

Call for Papers | 5-6 July 2018, King's College London

Worldviews in World View: Particularizing Secularism, Secularity and Nonreligion

Convener: Dr Stacey Gutkowski, King's College London

Conference Assistants: Yosr Ben Slima and Sam Jeffery

Keynote Speakers:

Dr Samuli Schielke, Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient and Freie Universitaet Berlin

Dr Erica Baffelli, Japanese Studies, University of Manchester

Dr Reza Gholami, School of Education, University of Birmingham

Special Plenary:

Keeping Worldviews in Mind: The Psychology and Cognitive Anthropology of Nonreligion

Dr Miguel Farias, Coventry University

Dr Jonathan Lanman, Queen's University Belfast

Dr Benjamin Grant Purzycki, Max Planck Institute for Human Cognition and Brain Sciences

Dr Valerie Van Mulukom, Coventry University

Plus a special evening arts event in the heart of London.

In his *Formations of the Secular*, Talal Asad called on researchers to attend to the nuanced, case-specific, historical processes whereby conceptual binaries are established and mobilized towards the formation of the 'secular' as a modern epistemic category and 'secularism' as a modern political doctrine – what Saba Mahmood has since termed a 'critical secular studies'. Similarly, proponents of the Critical Religious Studies approach aim to identify the historical circumstances in the West which brought about 'religion' as a modern category of thought, in order to problematize the term. Additionally, scholars working on 'nonreligion', 'unbelief', and 'religion's Others' argue for supplementing these approaches by unpacking the ways in which people draw positively on resources within and beyond traditional religion to fashion worldviews and meaning-making practices.

This conference endeavours to bring these three strands of scholarly work into deeper dialogue with one another, for the purpose of theoretical refinement and advancement across the strands. It aims to provincialize some of the theoretical assumptions made in the literature on nonreligion, which has drawn heavily, though by no means exclusively, from European and North American case studies. It also provides an opportunity to re-read theoretical assumptions made within Critical Secular and Critical Religious Studies, in order to further advance thinking within these areas about phenomena such as atheism, agnosticism, humanism, rationalism and spirituality.

The conference provides an opportunity:

- to showcase rich, empirical fieldwork from case studies from the Middle East, Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Caribbean and other regions.
- for scholars of cases from Europe or the Americas to analyse the provincial nature of these case studies, to reflect upon and problematize some of the most significant theoretical concepts used thus far to define the field of study (including, but not limited to, 'nonreligion', 'irreligion', and 'unbelief').
- to think through diversity within these contexts, including the practices and beliefs of non-Christian minority cultures in Europe and the Americas.
- to reflect upon 'the West' as a cultural formation and political modality whose geography is not confined to Europe or the Americas.
- for scholars using a range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to reflect on the implications of these constructed categories for their work.

Reflecting the multidisciplinary nature of its membership, the NSRN welcomes proposals for papers and panels from a diverse range of scholars from Anthropology, Sociology, Geography, History, Religious Studies, Politics, International Studies, Cognitive Science, Psychology, Philosophy, Cultural Studies and the Arts.

Publication Outcome: We are planning to publish a selection of the papers presented at the conference in a journal special issue.

The deadline for abstract submission (250 words max) is 27 **October 2017**. Please send your abstract together with a short biographical note to nsrnconference@gmail.com.

If you are an early career researcher and would like to be considered for a travel grant, please also send a CV and a summary of your research (500 words max).

The event is co-sponsored by the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network, the Understanding Unbelief Programme, University of Kent, the Department of Theology and Religious Studies, King's College London, the Department of War Studies, King's College London and DeGruyter Press.