:

- the relevance of culture in varying religious traditions such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, etc. and against different societal backgrounds (including migrant contexts)
- the way gender cultures and institutions structure beliefs and practices and the way these are negotiated, debated and re-organized in different cultural contexts, not only in Western-European societies

- the relevance of cultural constraints in regards to questions of women's participation and leadership in religion at various societal levels (local, regional, national, transnational)
- the influence of socio-cultural change on gender relations in religion within the context of crisis and conflict or against the background of socio-historical, political and other forms of transformation

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Abstracts and deadline:

Please submit your abstract of no more than 150 words (in **.doc format**) by 25th March 2014 to both session organizers:

elisabeth.arweck@warwick.ac.uk and heidemarie.winkel@uni-potsdam.de.

Pls include the following details:

- = title of proposed paper
- = contributing author/s and contact details (for all authors)
- = institutional affiliation
- = indication of significance of research question & research framework, aim & methodology
- = indication of key concepts

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