



# SocrelNews

2018  
Issue 8

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## Chair's Welcome

Friends... it is such an honour to have been invited to act as Chair of the BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group. Thank you for having confidence in me to take the group forward over the next three years. In taking up this role, I would like to extend my appreciation to the existing Socrel committee, who have all been very welcoming and helpful. I also owe my predecessor, Prof Adam Dinham, a special 'thank you' for making my transition into the role so straightforward. In some respects, I feel that I have 'come home' to the Study Group... it is exactly 20 years ago that I started my term of office as Convenor! I had the very good fortune to work with Dr Kieran Flanagan as Chair, back then. He was a model of enthusiasm, commitment and dedication to the Study Group, and so I have an excellent role-model to follow.

We have a number of exciting events to look forward to over the coming 12 months, beginning with the Response Day in November, and then the main annual conference, to be held in Cardiff in July 2019. I am going to do my best to make sure that members have a wonderfully memorable and stimulating time in Cardiff, so please get the dates of the conference into your diary now! Details will follow, but the conference theme is 'Communicating Religion'.

I hope that members will always feel free to contact me with suggestions, questions or comments about the Study Group. I will always be pleased to hear your ideas for ways in which we can ensure the flourishing of the Study Group, both now and in the future

Sophie Gilliat-Ray (Chair)  
[gilliat-rays@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:gilliat-rays@cardiff.ac.uk)

**2018 Annual Conference**

**'Religion and Education'**



## Keynote Lectures

We enjoyed keynote lectures from five leading scholars in the field. Recordings of these lectures will be available to Socrel members through our website. Login through the Members Only section to access them. And, in the spirit of Green Open Access, they will be publicly available 12 months from now.



Yvette Taylor  
Professor of Education  
University of Strathclyde

**Queer religious youth in faith and community schools**



Liam Gearon  
Associate Professor of Religious Education  
University of Oxford  
Senior Research Fellow  
Harris Manchester College

**The educational sociology and political theology of disenchantment: From the secularisation to the securitisation of the sacred**





Anna Strhan  
Lecturer in Sociology  
University of York

**The agency of children and the sociology of religion**



Mathew Guest  
Reader in the Sociology of Religion  
Durham University

**Religion in the contemporary university: Recovering the institution within the sociology of religion**



Mary Lou Rasmussen  
Professor of Sociology  
Australian National University

**What's the relationship between  
sexual freedom, religious freedom,  
and education? The perspectives of  
Australia's Gen Zs**

*(Photo source:  
<https://researchers.anu.edu.au/researchers/rasmussen-ml>)*

# Socrel Upcoming Events

## BSA SocRel Chair's Response Day

Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2018, 10am – 4pm Imperial Wharf, London

### Doing Diversity: 'Decolonising' the Social Scientific Study of Religion

**Keynote speakers:** Professor Abby Day (Goldsmiths) & Dr Lois Lee (University of Kent), editors (with Professor Jim Spickard) - *Doing Diversity in Writing, Teaching and Research*, forthcoming 2020.

The social scientific study of religion and the programmes of study associated with it, have emerged in relation to a particular set of narratives, contexts, and assumptions. There is a danger that the 'elite few' have had a disproportionate influence on the shape of the discipline that can directly or indirectly 'exclude' the voices of minorities.

The work of everyone in the field of sociology of religion (and sociology more widely) is shaped by these dynamics and their significance is not only ethical and economic, but epistemic too, since they channel and ultimately distort knowledge in our field. In summary, biases towards elite actors impacts the comprehensiveness and therefore the quality of research and teaching, again, both within and outside academia.

To date, responses to issues of elitism in the academy have been to offer popular and scholarly critique, as well as initiatives aiming to revise curricula to better reflect non-elite perspectives. These interventions have been productive, but often ad hoc and potentially unsystematic in so far as various markers of difference are considered in isolation from one another, for example. In the study of religion, this can include a dismissive attitude towards the academic rigour of confessional religious curricula, rather than appreciating this as one among many 'ways of knowing'.

This one-day event intends to examine our discipline critically and constructively. We would like to consider ways in which our teaching and research can reflect the interests and voices of individuals and constituencies that have been, or are in danger of, being marginalised. As well as connecting to broader conversations about elitism and the production of academic knowledge, the growing incorporation of sociologists of religion from a range of minority faith communities is a topic of particular interest. How are they responding to the dominant theories and vocabulary of the discipline, and perhaps transforming it to reflect the multi-faith nature of our society?

We welcome papers that address these issues, and enable scholarly reflection on the future shape of our field. Please submit your abstract for consideration to Rachael Shillitoe. [rachael.shillitoe@york.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.shillitoe@york.ac.uk)

### Key Dates

- Registration open: Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September
- CfP deadline: Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October
- Notification of abstract: Friday 19<sup>th</sup> October
- Registration deadline Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November

## Socrel Member Interviews



*Douglas Davies*  
*Professor in the Study of Religion*  
*Durham University*

**Death has been a consuming topic for so much of your professional work. It feels like a personal subject, but what strikes you most about the social aspects of death?**

I guess my death research covers about a third of my work. Those familiar with it seldom know of my Mormon, Church of England, Anthropology-Theology interface studies, or my earlier work on Sikhs. Though understandable for professional funeral directors and those with whom I have worked outside the academy, I do find it interesting when some academics don't know, perhaps indicating the frequently boxed-off nature of our interests.

Though intensely personal, touching everyone in some way, I came to death topics through a decision to work on 'secular ritual' in the later 1980s prompted by Chris Binns, then a Nottingham colleague, and his significant studies of Soviet Ceremonial. I chose cremation because of the mixed religious/secular status of UK crematoria, much encouraged when finding, surprisingly, that no-one was researching it. This soon proved of interest to funeral professionals and, responding to their local and national needs, led to major survey and qualitative studies of burial, the re-use of graves, woodland burial, cremation, and to the theology of death. Perhaps I was first to link classic anthropological ideas of double-burial to modern cremation, ashes, and liturgy. All this impacted on some church interests, on a Select Committee of The House of Commons and, for example, a commissioned survey in mid-Wales that played a part in the establishing of Aberystwyth crematorium: local folk no longer needed to take their dead to England for relatively local cremation. It was then interesting to share with a small group of UK social scientists in fostering 'death studies', including The Association for the Study of Death and Society, with Jenny Hockey as its first President.

As for 'social aspects' of death, funerals have come to be their own kind of 'carrier institution' - as a group of us showed in a recent research volume on *Cremation in Modern Scotland* - carrying social class, gender, and the muddled 'religion, spirituality, non-religion' complex; with modern cremation offering its own index of secularization and negotiated ritual practice. A certain professional feminization of death and funeral practice has also become important in recent decades, while the



unregulated nature of funeral management has also witnessed the rise of hundreds of funeral ritual specialists. Often prompted by bad personal experiences of funerals some have discovered new opportunities for personal identity-recognition and social fulfilment as funeral celebrants. With established clergy being less involved in funerals, funeral directors have, if anything, become more 'professional' in ceremonial performance and gatekeeping of ritual leadership. Issues of emotion, identity, and family politics have also burgeoned in an increased personal-choice of treating bodies, their ritual exit, and ongoing memorialisation.

**Your book, *Death, Ritual and Belief*, is in its third edition, now. What is in the updated material, and why did you feel that now was the time to add these subjects?**

Since the 1997 first edition there has been an exponential rise in death studies as an area that has demanded and created real interdisciplinary work, and that needed expression in edition three. Grief theories are notable here, for while much of the twentieth century rooted itself in psychological ideas of attachment and loss, the later 1990s developed ideas of 'continuing bonds' with the departed alongside the importance of narrative engagements with stories of our dead. Noting this I wanted to add a new dimension to the debate, suggesting that we think twice about taking the notion of 'the individual' as the starting point for grief theories by considering the anthropological notion of 'dividual' or composite personhood as the starting point. This needs more work for it carries various potential applications for how we conceptualize 'memory' and 'personal' identity and, for example, human-animal interaction. So, though my 1997 edition had a chapter on 'Pet death' involving some original 1990 research the significant and later 'animal-turn' in Anthropology and elsewhere merited an updated chapter. This prompts me to ask whether that 'individualist' emphasis concerning personhood has not also been too influential in the sociology of religion where 'self-religion' and the like, along with numerous assumptions of postmodernism, may not be conceptually suspect? Death offers a window into human nature, social identity, the community of the living and the dead that invites analyses of worldviews that may be more similar than different across time and space. In this death studies offers its own bio-cultural challenge to more extreme social-learning, social-constructionist, theories.

**Last year saw the publication of a collection of essays in your honour, entitled *Death, Life and Laughter*. That third one might surprise people, given your specialism. What makes laughter such a part of your life and your work?**

My old friend and colleague, the late Hebraist Ed Ball, who died far too young, often interjected "you've gotta laugh" into musings on some university or political plan or when a colleague was absurd. I think the phrase was his gloss on my raucousness; certainly, we laughed a lot in what was a small but wonderful Department of Theology at Nottingham University in the 1970-90s. Though, funnily enough, I have often been party to more laughter at gatherings of funeral professionals than of academics! Though I do recall one Socrel conference at Durham, it was when I was President I think, when laughter practically shook one evening event silly; perhaps scholarly life was a little more laid-back just then! But, realistically speaking, you do have to laugh at our primate pomposity, academic tendency towards mini-omniscience, and at how institutions sideline the very idea of luck and happenstance. As for that *Death, Life, and Laughter* book, itself the outcome of a day secretly planned in London by Durham's Mathew Guest and Martha Middlemiss Le Mon,

now of Stockholm and Uppsala, when numerous colleagues and friends gathered to 'comment on' the varied aspects of my work. It was a little bit like being at one's own funeral.



*Lois Lee  
Research Fellow  
University of Kent  
Keynote speaker for Socrel Chair's Response  
Day 2018 "Doing Diversity: 'Decolonising' the  
Social Scientific Study of Religion"*

**Unbelief, nonreligion, atheism - these are all words that seem to float about our discipline without being brought to ground. What does your project Understanding Unbelief intend in terms of grounding these concepts?**

Ah, questions of terminology – very close to my heart. The big issue here is, I think, that we're using these kinds of words to make space for the study of not one thing but several significant things – the (very large) populations who identify themselves 'atheist', 'humanist' or most commonly just as 'not religious'; their relationship with the religious beliefs, religious traditions and cultures and religious people that they encounter in their lives; and their own 'religious-like' existential beliefs, traditions, cultures and practices – to give just a few examples. Making space for all this stuff is hugely significant for our discipline. Not only are we going through a process of recognising a broad set of phenomena that are relevant to the work our discipline has always done – and which our discipline has lots of tools to bring to bear upon – but that process is making us rethink the nature and boundaries of our discipline itself. I think in that it echoes some of the major shifts we saw around recognising and learning much more about alternative spirituality as something 'religious-like', and about individualised forms of religiosity before that.

At the same time though, the words we are using derive from conventional, colloquial, often Christian ways of thinking about the nonreligious – 'unbelief' certainly does, but so too does 'atheism' and 'secularity'. In my view, that's the way it has to be: making space for the study of 'atheism' provides a pathway into empirical work and it's only then we find that 'atheism' isn't really helping us understand this or that about the people and phenomena at hand, if anything at all. That's what really excites me – the prospects for finding new ways of thinking and talking that come out of empirically grounded research.

And that's really what we're trying to do with the Understanding Unbelief programme. The focus is on empirical studies, and it's a really ambitious research programme in that regard – we have 21 research teams and around 50 core researchers (at the last count) working around the world to build a much richer picture of what it means to be 'without religious belief' – and what beliefs, values, practices (etc. etc. etc.!) are a part of their lives. We also move away from binary thinking about religion and nonreligion, theism and atheism, because in the 'real world' these phenomena are of course inter-connected in really interesting and complicated ways.

You really asked me about language though. The shorter answer would be to say that we take the view that the language should follow the research to the extent that it can, not the other way around. That was one reason we turned to the concept of 'unbelief', which is much more clearly a 'folk category' than 'atheism' and 'secularism', both of which have a degree of scholarly credibility as concepts that they don't always warrant. Trying to 'understand unbelief' is about turning a population and a set of beliefs that are roughly outlined, and acknowledging that giving them our proper interest is bound to radically redraw those outlines.

**One of the basic questions around the topic - and it's a political question, but a methodological one as well - is why nonreligion belongs within the remit of the study of religion. What's your answer to that question?**

I think there are really quite a few reasons why this is the case. What brought me to this subject area getting on for, goodness, 15 years ago was a basic methodological issue. I was reading all the theory about religion and modernity – debates about secularisation, 'believing without belonging' and so on – and I kept coming across claims that required empirical work with nonreligious people. For example, Steve Bruce claimed that the nonreligious were or should be indifferent to religion, whilst rational choice theorists were saying that there was a universal demand for religious 'goods', but they were suppressed or latent. It seemed obvious to me – perhaps as a nonreligious person myself – that you would need to talk with people who said they had no religion to investigate which of these kinds of claims were true. I tried to find the studies doing that, and discovered that they didn't exist. That was – and still is – a major reason why the study of people and things that are identified as nonreligious need to be studied in relation to religion.

But initial observations like that have just opened the floodgates when it comes to new opportunities for research. For example (and reflecting my own interests), once you do start to talk to nonreligious people you start to learn about the existential and ethical beliefs and cultures that play a role in their lives and which aren't be studied elsewhere – and which have a very close relation to how we think about religion. You also get deeper into the complex relationships between religious and nonreligious cultures, and between religious and nonreligious people.

It's interesting and exciting, I think, to see how this work is making us rethink what the remits of the study of religion are. In my own department, we've just launched a new BA degree in Global Philosophies which runs alongside our existing degree in Religious Studies, and which expands how we understand and present our expertise as a Religious Studies department in really interesting ways. And all this connects to discussion going on more broadly – the Commission for Religious Education's recent recommendation to rename 'Religion and Worldviews' is making a move of this sort. It's an interesting time, I think.

**You're also part of a project on diversifying the sources that inform both our teaching and our research on the sociology of religion. What's the problem you've identified, and what is your goal with the project?**

Yes, this is the 'Doing Diversity' book project that I'm working on Abby Day and Jim Spickard. We're responding to a problem that lots of others have identified – issues of elitism that still plague so many of our institutions. In academia, this raises profound issues around the quality of knowledge produced when a narrow set of perspectives dominate processes of knowledge production. The problem we've identified with this project is that we've tended to be much better at describing the problem than finding practical solutions for it. At the same time, we are aware of a considerable number of initiatives that are emerging, sometimes led by institutions, often by individuals. We wanted to help scholars share and develop the practical work they are doing, as well as encourage more initiatives of this kind and their more systematic uptake across the academy. At the same time, we recognise that sharing good practice offers opportunities for us to reflect critically on what we're doing, too. The book will provide an important forum for all that work.

The book project works across the social sciences and humanities, but we'll also be honing in on how these themes play out across sociology of religion in particular at the next Socrel Chair's Response day this November. Sociology of religion experiences the same issues, but also some that are unique to it as – such as the role and status of knowledge produced by scholars who are also religious practitioners of some kind, and, indeed, of religious actors who aren't scholars. Applications to speak and registration to participate are open at the moment, so there's still time for those interested to get involved. It would be great to see lots of colleagues from Socrel there.



*Lucinda Murphy  
PhD Candidate in Religious Studies  
Durham University*

**What is your PhD about?**

It is often with looks of wry bemusement that my PhD topic is greeted. Yes, I am the girl who gets to do Christmas every day! It seems that, for many, this 'wish come true' seems just a little too fun, a little too close to home, too personal, to be worthy

of anything resembling serious academic study. And yet, it is precisely the surprised smile of delight that appears on people's faces during these conversations, precisely the alarmed concern for preserving the sanctity of my own Christmas experiences, precisely this quality of intimacy which I believe reveals something of real interest for the study of contemporary religion. Christmas in Britain, as indeed elsewhere, appears to evoke a deep-seated sentimentality in people; a sentimentality for a utopian magical fantasy world which, more often than not, holds a mirror up to the very root of their hopes, their fears, their values, their desires, their disappointments, their ideals, and of their beliefs.

My PhD seeks to delve into the complexity of this emotional matrix to explore what these kinds of commitments and attachments might reveal about the nature of religion, spirituality and belief in Britain today. My research therefore predominantly focuses on how people make sense of and cultivate 'Christmas' as they navigate their way through the life course and through all the inevitable undulations and transitions which come along its path. I am particularly interested in the interactive role which emotion, identity, memory and narrative might have to play in this meaning making process, and much of my empirical work is engaged in unpacking how these dynamics might map onto conceptions and performances of the popular and yet allusive idiom, the 'Christmas spirit'.

### **What inspired your interest in the topic?**

I have always been fascinated by nostalgia and the role it might play in identity formation. I began to look at this more consciously in the context of my undergraduate dissertation which explored the impact that the experience of being a cathedral chorister might have upon attitudes towards religion in later life. Having grown up singing week in week out in my own parish church choir, this was a topic I felt a real (and perhaps nostalgic!) connection to myself.

It became increasingly clear as I interviewed ex-choristers, and indeed reflected upon my own life transitions, that nostalgia was an emotion with a significant and almost magnetic force in this context. But perhaps more intriguingly, it was an emotion which I could not seem to extract from an aesthetic appreciation and fondness for the music or from the architecture and perceived atmosphere of the building. It seemed to induce a sense of security, familiarity and homecoming combined with a kind of transcendence which could only really be articulated as a warm fuzzy mushy feeling. This resulted in a strong sense of emotionality which did indeed seem in some way connected to a sense of 'faith' and/or spirituality. That so much could be contained within one emotion captivated me as I began to reflect further on whether this warm fuzzy feeling contained more joy or more grief, more regret or more gratitude, more transcending spirituality or more insular idealizing. Beginning to think about this in the context of Christmas traditions revealed a surprisingly under-researched area of British life, and one which I believe carries some considerable significance for people across a wide spectrum of sociological categorization.

### **You've taken some unusual methodological decisions with your fieldwork. Tell me about how you got answers from your participants, and how did it do at providing the data you wanted?**

My primary multi-sited fieldwork has aimed to explore various public settings in which 'Christmas spirit' might be performed and experienced in the North East, and has provided me with more 'Christmassy' fun and hilarity than I could ever expected



from a PhD! In the lead up to Christmas 2017, I spent time in a primary school (parading an elf around the playground and helping sheep into their nativity play costumes amongst other things!), volunteered as part of the organising team for a community Christmas lunch organised near Newcastle for the socially isolated on Christmas day, attended a plethora of carol services at Durham Cathedral, and transformed myself into an elf to gain my ticket into the heart of Santa's grotto at a local country house. This was an attempt to deliberately place myself in a variety of public situations which pertained to different social worlds, and appealed to both the more ostensibly recognised 'religious' narratives and to the commercial, perceivedly 'secular' dimensions of the festival across which the 'Christmas spirit' is beckoned, and the annual search for 'the true meaning of Christmas' takes hold.

I was keen to take a co-constructive approach, so I launched 'The Festive Log Research Project' ([www.lucindaslog.com/thefestivelog](http://www.lucindaslog.com/thefestivelog)). The project invited people to follow my fieldwork progress and to 'log' their own Christmas story as part of my research story. This allowed me to combine these personal stories and memories with my own field notes to provide a base for my ongoing reflections with a nod to grounded theory when formulating my ensuing interview conversations. But it also enabled me to engage people with the research and to give myself a more discernible purpose and role in the communities I was working with. My primary fieldwork experience also therefore functioned as a tool for generating themes and identifying a good range of around 40 interviewees from across my four locations to reflect more upon the topic after Christmas; a method which has effectively helped me extend my fieldwork period beyond the short span of the Christmas period!

My main method of 'extension' has, however, come in the form of an elf. Sometime into my first year I had become aware of a new growing Christmas craze. 'Elf on the Shelf' had come to town. In my quest to create a methodology as 'fun' as my topic, I decided to enlist an elf as my 'research assistant'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, she proved a big hit with children who developed their own relationships with her as a special 'research elf', gave me a certain kudos as 'the elf keeper', and enabled me to explore their beliefs and interactions from a perspective I could never have fully anticipated. But she has also shaped the outward performance of my ethnography throughout the rest of the year, enabling me to engage both academic and non-academic audiences in every stage of the PhD research process. She has, in a sense, become my thesis performed and, as I see it, an alternative phenomenological form of ethnographic inscription. She is both subject and object, ethnographer and participant, and has become a vital theoretical as well as practical tool in relation to my reflexive approach. As well as keeping me laughing over the past 12 months, not to mention going some way to reducing the loneliness of fieldwork research, this approach has I believe enabled me to co-generate data by means of a highly performed research identity both online and offline. If you fancy following her adventures, you can find Gelf the Elf on Twitter @MyElfGelf.

## **Socrel Outstanding Achievement Award**



### **2018 Recipient – Prof Grace Davie**

Once over the term of the chair of Socrel's executive committee, the chair nominates an eminent scholar for recognition. Our outgoing chair, Adam Dinham, wished to recognise Grace Davie's outstanding contributions to the sociology of religion in Britain. We were pleased to present Grace with this award during the Gala Dinner on 11 July 2018 at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow.

### **Peter B Clarke essay prize 2018 recipient – Leonardo Vasconcelos**

Also at the Gala Dinner, our convener Céline Benoit awarded the Peter B. Clarke Memorial Essay Prize 2018 to Leonardo Vasconcelos, a doctoral candidate at the University of Warwick, for his essay 'The Secularisation of Demons: Exorcisms by the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Madrid'. Leonardo receives cash and books as part of his prize. This is open to postgraduate students who are members of Socrel, and details of this year's competition are included in this newsletter.

# Funding Opportunities through Socrel

Socrel is pleased to announce that the call for applications for our Seed Corn Funding is now open. Our Seed Corn Funding seeks to support the development of innovative research project in the field of Sociology of Religion. The winner of the competition will be awarded up to £5000 to support them in the development of significant work.

Socrel is also proud to announce that it is expanding its support fund and will also provide £500 to PG/ECS towards research-related expenditures and thesis production costs.

PG students also have the opportunity to take part in the Peter B. Clarke Memorial Essay competition. The winner will get a cheque for £100, and a year's subscription to the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*.

For more information about any of the awards and prizes available, please see the calls below, or visit <https://www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/study-groups/sociology-of-religion-study-group/funding/>

We look forward to receiving your proposals!

Céline Benoit (Socrel Convenor)

## Seed Corn Funding Competition – Call for Applications

As part of its ongoing effort to invest in its membership, Socrel invites applications for seed corn funding to support the development of significant and innovative work in the sociology of religion.

This competition is open to Socrel members at any stage of their careers who are also members of the British Sociological Association (BSA) and based at a UK university.

We will make one award of up to £5000 to be used in 2019.

The deadline for applications is 17th December 2018. Applicants will be notified of the outcome by mid-January 2019.

This award may be spent, in line with the BSA's terms and conditions, on travel, subsistence, a one-off work package delivered by a third party e.g. event recording, transcription, research expenses e.g. equipment, software, printing, but not salary or indirect costs/overheads/full economic costing (fEC). We are open-minded as to the type of activity the seed corn funding is used for, for example, a writing workshop, pilot fieldwork, but it must be clearly designed to develop further work.[1]

We welcome applications from groups of members. In this instance, there must be a designated lead applicant who is a Socrel and BSA member and all co-applicants must have at least Socrel membership.

Any seed corn activity must be undertaken in line with the (lead) applicant's university's codes of ethics and conduct and data protection policies. The BSA will pay the award to the successful (lead) applicant's institution once an invoice has been received. Socrel expects the successful applicant to contribute to the study group's blog within the year of the award.

The application must be emailed to incoming Socrel Convenor Céline Benoit ([c.benoit@aston.ac.uk](mailto:c.benoit@aston.ac.uk)) and include the following: Applicant(s) Details (name, affiliation, BSA and Socrel membership no and status, plus those of any co-applicants, excluding BSA membership info if this does not apply) Proposal Title Description of Seed Corn Activity Proposed (including background and rationale and how it is innovative and significant, up to 2 pages) Description of Proposed Output(s) and/or Outcome(s) (up to 1 page) Timetable (up to 1 page) Budget (1 page) Applicant Short CV (plus short CVs for any other co-applicant named)

A note of support for the proposal from the (lead) applicant's line manager/head of department/postgraduate supervisor/institutional point of contact should be emailed separately to Céline by the competition closing date.

### **Criteria:**

Applications will be judged by the Socrel Chair, another Socrel committee member, and two independent volunteer Socrel members, using the following criteria, which are ranked in descending order:

1. Eligibility of applicant(s): affiliation to a UK university; Socrel **and** BSA membership for the (lead) applicant and at least Socrel membership for any co-applicants;
2. Innovation;
3. Significance;
4. Clarity of pathway to output(s) and/or outcome(s) e.g. a research project proposal, publicly available report, film, journal article, social impact[2];
5. Applicant background and experience and proposal match;
6. Benefit to Sociology of Religion in the UK;
7. Value for money. Please email [c.benoit@aston.ac.uk](mailto:c.benoit@aston.ac.uk) if you have any queries.

[1] Any event(s) organised should not clash with any Socrel-run ones or the BSA annual conference (please check the Socrel website or with Socrel Events Officer Rachael Shillitoe [[rachael.shillitoe@york.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.shillitoe@york.ac.uk)] if unsure of scheduling).

[2] Here we follow the Economic and Social Research Council's definition of social impact, please visit <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/evaluation-and-impact/what-is-impact/> for more information.

## **BSA Socrel Support Fund**

Each year the BSA Support Fund provides financial assistance to individual members. Applicants can benefit from financial assistance towards research related expenses, attendance at conferences and study group events, and thesis production costs. Applicants are limited to one BSA Support Fund claim of up to £1000.

We are pleased to announce the Socrel study group will be providing a separate support fund of £500 annually each academic year beginning October 1st 2018. This support fund is designed to support and aid postgraduate students/early career scholars (ECS) with the mechanics of academic research. Applicants are able to apply to both.

All applications will be considered on an individual basis, but ideally the support fund will be divided up to help as many scholars as possible, and applications can be made for smaller claims. The majority of the funds will be considered for but not limited to:

- Research and/or fieldwork, including travel costs.
- Thesis binding

The BSA Support Fund does not award grants towards the cost of course fees; for the purchase of books or equipment; but this may be considered by the Socrel Support Fund. Attendance at conferences other than Socrel will not be considered, please use the BSA support fund.

To be eligible, applicants must:

- Live in the UK
- Be a paid member of the Socrel study group

The Socrel Support Fund differs from the £5000 Seed Corn funding which supports the development of a significant and innovative work in the sociology of religion. This support fund will not contribute towards the Seed Corn funding. Socrel expects the successful applicant to contribute to the study group's blog within the year of the award.

An application form will be made available on the Socrel website this autumn. Please do share the Socrel Support Fund with postgraduate students/ECS in your departments. Any questions can be directed to Josh Bullock [j.bullock@kingston.ac.uk](mailto:j.bullock@kingston.ac.uk)



# PETER B. CLARKE Memorial Essay Prize 2019

## Call for Essay Submissions

The BSA (British Sociological Association) Sociology of Religion Study Group (Socrel) invites essay submissions on any aspect of contemporary religion addressed from a sociological perspective.

**Final Deadline: 15 April, 2019**

### The Winner of the Essay Prize will receive:

- a Free Full Pass for the Annual Socrel Conference 9-11 July 2019, Cardiff University
- a cheque for £100 (sponsored by Taylor & Francis)
- a £50 voucher for books from Taylor & Francis (sponsored by Routledge)
- a year's subscription to the *Journal of Contemporary Religion*
- an opportunity to get published in the *Journal of Contemporary Religion* (the winning essay is subject to JCR's normal peer review)
- for the runner-up essay, a cheque for £50, if the judges decide that there is a runner-up (sponsored by Taylor & Francis)

### Submission Details:

- The essay should be between 6000 and 7000 words, including footnotes and bibliography, and must not be available in print/electronic format or submitted for publication elsewhere.
- The essay should be single authored, written in English and submitted as a single MS Word document attachment, including bibliography and cover sheet. (Failure to incorporate the cover sheet will render disqualification.)
- Submitting authors must follow the *JCR* style guide.
- The winning essay must be submitted to *JCR* within 3 months of the prize having been awarded.
- Submitting authors must be postgraduates and be/become a members of Socrel to enter.
- The winning author will be expected to contribute a short blog post to the Socrel website
- Application forms and further details are available from the Socrel website: <https://www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/study-groups/sociology-of-religion-study-group/>
- Electronic submissions with cover sheet downloaded from the Study Group website need to be sent to Dr Michael Munnik ([munnikm@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:munnikm@cardiff.ac.uk)).

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