

Call for Abstracts

McGill-CREOR Graduate Student Conference

Conference topic: Problematizing Religious Diversity in a Secular Age

Dates: September 14-16, 2017

Location: McGill University, Montreal

Submission Deadline: July 15, 2017

Contact: creor2017@gmail.com

Website: <https://creor2017.wordpress.com/>

Description of the conference:

The McGill Centre for Research on Religion (CREOR) invites graduate students and emerging scholars to participate in a special edition graduate conference rethinking the problem of religious diversity in a secular age. In the 10 years since the publication of Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* and the beginning of the Bouchard-Taylor Commission on reasonable accommodation, religious diversity has become an increasingly divisive topic in Quebec and much of Canada. There are fears that what began as a peaceful exercise in public democratic governance may degenerate into violence as demonstrated by the mosque shooting in Quebec City in January, 2017. Such fears are not unique to Quebec; indeed, religious diversity is increasingly problematized in political and public discourses around the world, with secularism/ *laïcité* posited as "the solution" to the challenge of fostering social cohesion in multicultural environments. This categorization of secularism as "solution" ultimately places religion in the category of "the problem". However, there are other ways of thinking about diversity - such as that offered by Charles Taylor - as itself a "solution" to multicultural society's problems. This conference seeks to rethink how the categories such as "solution" and "problem" are constructed, designated, and utilized by scholars, politicians and religious communities, as well as how they have shifted overtime.

Participants are encouraged to submit papers that reflect on the following questions and themes: How does the problematization of religious diversity affect particular religious communities? How are secular discourses shaped by their context, cultures, histories, and/or language? How have religious communities responded to and adapted to the political management of religion, from ancient times to the present? How is religious diversity approached in non-secular contexts? Is secularization Westernization? How can academics contribute to the political/public discourses on secularism? Who is left out of these discourses and why? What is the role of the media in this debate and how is it involved in the construction of categories of "good" and "bad" religion? How does the representation of "secularism" as "the solution" affect visible/non-visible religious persons/communities? How are society's values represented, constructed and shaped by the debates over religion and secularism?

-Is the focus on secularism/*laïcité* making us blind to other (better?) possibilities?

Themes and Topics:

- Secular/Religious Fundamentalism
- Gender/Racial intersections with Secularism
- Atheism/non-belief
- Religious freedom/human rights
- Globalization
- Law and public policy
- Political theology
- Politics of Recognition vs Politics of Refusal
- Multiculturalism / Interculturalism
- Religion and Economics
- Violence and extremism
- Western vs Eastern approaches to the Secular

Guidelines for proposals:

Please submit a 250 word abstract explaining the topic and main arguments of the paper by July 15th, 2017. All disciplines and fields welcome. Papers must engage in and contribute to the scholarly discourse; works of advocacy or mere summary will not be considered. Presentations should not exceed 20 minutes and may be in either English or French. Proposals should include all contact information including institutional affiliation and any technical request such as audio-visual equipment. These proposals as well as any questions or requests for further information should be sent to the following address: creor2017@gmail.com.

Keynote Speakers

CHARLES TAYLOR, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at McGill University, is a Canadian philosopher and public intellectual from Montreal, Quebec. He is best known for his contributions to moral philosophy, the philosophy of the social sciences, political theory, philosophy of language, and intellectual history. In 2003, Prof. Taylor received Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Gold Medal for Achievement in Research. For his 2007 book, *A Secular Age*, Taylor was awarded the prestigious Templeton Prize. Most recently, Charles Taylor became the first-ever recipient of the Berggruen Prize in recognition of his many contributions to human self-understanding. Some of his most prominent works are *Sources of the Self* (1989); *A Secular Age* (2007); and *The Language Animal* (2016).

ROWAN WILLIAMS is currently Chancellor of the University of South Wales and Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. From 2003-2012, Williams served as the 104th Archbishop of Canterbury of the Church of England. An academic, theologian, and playwright, Williams has lectured at Cambridge University and Oxford University. He has written extensively on a wide range of subjects, including philosophy, theology, religious aesthetics, contemporary culture, and religious pluralism. Some of his most prominent works are *The Worlds We Live In: dialogues with Rowan Williams on global economics and politics* (2005); *Wrestling with Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology* (2007); and *Faith in the Public Square* (2012).

For further information regarding keynote speakers, conference schedule and special panels, please visit our website: <https://creor2017.wordpress.com/>

Publishing Possibility:

Following the conference, a select number of high quality papers will be considered for publication in a special volume.