

**Call for Papers: Postgraduate Conference
Re-thinking Boundaries in the Study of Religion and Politics**

**11-12 September 2015
Linklater Rooms, University of Aberdeen**

A common approach to the study of religion and politics frames the inquiry using boundaries. Such boundaries include religion/secular, private/public, belief/practice and theism/atheism, to name just a few. It may be argued that these categorisations are analytically useful in understanding social phenomena because, for example, what is 'religious' should be analysed in relation to what is 'secular.' Another approach may instead point to the problem with the construction of such binaries in that empirically these distinctions become blurred, so that framing an action, for example as 'public' or 'private', does not reflect the diversity of human experience. The various approaches to the study of these boundaries meet different critiques. For one, it may be argued that the use of these categories does not always provide adequate contextual, historical or empirical consideration, and may then fall victim to generalisation. On the other hand, it may also be argued that the way these boundaries have been constructed should be critically addressed to shed light on the reasons they are often sustained analytically despite their empirical blurriness. Therefore, the conference aims to provide a space for participants to engage in a constructive dialogue on how to think about these boundaries. The committee is trying to move beyond noting the blurriness between these categories of thought, and instead seek to examine the consequences of these boundaries by creating a space for interdisciplinary dialogue.

Topics may include but are not limited to:

- What kinds of boundaries do scholars of religion work with?
- What are the political/social/cultural/theological consequences and implications of critically approaching these boundaries?
- What does such an examination say about the subject of post-secularity?
- What kinds of frameworks help to bridge together a critical analysis of these boundaries whilst taking into account agency and the life experiences of individuals?
- What is the dynamic relationship between these boundaries when thinking about them as categories of analysis and also of action?
- How is such an examination important in depicting relations between religion and social and cultural outlooks, including politics, law, education and theology in contemporary societies?
- What is the political and how might our understanding of politics develop from examining these categories?
- In relation to the conference theme, what does faith-based mean?

The conference organisers welcome postgraduate researchers interested in exploring how closer attention to the ways in which such boundaries are constructed can be meaningfully questioned to engage with working research questions. Methodological approaches may include both empirical studies (both qualitative and quantitative) and theoretical analysis. The conference invites those studying in a variety of disciplinary fields within the Humanities and Social Sciences with the intention of creating interdisciplinary engagement. Additionally, the conference welcomes applications from those studying contemporary contexts within any geographical area.

We welcome presentations on any of the following:

- Research papers for submission to academic journals
- Research findings or excerpts from a PhD thesis
- Methodological or research design ideas for a PhD thesis
- Masters papers in the final stages with a view to continuing into a PhD programme

Delegates will benefit from hearing lectures given by scholars in the field. They will also gain further presentation experience, receive feedback on their work and establish networks with other early career researchers with overlapping research interests. Scholars from the University of Aberdeen will provide feedback on presentations.

Confirmed keynote speakers:

- Timothy Fitzgerald (University of Stirling)
- TBD

Additionally, part of the conference will be organised as a workshop to give participants the opportunity to take part in theme-specific talks. These workshops will be facilitated by University of Aberdeen academics. Details will follow once all proposals are received.

Tentative themes will be:

- 1) approaching the category of Islam from empirical to analytical,
- 2) gender and non-belief,
- 3) conceptualising religion and the political.

Please submit your proposal of a maximum 250 words and a short CV to Sarah Hynek at r01seh11@abdn.ac.uk by the deadline of 19 June 2015.

Proposals that arrive after this deadline without a particular reason will not be accepted. The conference is free of charge (lunch and refreshments will be provided). Hotel accommodation on the evening of 11 September will be reserved and the costs covered. Attendees are expected to arrange and pay for their own travel expenses.

Presenters will be allotted 15 minutes for their presentation and 15 minutes for discussion. Those in the early stages of research presenting their methodology or research design will be allotted 10 minutes to present and 10 minutes for discussion.

Please do not hesitate to contact the email address indicated above should you have any inquiries. We look forward to receiving a proposal from you.

Conference Committee
Sarah Hynek
Yutaka Osakabe