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et des religions



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## Video series proposal on COVID-19, religions and spiritualities

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The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting all facets of human existence on a global scale. Religions and spiritualities have not been spared; they have been directly affected and at the same time they have enabled for giving meaning and mobilizing communities and individuals throughout the world. Researchers have long taken globalized religions as an object of study, a complex one due to the very conditions of their ubiquity and diffusion. However, the pandemic has severely hindered this characteristic because in the current context, the measures taken by governments around the world to combat the coronavirus are converging towards lockdown, generalized confinement, social distancing, and bans on gatherings, including religious gatherings.

Thus, it seems that the pandemic may allow for a very particular way of scientific investigation, given that group meetings are prohibited in most countries so that virtual means have taken over, whether to inform members and to maintain community ties, or for rituals and practices, and donations from their respective members. Charitable and social work (food distribution, supporting communities in the prevention of contamination, etc.) is subject to authorization and control (although it remains to be seen how this is done in detail). Spiritual nourishment is lacking not just on the communal dimension, but also on that which passes through ritual.

For a researcher, being able to follow up all the practices and commentaries on digital media (Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp) is fascinating and forces us to think about an appropriate methodology to this field, which is certainly not new, but here it has become essential. This redeployment of religions and spiritualities on social networks also gives room to small but very active groups, greater visibility and a renewed field of action, albeit deprived of the full emotional dimension that seemed to prevail in the expansion of contemporary religious expressions.

It also puts religions in a new relationship with power, because religious freedom, as well as freedom of conscience, are strongly affected by political and public health authorities when intervening in the domain of worship, including in countries where religious authority seems to have more power. Are religions being put on a crossroads by political powers into being obliged to renounce to all ritual? In this context, will the tendency of religions for being a force in political opposition be further confirmed, or have religions become inaudible for contesting political power in civil society?

The present video series proposal focused on globalized religions and spiritualities aims to explore these questions, as well as the articulation of a globalized discourse and the shape it takes in local practices/contexts.

While there is a tendency for religious discourse to have commonalities, the coronavirus context is paradoxical in that it brings all lived experience back to the local dimension, not even to the national, but to a more familial one. Will this context become an opportunity for the revitalization of religious and ritual practices in households? Is there a process of religious individualization, even in countries where collective practice prevails? Are we witnessing a conservative turn or consolidation of religious discourses, where in some cases accusations are made to the lax religious practice of individuals as the cause of the pandemic, which is interpreted as “God’s wrath”? Answers to this last question will allow for problematizing the different types of reactions and interpretations of the pandemic – not only as an expression of divine punishment but also as something accidental. On the other hand, the individual dimension could consist of deciding to circulate certain types of information, for which each individual has their own motivations and reasons that often overlap with their sense of responsibility or personal practice.

The challenge here is to identify how the COVID-19 pandemic is bringing about new tendencies in religious life and whether observations and explorations of content via the Internet allow us to spot them. The video participations will, therefore, have to be structured by common points, in order to identify elements for comparison and further research. Video participations could deal with "classical" or institutional religions as well as with new religions and spiritualities, including the New Age or Scientology. The goal is to see whether COVID-19 acts, as Jean-Francois Mayer puts it, an "extraordinary simultaneous transreligious revealer".

The different videos in this series will examine in a short format (10 minutes) the reactions of religious and spiritual communities and individuals to the pandemic in different aspects. Here we propose the following topics and guiding questions:

### **1. Political and religious dimension of the pandemic**

-How do religions reorganize themselves in a context where they are restricted by political or secular institutions?

-How have religions reacted, especially since some of their gatherings have been accused of being sources of the viral outbreak?

-What is their reaction to the measures decided upon by authorities - open collaboration, levels of disobedience, protest (verbal or political)?

-To what extent do religions offer a material remedy that can compete with other actors (State, NGOs, grassroots organizations, etc.)?

-How religious discourse has been used by politicians in the pandemic, to further legitimize their power or justify their shortcomings (e.g. Trump in the United States, Bolsonaro in Brazil, Lopez Obrador in Mexico, Putin in Russia, etc.).

-What is the impact of COVID-19 on the relationship between different religions? How the pandemic contexts strengthen their connections or, on the contrary, how it puts an end to dialogue or cooperation that existed in practice? Has there been a case of "centrifugation" within religions, that is, leading believers to refocus on their own community/faith exclusively?

-What has been the measures taken by States in relation to religions – e.g. accusation of acceleration of the pandemic, reduction of religion to a leisure activity or, on the contrary, a recourse and a return to transcendence (Brazil, United States, Italy, etc.)?

### **2. Beliefs and religious affiliations in the times of COVID-19**

-How has people's religiosity in the public space and in collective ceremonies have shifted towards a private, almost intimate celebration at home?

-What is the organization of worship during and after confinement? Additionally, what are the interreligious dynamics that take place in this context?

-Distinctions between the actions of churches or religious associations, and practices related to popular religion and magic (holy water, amulets, candles, etc.)

-The questioning of practices and faith itself (in relation to the community, to the rituals, or to the physical gathering in particular). Do these questions and their answers provoke disagreements or ruptures within the groups themselves?

### **3. Different, distant and divergent interpretations of the pandemic around the world**

- Islam (traditionalist, reformist, liberal, sufism)
- Judaism (orthodox, liberal)
- Christianism (evangelicals, protestants, catholics, orthodoxs, copts, etc.)
- New Age (alternative therapies, angels, energies, faith healing, etc.)
- Indigenous religions
- Magic and shamanism
- Popular religion and worships (cult of saints, etc.)
- Nonbelief (atheism, agnosticism, etc.)
- Other religious expressions

### **4. End of times narratives and conspiracy theories**

- Return to a circular time, prophecies, divine revelations, eschatological beliefs (2020 and signs of the end of the world)
- Conspiracy theories, secret societies and their alleged role in spreading the virus. I.e. the sacralization of the secular world

### **Websites where the videos will be published**

OpenDOAR – Directory of Open Access Repositories

- Website: <https://v2.sherpa.ac.uk/opensoar/>

Latin American Repository Network

- Website: <https://repositorioslatinoamericanos.uchile.cl/>

Pharos Observatory for Religious and Cultural Pluralism

- Website: [www.observatoirepharos.com](http://www.observatoirepharos.com)
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ObsPharos>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ObservatoirePharos/>
- YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIRRGdT11H3zcgLGCWREW4w>

French Institute of Andean Studies (IFEA)

- Website: <http://ifea.org.pe/>
- Blog Hypothèses: <https://ifea.hypotheses.org/a-propos>
- YouTube channel: [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCs8wtPimB\\_xnl20EbM9ROBg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCs8wtPimB_xnl20EbM9ROBg)
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ifeanet/>
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/IFEAPeru>

The Laboratory for Analysis of Societies and Powers / Africa – Diasporas (LASPAD)

- Website: <https://www.laspad.org/>

International Association of La Salle Universities (IALU)

- Website: <http://ialu.org/>

La Salle University, Mexico

- Website: <https://lasalle.mx/>
- Website of the La Salle Universities Network <http://www.redlasalle.mx/>
- YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/LaSalleMX>

**Time frame for submissions:**

8th june / 14th september

**Languages:**

English, French, Spanish

**Send videos and inquiries to:**

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**Recommendations for recording:**

-How to dress?

A formal dress is recommended.

Use clothes with neutral colors and smooth textures, avoiding stripes or checks.

Use a shirt or blouse of a color that contrasts with the background.

-Where should I record?

Use a closed, silent and well-lit space. The space should not be empty to avoid echoes.

Avoid contrast with the light, that is, place yourself on the opposite side from where the most light enters.

Use a background (wall) preferably in light tones and without distractions.

Ask the other people present in the same space to be as quiet as possible.

Keep pets out of the room.

-What should I do when recording?

Place the device at your face level, so that the shooting is frontally and horizontally positioned.

Maintain an upright but comfortable position.

Check the frame. There should not be too much space above or to the side of the person speaking.

Speak slowly, loudly and clearly.

Try to give the messages the right intention.

Place a tripod or ask the person who will record to lean on a fixed object to stabilize the device.

Keep a backup copy of the recording.