

**FRIDAY MAY 5**

Keynote Address – 5:30 PM [followed by reception at Grad Club]

Location: Convocation Hall in Theological Hall Building	<p><b>Dr. Megan Goodwin</b> (Crossroads Project, Princeton University) <i>Against Charisma: Cults, Koolaid, and the Pornographic Afterlife of Peoples Temple</i></p>
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**SATURDAY MAY 6**

**SESSION ONE – 9:00-10:30**

**Panel 1 – Biblical Perspectives on the Other**

**Chair: Richard Ascough, Queen’s University**

Location: Theological Hall 203	<p><b>Grace Goebelle</b> (Queen's University) - <i>Hellenization Goes Both Ways</i></p>
	<p><b>Lucas Coque</b> (McGill University) - <i>Annihilating the Other: The Relationship Between Ontology and Politics in Augustine's City of God</i></p>
	<p><b>Phoebe Jane Miller</b> (Yale Divinity School) - <i>The Love God is, The Love God Works: Karl Barth and Julian of Norwich on The Universally Salvific Will of the Trinity</i></p>

**Panel 2 – Culture Clashes: Confrontation with the Other**

**Chair: Lauren Paulozza, Queen’s University**

Location: Theological Hall 209	<p><b>Carmen Celestini</b> (Queen's University) and <b>Sahver Kuzucuoglu</b> (Wilfrid Laurier University) - <i>The Political Power of Victimhood - A Religious and Secular Battle for the Middle of Canada</i></p>
	<p><b>Kacey Dool</b> (Queen's University) - <i>Gendered Experiences of Religio-Racial Eugenics in 'Canada': Settler Colonialism and Coercive Sterilization</i></p>
	<p><b>Colin H. Simonds</b> (Queen's University) - <i>Caring for Ecological "Others": Buddhist Responses to the More-Than-Human World</i></p>

BREAK – 10:30-10:45

**SATURDAY - SESSION TWO – 10:45-12:30**

**Panel 1 – Perspectives on Islamophobia**

**Chair: Amarnath Amarasingam, Queen's University**

Location: Convocation Hall	<b>Carly Baldachin</b> (Queen's University) - <i>The Creation and Continuation of The Other: Bill 21</i>
	<b>Eve Sotiriadou</b> (Queen's University) - <i>The Making of The Muslim Terrorist: Multiple Modernities and Islamic Fundamentalism</i>
	<b>Laraib Khan</b> (York University) - <i>Policies &amp; Law to Instill Islamophobia: A Deeper Analysis of Bill 21</i>
	<b>Sahver Kuzucuoglu</b> (Wilfrid Laurier University) and <b>Philip Oddi</b> (York University) - <i>The Elephant in the Room - Racialisation and the Construction of the "Other" within Multicultural Muslim Communities</i>

**Panel 2 – Academia and Communities**

**Chair: Eric Chalfant, Queen's University**

Location: Theological Hall 203	<b>Chris Miller</b> (University of Ottawa) - <i>The Fastest Growing Religion? Paganism's Rapid Growth and How Scholars Describe What They Study</i>
	<b>Chelsea Kennedy</b> (University of Colorado Boulder) - <i>Western Bias in Introductory Philosophy Classes</i>
	<b>David Breme</b> (Laval University) - <i>Reception of Sikhism in Canadian Academy: help or obstacle for persecuted diasporic Sikh community?</i>

**Panel 3 – Critical Approaches to 'Tourism'**

**Chair: Colin Simonds, Queen's University**

Location: Theological Hall 209	<b>Tony Scott</b> (University of Toronto) - <i>Standing Reserves of Energy: Glacial-fed Rivers, Dinosaur Fossils, and the Alienation of the Land in the Photography of Joseph Burr Tyrrell</i>
	<b>Elsa Immer</b> (McMaster University) - <i>Sharing a Meal: Uncovering Vietnamese Buddhism in the Everyday</i>
	<b>Geoffrey Hodges</b> (Queen's University) - <i>Spiritual Tourists and Catholic Shamans: Shifting Ayahuasca Ritual in South America</i>
	<b>Marcel Parent</b> (Concordia University) - <i>Imperial Gays: The Qatar World Cup, the Gay International, and the (Neo-)Colonial Gaze</i>

*LUNCH – 12:30-2:00 in Elias Andrews Room*

**SATURDAY - SESSION THREE – 2:00-3:30**

**Panel 1 – Undergraduate Panel**

**Difference & Defiance in Popular Culture: Postsecular Perspectives**

**Chair: Carly Baldchin, Queen’s University**

Location: Convocation Hall	<b>Aidan Feldman</b> (Ithaca College) - <i>Panelist</i>
	<b>Justin Foster</b> (Ithaca College) - <i>Panelist</i>
	<b>Chloe Gibson</b> (Ithaca College) - <i>Panelist</i>
	<b>Athaliah Knoell</b> (Ithaca College) - <i>Panelist</i>

**Panel 2 – Society for Comparative Research on Iconic and Performative Texts (SCRIPT)**

**Chair: Dr. Jennifer Leath, Queen’s University**

Location: Theological Hall 203	<b>James W. Watts</b> (Syracuse University) - <i>Banning Books: Rituals to Discourage and Encourage Inspiration</i>
	<b>David Dault</b> (Loyola University Chicago) - <i>The Parasocial Dimension of Scripture</i>
	<b>Erin K. Vearncombe</b> (University of Toronto) - <i>If Eve ain't in your garden...! Lil Nas X and the Queering of Eden</i>

**Panel 3 – Graduate Student Workshop**

**“Comprehensive Exams: Contents and Trajectories”**

Location: Theological Hall 209	<b>Htet Lwin</b> (York University) – EIR Graduate Student Director
	<b>Laraib Khan</b> (York University) - <i>Panelist</i>
	<b>Tony Scott</b> (University of Toronto) - <i>Panelist</i>
	<b>Sahver Kuzucuoglu</b> (Wilfrid Laurier University) - <i>Panelist</i>

*BREAK – 3:30-3:45 in Elias Andrews*

**SATURDAY - SESSION FOUR – 3:45-5:30**

**Panel 1 – Narratives of Persecution and Self-Othering**

**Chair: Shobhana Xavier, Queen’s University**

Location: Theological Hall 203	<b>Linda Darwish</b> (St. Francis Xavier University) - <i>Narratives of Persecution of Christians from Iraq and Syria - A (Mostly) Hidden Tragedy of Our Times</i>
	<b>Lynda Clarke</b> (Concordia University) - <i>Narratives of Persecution &amp; Migration of Hazaras from Afghanistan</i>
	<b>Aaron Ricker</b> (Independent Scholar) - <i>Believe it or Not: Narrative Self-Othering as Self-Assertion</i>
	<b>Mehmet Karabela</b> (Queen's University) - <i>Self-Othering in Yunus Emre's Thought</i>

**Panel 2 – Undergraduate Panel**

**Locating the Other in Texts, and in the University**

**Chair: Chris Miller, University of Ottawa**

Location: Convocation Hall	<b>Asma Shakul</b> (University of Toronto Mississauga) and <b>Awa Kane</b> (University of Toronto Mississauga) - <i>Dynamics of Exclusion within Inclusion: The Case of Black Muslim Immigrant University Students</i>
	<b>Muhammad Ali, Minahil Farooq, Matthew Lu, and Sahar Rahgozar Safi</b> (University of Toronto) - <i>How do Religious and Cultural Accommodations by Ontario Universities Impact the Sense of Belonging in International Students?</i>
	<b>Codey Lecchino</b> (McGill University) - <i>The Kid Was Not Alright: Why Augustine Would Have Listened to Emo Punk Rock</i>
	<b>Ael Spence</b> (York University) - <i>"As literal as possible, as free as necessary": The NRSV-UE and English Bible translations of αρσενοζοίτης and μαλακός</i>
	<b>Sarah Wicks-Potter</b> (McGill University) - <i>Reclaiming Hope in the Face of Eschatological Ambivalence: A Feminist Perspective on Luther</i>

**SUNDAY MAY 7**

**EIR BUSINESS MEETING – 9:00-9:30**

Location: Theological Hall 203	All attendees are welcome to join us for a light continental breakfast in Elias Andrews room, and the EIR’s Business Meeting, where we will share updates for the Region and announce the winners of our Student Paper Awards
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**SUNDAY – SESSION ONE – 9:30-11:00**

**Panel 1 – Responses to the Other – Textual Approaches**

**Chair: Grace Goebelle, Queen’s University**

Location: Theological Hall 203	<b>Brian Loh</b> (Marist College) – <i>Harmonizing Difference in the Xunzi: Confucian Depictions of Otherness</i>
	<b>Florence Pasche-Guignard</b> (Université Laval) – <i>Betraying his Caste? Frédéric Leboyer, Birth without Violence, and the Other</i>
	<b>Eric Bronson</b> (York University) – <i>Democracy’s “Soft Conformity” and the Othering of Minority Viewpoints</i>

**Panel 2 – Christian Nationalism and Online Radicals**

**Chair: Tracy Trothen, Queen’s University**

Location: Theological Hall 209	<b>Carmen Celestini</b> (Queen’s University) and <b>Amarnath Amarasingam</b> (Queen’s University) – <i>Reviving the Violet Flame: The New Age Conspiratorial Journey of Canada’s Queen Romana Didulo</i>
	<b>Thomas Hale</b> (Fuller Theological Seminary) – <i>Toward an Ethic of Loving Online Neighbors; or, Why ‘Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner’ Doesn’t Work toward the Right Wing Any Better than It Does When Used by Them</i>

**Panel 3 – Minority Voices in Complex Spaces**

**Chair: Chris Miller, University of Ottawa**

Location: Convocation Hall	<b>Lily An Kim</b> (McMaster University) – <i>Genocides and Return: Experiential Rebuilding after Family Separation and Trauma</i>
	<b>Jeff Yaneff</b> (Wycliffe College, University of Toronto) – <i>The Challenge Scholarly Consensus Poses to Minority Voices in Interdisciplinary Studies</i>

*BREAK – 11:00-11:15*

**SUNDAY - SESSION TWO – 11:15-12:45**

**EIR Presidential Roundtable**

Location: Convocation Hall	<b>Abraham H. Khan</b> (Trinity College, University of Toronto) - Moderator
	<b>Johannes Wolfart</b> (Carleton University) - Panelist
	<b>Bryan Rennie</b> (Westminster College) - Panelist
	<b>Tracy J. Trothen</b> (Queen's University) - Panelist
	<b>Pavlo Irizar</b> (McGill University) - Panelist
	<b>Damon T. Berry</b> (St. Lawrence University) – Panelist
	<b>Florence Pasche-Guignard</b> (Laval University) – Panelist
	<b>Marc Lalonde</b> (Concordia University) – Panelist
	<b>Carmen Celestini</b> (University of Waterloo) – Panelist
	<b>Donald Wiebe</b> (Trinity College, University of Toronto) - Respondent



**Abstracts (listed in alphabetical order)**

**Muhammad Ali** (*University of Toronto*), **Minahil Farooq** (*University of Toronto*), **Matthew Lu** (*University of Toronto*), and **Sahar Rahgozar Safi** (*University of Toronto*)

**How do Religious and Cultural Accommodations by Ontario Universities Impact the Sense of Belonging in International Students?**

This paper investigates the impact of religious and cultural accommodations provided by universities in Ontario on international students' sense of belonging. In specific, the study will use qualitative analysis to gain a better understanding of perceptions of belonging in Canadian universities, depending on the forms of religious and cultural accommodations provided. While the study aspires to cover a range of international students, the focus will remain on establishing an understanding of the difference in the sense of belonging between Muslim and Non-Muslim international students based on provided accommodations. As the iterative process of constructing this paper is still occurring, there are currently no findings to present. However, the null hypothesis assumes that the cultural and religious accommodations provided to international students bear no impact on their sense of belonging in Canada. The disproval of the null hypothesis would lay groundwork which can then be used to implement policy changes to improve the quality of life for the student body. The results may offer insight into the importance of accommodating students' religious and cultural needs and highlight the challenges faced by international students in adapting to university life. This study has implications for universities and policymakers in promoting the well-being and integration of international students.

**Amarnath Amarasingam** (*Queen's University*) and **Carmen Celestini** (*Queen's University*)

**Reviving the Violet Flame: The New Age Conspiratorial Journey of Canada's Queen Romana Didulo**

Romano Didulo, the self-proclaimed Queen of Canada, gained notoriety as an influencer online within the QAnon conspiracy. Taking advantage of the both the pandemic and the silence of Q, Didulo has created a movement of her own. She preaches an anti-vaccine, anti-Covid conspiracy theory where she is the commander-in-chief of Canada, issuing new rules and laws for the nation. While predominately an online group, Didulo and her followers have made forays into actions in the offline world, such as an attempt to arrest police officers in Peterborough for "genocide," and "treason," for supporting Covid-19 mandates and vaccinations.

Didulo and her movement have been the subject of research by conspiracy theory, extremism, and social movement scholars, yet an important aspect of her movement has not been researched: her use of religion. Didulo relies upon a religious movement from the theosophical traditions of the 1930s and 1940s, the I AM Movement. The movement's title comes from God's words to Moses in Exodus 3:14, "I am who I am," and encompasses Christian dogma, occultism, Eastern Religions, and New Age mysticism. The use of theosophical religious roots in Didulo's conspiracy based social movement are an important component of understand improvisational conspiracism and occult religion in a time of radical politics. Through a content analysis of the Queen and her followers' Telegram posts and the Queen's live streams, we will argue that the use of I AM Movement and Church Universal and Triumphant religious practices are foundation to Didulo's conspiracy movement both online and offline, and the possible connotations of improvisational conspiracism on the radical political movement she is leading. The Queen has enmeshed the conspiracies of QAnon, Gesara and Nesara, with the religious I AM movement from yore, to re-create herself not only as an Ascended Master, but the God Presence that will save humanity and the world. Queen Didulo has created a perfect scenario where the chaos of the

contemporary world can be responded to via a god-like being, who has the power to end evil and lead adherents to a peaceful, pure world.

**Carly Baldachin** (*Queen's University*)

### **The Creation and Continuation of The Other: Bill 21**

In the spring of 2019, the National Assembly of Québec passed Bill 21: An Act respecting the laicity of the State. This bill argues that religious expression through the form of visible religious symbols prohibits neutrality within the public sphere, and therefore, cannot be worn by public servants (Bill 21 2019). While this was done in the name of secularism in hopes for a more pluralistic and tolerant society, all it did was ostracize religious minorities and continue to construct religious minorities as “the other.” This paper aims to highlight the way that Bill 21 creates an optical illusion of religious diversity in Canada while maintaining a white Christian national identity. Furthermore, this paper will analyze how Christianity has become a normative power in Canada to the extent that it becomes the face in which other religious traditions are being compared (Yoshi 2020, 30).

**David Breme** (*Laval University*)

### **Reception of Sikhism in Canadian Academy: help or obstacle for persecuted diasporic Sikh community?**

Regarding its number of followers Sikhism is considered 5th among other world religions and presents a remarkable history built after overcoming a series of persecutions by colonial, political, and military powers during the first centuries of its existence. Notably, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth guru of Sikhism, established martial order of Khalsa in 1699 that include the obligation to wear five symbols which represent their public visibility pledging to defend their community. Following the 1984 genocide, the diasporic Punjabi Sikh community has organized itself to preserve its tradition while facing the challenges of immigration and systemic discrimination. In this context some of the five Sikh symbols were interpreted as incompatible with Republican French schools by French government (Stasi law, 2004) and with positions of institutional authority by Quebec government (Law 21, 2018). The academic invisibility can be added to such challenges. Even though there are more than 600,000 Sikh Canadians, the volume of publications in French and - to a lesser extent - in English language in Canada on other major religions (Daoism, Judaism, etc.) -with even fewer members – has been more considerable.

Therefore, the purpose of this presentation will be to report how the developing field of Sikh studies by Sikh scholars and other academics helps to the recognition of Sikhism by politicians and society in general and in French-speaking context particular. I will argue that this may contribute to overcome systemic discrimination but might also bring forth specific divergences due to western intellectual biases (Helweg, 1993; Stratton Fowler, 2017).

**Eric Bronson** (*York University*)

### **Democracy’s “Soft Conformity” and the Othering of Minority Viewpoints**

Whether it’s populists vs. Never Trumpers or vaxxers vs. anti-vaxxers, what’s become increasingly clear is that North American societies are politically splintered and galvanized in sometimes troubling ways. Here in Canada this division was amplified in January, 2022, when a vocal minority occupied downtown Ottawa with trucks, hot tubs, and even a bouncy castle to protest COVID vaccine mandates. As one Canadian security expert observed at the Ottawa convoy, “There were people there you cannot have a rational conversation with.” I think this observation cuts to the core of why the majority “others” minorities and minority viewpoints in democratic societies. When rational arguments fail to convince either side, we are left without tools for respecting or even accounting for people we disagree with.



In an attempt to begin the repair work necessary to bridge some of these divides, this paper will re-examine the political philosophy of Christian thinker Reinhold Niebuhr. “It is simple enough to be tolerant on issues which are not believed to be vital,” Niebuhr writes. “The real test of toleration is our attitude towards people who oppose truths which seem important to us, and who challenge realms of life and meaning towards which we have a responsible relation.”

This paper will build on Niebuhr’s Christian realism to explore two questions critical to democratic theory today: 1) How can we get along with “other” people we disagree with when reason fails, and 2) Why should we even bother with such people?

**Carmen Celestini** (*Queen's University*) and **Sahver Kuzucuoglu** (*Wilfrid Laurier University*)  
**The Political Power of Victimhood - A Religious and Secular Battle for the Middle of Canada**

As polarization accumulates in the political realms of Canada, right wing extremists (RWE) and white nationalists are using this opportunity to mainstream racist and extremist agendas. Through social media platforms their messages of hate are cloaked within memes and tweets espousing hateful commentary on Canadian politics in the nation. Inherent in these tweets are notions of victimhood and persecution as so-called ‘White’ Christian males evoking emotions to produce political mobilization. The enemy, or oppressor, are the “woke” - often referred to as progressive liberals. Hosseinmardi et al. (2021, p. 1) found that consumption of anti-woke - meaning material that is openly in “opposition to progressive intellectual and political agendas” - was growing in popularity and correlated with right-wing content on YouTube.

Yet RWE and white nationalists are not the only ones insisting on using segregating and obsolete racial constructs to gain an audience in the social consciousness of Canadians. Hate, perceived victimhood, and persecution are common tools in the narratives repeated within social media by those of many political leanings, including the far left. The political divisions articulated and spurred on by extremists at both ends of the political spectrum depend upon narratives of fearmongering, persecution, and creating an “other” designated as such by stereotypes and profiles reducing their perceived enemy to a caricature. While the far right depend upon religious language and traditionalism the far left depend upon secularization tropes to mobilize. Tropes of persecution and victimhood are the commonality upon which both sides depend upon to mobilize, yet the right characterize the battle from that of the eternal, while the left characterize the battle of one of human frailty.

Using tweets from the far-right and the far-left, we analyze the common narratives of victimhood as a tool for mobilization, as the battle between the secularized and the religious call for their followers to not engage in dialogue with the “other,” while simultaneously using the “other” as the focus of their discussions. Has this growing expanse between extreme right and extreme left become a popularity contest and a battle for who gets the most hits and follows on social media? As these groups target each other, is the collateral damage the cohesion of society, and the dismantling of the political middle?

**Lynda Clarke** (*Concordia University*)  
**Narratives of Persecution & Migration of Hazaras from Afghanistan**

This paper draws from life-stories elicited in interviews with Twelver and Ismaili Hazaras from Afghanistan to examine experiences of persecution that have contributed to forced migration to Iran, Pakistan, and ultimately, Canada. With their distinctive beliefs and practices and often distinctly Asian physical appearance, the Hazaras have historically been subject to discrimination and violence, principally from the dominant Sunni-Pashtun majority. Recent targeted assassinations and bombings, such as the suicide attack in September 2022 on an educational institution in Kabul that

left tens of girls and women dead, are a continuation of this record, which includes targeting of places of worship and has been internationalized especially with the spread of ISIL to Afghanistan. The paper uses narrative enquiry to examine how migrants construct meaning out of chaos through narrativization and particularly how religion, as a psychological and cultural resource, is deployed to make sense of persecution along with the migratory experience. The narratives also demonstrate a sustained effort to recount and define a common Afghan identity, nationality, and even religiosity that transcends sectarian and ethnic differences.

**Lucas Coque** (*McGill University*)

### **Annihilating the Other: The Relationship Between Ontology and Politics in Augustine's City of God**

This hermeneutical analysis articulates the link between Augustine's ontology and his political attitude as they are presented in his major work *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos*. This is done by juxtaposing it to Cicero's *De Re Publica*, one of the main references and influences of *Civitate Dei*. I ask how it is that Cicero displays a strong faith in political life and the pursuit of justice, while Augustine walks a thin line between political nihilism and Christian theocracy, discouraging involvement in politics while simultaneously supporting state persecution of pagans and heretics. Both works share a Roman imperial context, a Platonic philosophical framework, and are motivated by a major crisis: Cicero wrote in response to the brewing civil war that ended the Roman Republic, and Augustine to the sack of Rome in 410 CE. I argue that Augustine's political stance is not accidental to his theology, but rather it springs directly from his concept of *nothing*, which is essential to his ontology, theology, and anthropology, differing them from Cicero's. I delineate how Augustine's *nothing* shares a formal structure with ignorance, madness, evil, and death, shaping his narrative of humanity and of salvation history as an imperial conquest of alterity and an annihilation of difference. At the end, I reflect on the possibility that modern politicized Christian fundamentalisms are not an accident of Western Christianity, but rather the expression of a coherent worldview inherited from its imperial foundations.

**Linda Darwish** (*St. Francis Xavier University*)

### **Narratives of Persecution of Christians from Iraq and Syria - A (Mostly) Hidden Tragedy of Our Times**

"A profound series of crises has overtaken Middle Eastern Christianity in contemporary times. Displacement by war, genocide, interreligious conflict, leading to loss, emigration and exile would seem to be the main experience of Christianity in the Middle East." Anthony O'Mahony's (2008) terse litany of calamities facing Middle Eastern Christians in contemporary times sounds bleak. It is certainly not a good news story. But, the evidence supports the contention that this is no sensationalist rhetoric but the bitter reality behind an all too often hidden tragedy of our times.

This paper uses qualitative analysis to investigate how Christians from Syria and Iraq, now residing in Canada, narrate their experiences of persecution and genocide during the respective uprisings in these two countries and continuing, at times, into the refugee journey that follows. Particular attention is paid to the ways that the Other is framed in narratives of persecution and the narrators' responses to it.

The paper addresses the question of silencing or downplaying of certain persecution narratives in academia and mainstream media. It looks briefly at ideological tropes that, I argue, enable and sustain this silencing.

The paper concludes with a brief exploration of Egyptian Christian narratives of discrimination, suggesting that this phenomenon sits on the same continuum of which deprivation of the fundamental right to life is but the extreme.

**David Dault** (*Loyola University Chicago*)

**The Parasocial Dimension of Scripture**

Fifteen years ago, James Watts helped to define the field of study of Iconic Books with his foundational paper, "The Three Dimensions of Scriptures." In it, he put forth a model for a three-fold analysis of material texts in religious contexts, allowing a scholar to consider the balance of the semantic, performative, and iconic dimensions, functioning as field forces that overlap and yield complex social information about a given scriptural object. This present paper seeks to extend Watts's three dimensions by offering one possible model for defining this complex field effect: parasociality. A parasocial relationship describes a narratively-complex one-sided relationship with a mediated character who, by definition, is unable to reciprocate love and affection. By looking at Watts's Three Dimensions model through the lens of parasociality, we will seek to more fully understand the social power of each dimension singly, and begin to build a parallel analysis to discuss their cumulative socio-material effects.

**Kacey Dool** (*Queen's University*)

**Gendered Experiences of Religio-Racial Eugenics in 'Canada': Settler Colonialism and Coercive Sterilization**

Referred to as 'population control,' other times 'better breeding,' eugenics has been seen as a religious solution to social ills, and sometimes a new religion unto itself. Eugenics has held the attention of religious communities and their leaders throughout the West since the late-19th century, relying on hereditarian principles and concerning itself with the elimination of 'unfit' humans (constructing a religio-racial 'Other') for the protection of white, upper-middle-class morality. Much research has been dedicated to the relationship forged between science and politics in terms of the success and popularity of eugenics movements throughout the British Empire and the Americas. However, religion has also played an integral role in the social solidification and legislation of eugenic ideologies and programs such as segregation and coercive sterilization. Throughout the 20th century, modernist or 'progressive' Protestantism, Reform Judaism, and even liberal Catholicism, demonstrated a vested interest in the promotion, application, and debates of eugenics, emphasizing how their theologies authorized eugenic ideologies of human development and moral progress. The involvement of religious actors and institutions in eugenics must be considered to fully grasp the extent to which the movement infiltrated, and benefitted from, social and political systems of power.

Using archival documents, alongside critical political theological theory, I aim to locate religious impetus and authority in the popularization of the eugenics movement within a Canadian context, and the continued persecution of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit peoples through coercive sterilization practices.

**Aidan Feldman** (*Ithaca College*), **Justin Foster** (*Ithaca College*), **Chloe Gibson** (*Ithaca College*), and

**Athaliah Knoell** (*Ithaca College*) **\*Panel\***

**Difference and Defiance in Popular Culture: Postsecular Perspectives**

Assumptions about the opposition between "religion" and "the secular" in popular culture perpetuate forms of oppression comparable to other discriminatory ideological constructs. Secularism can function in popular culture to strategically displace subjects deemed incompatible with capitalist and nationalist agendas. Additionally, perceptions of religion's "decline" often obscure ways that individuals and communities adapt popular media to unsettle existing power structures. The present panel explores how popular culture complicates, resists, and reinscribes the sacred/mundane binary and its attendant exclusionary logics.

Questions to be addressed include: How do directors, authors, and musicians use their work to disrupt reductive narratives of religious identity? What role does popular culture play in the construction of particular religious, gendered, subaltern, and racialized identities? To what extent are religiously inflected artifacts of popular culture effective at challenging or perpetuating the persecution of marginalized peoples? How does a consideration of popular culture's participation in the construction of self and society enable a reframing of the very concept of religion itself?

The first paper analyzes three examples of digital media where secular values converge with sacred beliefs, including Hasan Minaj's standup show *Homecoming King*, Lil Nas X's *Montero* music video, and Daniel Kwan's film *Everything Everywhere All At Once*. The second paper discusses the formation of alterity in Indian cinema cultures, arguing that Dalits (formerly Untouchables) are empowered through the mass-media form of cinema because of the historical development of cinema culture in India as a popular mode of worship. The third paper considers how Colm Tóibín's novella *The Testament of Mary* secularizes an iconic Catholic figure to question church authority while remaining ambivalent about Jesus' death and resurrection. Finally, the fourth paper theorizes representations of masculinity in *The Matrix* (dir. the Wachowskis) and *Fight Club* (dir. David Fincher) in terms of these films' critique of secular modernity.

**Grace Goebelle** (*Queen's University*)  
**Hellenization Goes Both Ways**

Many understand Hellenism to be the dissemination of Greek culture to allied and conquered people during the so-called Hellenistic period. However, it would be false to label those who were "Hellenized" as passive agents at the receiving end of an unstoppable cultural movement. In *3 Maccabees*, the author describes the understandings and views of Alexandria Jews towards the spread of Greek culture and the effects of foreign leadership and diaspora. Through a close textual examination of *3 Maccabees* aided by the paramount literature of Eric Gruen, who has written numerous works on Hellenized Jews, the reactions of Alexandrian Jews to both Greeks and the ruling Egyptians will be examined (Gruen 2009). Aspects of both cultural clashes and compatibility will be analyzed as well as the maintenance of rituals and identity during a rapidly changing social landscape. This paper will discuss themes of existing as the "Other" and making decisions about accepting changes, fighting back and the life of traditions.

**Thomas Hale** (*Fuller Theological Seminary*)  
**Toward an Ethic of Loving Online Neighbors; or, Why 'Hate the Sin, Love the Sinner' Doesn't Work toward the Right Wing Any Better than It Does When Used by Them**

The religious right is known for its logics of otherness: lately, these appear most vocally against transgender people, whose very identity as transgender is denied as an impossibility and as inherently a patent falsehood by many conservative Christians. Yet rejecting the right wing becomes another logic of otherness, this time practiced by Christians (and others) more to the political and/or theological left. Yet for all Christians, there is a call to love one's neighbor, and even one's enemy. "Love" here is *agape*. What does *agape* mean in the context of right- and left-wing believers, particularly when encountering each other online? I argue that treatments of *agape* such as Gene Outka's (1972) fall short in their almost total omission of what *agape* requires when a third party is being mistreated. They also treat all people as a homogeneous group; as Iris Marion Young (1990) argues, this homogeneity functions to erase differences between people of various identities when it comes to justice. How, then, should love intersect with justice? When it comes to the right wing, there is often a greater concern about "truth" than justice. What, then, is the intersection of love and truth, and how does that relate to the intersection of love and justice? These are the questions to be



addressed by this paper, set in the context of “netnographic” (Kozinets 2019) immersion in social media interactions between right- and left-wing Christians in the US context.

**Geoffrey Hodges** (*Queen's University*)

**Spiritual Tourists and Catholic Shamans: Shifting Ayahuasca Ritual in South America**

Recent scholarship on substance commodification in South America has focused almost exclusively on the appropriative aspects of spiritual tourism or on governmental and economic departments of thought. There is very little scholarship which addresses the profound cultural impacts caused by this commodification. This paper explores the possibility that Western commodification of culturally significant substances in South America is actively altering indigenous ritual practices – leading to traditional indigenous practitioners being left behind or “othered” by their own traditions. In this work, I examine the recent modes of ayahuasca and coca commodification in relation to their traditional uses. I propose that spiritual tourism and Western commodification is creating new forms of indigenous traditions, co-produced from Western social and economic values interacting with indigenous beliefs and ways of knowing. I conclude that Western commodification of the culturally significant substances ayahuasca and coca has sparked notable changes in indigenous practices and in some cases created hybrid systems of belief – outcomes which have othered traditional practitioners from their own beliefs.

**Elsa Immer** (*McMaster University*)

**Sharing a Meal: Uncovering Vietnamese Buddhism in the Everyday**

This paper examines how Buddhism surfaces in the everyday of members of the Vietnamese Buddhist community in Montreal, through in-depth analysis of ethnographic data collected from August to December 2022, including 18 semi-structured interviews and participant observation in a local temple. Following lived religion theorists Nancy Ammerman, Courtney Bender, and Robert Orsi, the paper demonstrates how the “mundane” contains and produces the religious. Building on Elizabeth Perez’s work on the making of Black Atlantic traditions, it takes interactions involving food as its unit of analysis. This paper peers into the comings and goings of kitchens – spaces traditionally regarded as profane, female, and therefore largely disregarded in the study of religion – where meals are prepared to feed the living and the dead. The paper highlights the voices of immigrant Buddhists, which have historically been neglected in the scholarship on Buddhism in the West, and their centrality to the development of North American Buddhism.

This paper demonstrates that everyday activities related to food, namely 1) preparation, 2) sharing, and 3) consumption, reflect Buddhist ideas, and help shape the Vietnamese Buddhist landscape in Montreal. Vietnamese meals are prepared to “feed” (*nourrir*), that is, to care for and sustain relationships with grieving congregants and monastics, siblings and children, deceased relatives, or *cô hồn* (lonely spirits). Colourful varieties of smaller dishes with carefully balanced tastes are shared among family members to further “harmony” (*équilibre*) and “letting go” (*lâcher prise*). Consumption should follow the general rules of “doing good” (*faire le bien*) and showing “compassion.”

**Awa Kane** (*University of Toronto Mississauga*) and **Asma Shakul** (*University of Toronto Mississauga*)

**Dynamics of Exclusion within Inclusion: The Case of Black Muslim Immigrant University Students**

The intersectional identities of immigrant university students in Ontario will be the focus of our upcoming article, with a specific emphasis on Black Muslim students. The most important question that we are trying to answer is the following: how does racial identity shape these students’

interactions, lived experiences, and define their realities as they migrate to Canada and form new communities?

To answer to this question, we will be focusing on the thorny intersections of race and religion through the perspective of young immigrants. These students are frequently put under pressure to choose between two identities, depending on the circumstances of their surroundings. Throughout this research, one of our primary areas of focus has been on the politics of exclusion that isolate these students from their counterparts in non-Black Muslim and non-Muslim Black circles. The fact that they are immigrants, in addition to their visible racial and religious identities, merely adds to the systemic discrimination that they are subjected to.

**Mehmet Karabela** (*Queen's University*)

### **Self-Othering in Yunus Emre's Thought**

This paper examines self-othering in the poetry of Yunus Emre, a fourteenth-century Ottoman-Turkish poet and Muslim Sufi mystic. Yunus Emre's thought is replete with various instances of 'othering' which suggests alienation and loneliness. For example, as a Muslim Sufi, Yunus others himself in a Muslim land by insisting that he is a stranger and lonely, not quite at home anywhere in this world—far from his true home. Earlier studies dealt with Yunus Emre's inclusiveness of other religions and nations. However, following a Lacanian paradigm, this paper presents his self-othering as a process where he experiences himself as a stranger by analysing his concepts of *garib* (stranger) and *gurbet* (expatriate).

**Chelsea Kennedy** (*University of Colorado Boulder*)

### **Western Bias in Introductory Philosophy Classes**

This paper aims to bring into focus the repercussions of the cognitive dissonance the west has constructed to divorce itself from the intellectual debt owed to the Islamic / Arabic world. The connection to the modern impacts of this historical construction I hope to show through the inherent bias within *Intro to Philosophy* classes regarding content and nomenclature in the presentation of concepts connected to historically religious ideologies or non-western traditions. Through a quantitative exploration of syllabi and required textbook content in introductory classes, the extreme bias towards the normativism of western civilization's philosophy and history of philosophy is apparent. With the application of de-colonization theory, the concept of the *unmarked self* is explored in how students are introduced to philosophy. The suggested norm here discussed leaves other historical thinkers and contemporary "alternative" views to be introduced in advanced courses as area-based studies or outside of philosophy departments. I argue that this is a largely uninvestigated model that predisposes students to be intellectually constricted, and therefore unable to view non-western philosophical concepts on equal ground with the western philosophical tradition. Philosophy departments could be understood as internally reproducing this bias, in part, on the expertise of the faculty which is indicative of larger systematic issues that are explored. By relegating non-western, particularly religiously grounded philosophical traditions to higher level area-specified courses, Religious Studies departments, or Near Eastern Studies departments, these intellectual frameworks are constructively rendered unworthy of inclusion when introducing the most impressionable students to philosophy, as well as in western philosophical discourse as a whole.

**Laraib Khan** (*York University*)

### **Policies & Law to Instill Islamophobia: A Deeper Analysis of Bill 21**

Islam has historically been racialized and criminalized to the Western and secular politics due to being a potential 'threat' to the liberal states. Starting from the US imperialist strategies to manure



the world into Islamophobia, to contemporary policies in North America that clearly elicit hatred and discrimination towards Muslims. Drawing from this tradition to instill Islamophobia into the masses, Canada's province Quebec legalized Bill 21, which is a clear act of racialization. This conference paper will look at the aspects of the bill which clearly mirror the strategies of colonial entities thus far to maintain hatred and power over Muslim minorities. Further, how secularism- as represented by Bill 21 is a practice of colonialism and how this colonial practice creates race, and specifically the racialization of Quebec Muslims. Arguably, this tactic is a form of suppression, rather than freedom which nationalist and political leaders say they support. Through critically engaging with scholars such as Sylvester Johnson, Talal Assad and Saba Mahmood, I will be analyzing the effect such policies have on the daily lives of Muslims living in Canada, and the rise of Islamophobic prosecutions after the passing of the bill. Through analyzing current events of Islamophobia in Canada, I argue that bill 21 is not "failed secularism" but rather depicts secularism clearly - a colonial practice that racializes, dehumanizes others and subjects them to violence.

**Lily An Kim** (*McMaster University*)

**Genocides and Return: Experiential Rebuilding after Family Separation and Trauma**  
**\*Panel\***

The twentieth century was marked around the globe by wars, colonialism, and genocides. Among different "inner exiles," migrant children carried memories of family separation and cultural trauma to Canada. Examples included the Holocaust in Europe, involuntary migration (to/from the Far East), and the Rwandan Genocide. Therefore, eight decades after the Second World War, a post-Holocaust approach to dialogue and reconciliation is yet needed to address *The Other, Persecution and Response* for healing.

In the aftermath of atrocities, scholars of psychology and of religion reflected on the meaning of life and existence. Much of the contemporary literature has pointed to the "inevitable" impacts of trauma that often resulted from repeated moral injury—when general complicity or accepting what is contrary to a sense of "right" leads to a violation of one's own trust and conscience. However, in *War and Negative Revelation*, Michael S. Yandell relies on his experience as a veteran of war to propose a theoethical reflection: on a loss of meaning—i.e., moral injury, even potential *negative revelation* can phenomenologically serve as "turning to life." After a revelatory experience, the absence of goodness and justice may orient survivors of trauma to long for a positive *telos*, even as the very basis of "morality" appears irretrievably lost and betrayed. Conversation between survivors of different genocides helps to incorporate a common basis of understanding and reflective observation, which in turn, promotes conceptual appreciation or engagement with principles of healing and reconciliation on the basis of concrete experiences. *Deep listening* thus serves as a proposed practice for experiential understanding, by which participants can cooperatively rebuild personhood and clarify values. Without a demand for ideological certainty, the promise of experiential learning extends joint leadership or accountability, beyond law schools and structures of social engineering. Approaches to achieving transformative goals, including peace and diversity, transpire through social experiential learning.

**Sahver Kuzucuoglu** (*Wilfrid Laurier University*) and **Philip Oddi** (*York University*)

**The Elephant in the Room - Racialisation and the Construction of the "Other" within Multicultural Muslim Communities**

The recognition of the impact of Islamophobia and securitization on the Muslim-Canadian experience has pushed racial discourses and homogenization to the forefront of our psyches, community incentives, and research. These discourses are often constructed as inclusive of those who are deemed a 'visible minority.' Adversely, these very narratives tend to be

exclusive of many other Muslims. This includes those who are a challenge to certain narratives of 'inclusion,' and those who do not fit the academia and media-fuelled stereotypes of what a Muslim is 'supposed' to look like. People may also be identified with various levels of Islamic 'pedigree' regardless of ethnicities, ancestral history, or experiences. The conflation of the obsolete constructs of race with Islam reduces not only the religion to a racial identifier, but also forces people who do not fit neatly into these boxes into a liminal space as the 'other.' Does the colour of one's skin erase a person's experience of Islamophobia, securitization, representation, and belonging? Do micro-aggressions, words, ethnic-cleansing or bullets evade a Muslim who may be boxed as 'white'? Does the racialisation of Islam actually promote Islamophobia and othering? The racialisation of Islam within and without Muslim communities impacts not only those who are pushed between boxes of identity when framed as exclusive of one another, it also stunts the various communities these individuals belong to. This paper is a frank discussion of how the persistence of racial discourses, segregation, mis-recognition and non-recognition harms knowledge production, scholars, social cohesion, and most of all, people.

**Codey Lecchino** (*McGill University*)

### **The Kid Was Not Alright: Why Augustine Would Have Listened to Emo Punk Rock**

"The Kid Was Not Alright: Why Augustine Would Have Listened to Emo Punk Rock" explored the intersection of adolescence and faith in Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, specifically focusing on the themes of solidarity and catharsis in the second and third books. Taking factors like how decency was understood in both modern and ancient contexts, as well as how youths are observed to engage in indecent or delinquent behaviour when in informal social settings an exploration of the timelessness of these conditions ensues. The paper questioned whether Augustine's struggles as an adolescent in late antiquity would have resonated with the emo punk rock movement of the late 80s to early 2000s. It used hermeneutics to cross-analyze Augustine's *Confessions* and events of recent history, incorporating secondary scholarship by Aroney and Karfiková alongside studies of modern youth behaviour and punk culture, as put forth by Baron and Hoeben et. al. Thorough documentation of the explosive history of the emo punk rock movement by Greenwald, casts a light upon the esoteric details where the most fundamental elements of young Augustine's responses to his adolescent struggles are inadvertently echoed. The paper argues that catharsis was a common method for adolescents to cope with the challenges of growing up, whether in antiquity or today, and that emo music was a streamlined method of employing this coping mechanism.

**Brian Loh** (*Marist College*)

### **Harmonizing Difference in the Xunzi: Confucian Depictions of Otherness**

Differing readings of Confucianism's *Xunzi* present completely different expressions of the logic of otherness. Paul Goldin's interpretation of Xunzi's coherence (*li* 理) suggests that there is only one coherent pattern for all things. Under this reading, otherness is an incompatibility with flourishing that must be overwritten. As read by Brook Ziporyn, however, coherence *champions* difference by insisting that otherness partially constitutes self. In this, it celebrates personal particularity while modeling how to fold opposition into a non-coercive, non-partisan harmony. Under this alternate rubric, the logic of otherness represents itself as *fracture*, and the proper remedy can be understood as a process of recontextualization and harmonization.

This paper argues that while Goldin's reading is more consonant with the development of Confucian orthodoxy in later centuries, Ziporyn's reading of the *Xunzi* ultimately offers a

framework that resonates more with the scattered transmission of Chunqiu and Warring States Confucianism. After this, it will explore how Xunzi's *li* reframes the human proclivity to divide the world into tribal groups of self and other. It examines difference, harmony, value, and intelligibility (all aspects of *li*'s definition) as philosophical counterweights to the psychological perception that similarity provides more value than difference. It continues by exploring the way *li* grounds the global in the local by highlighting how local and global flourishing are necessarily interlinked, and it concludes by outlining how *li* offers a way to preserve salient local, personal, and tribal bonds while also providing those groups with a meaningful relationship to the global.

**Chris Miller** (*University of Ottawa*)

### **The Fastest Growing Religion? Paganism's Rapid Growth and How Scholars Describe What They Study**

Starting around the early 2000s, many scholars declared that contemporary Paganism was the “fastest growing religion” either worldwide, or in specific locales. This claim was most often based on data from the 2001 American Religious Identification Survey, which found a dramatic rise in Pagans compared to a similar study conducted ten years earlier. However, while Paganism certainly witnessed growth around this time, there are many reasons to question its status as the fastest growing religion. Analyzing the data that scholars cited, as well as factors that shape data collection and interpretations that scholars *applied* to the data, this paper argues that the claim represents a tactic of legitimation. Beyond just a statement of size or demographics, this claim functions as a response to finding oneself in the position of the other, or the under-represented.

By suggesting that a group is growing rapidly, a fairly meagre (at times marginalized) population may be given increased importance. Paganism is hardly alone in making this claim, as other communities also claim the mantle of “fastest growing,” or seek similar ways to articulate their importance and elevate their public perception. Making such claims enhances the perceived significance of the community in question, or perhaps, the importance of any scholars who specialize in studying that community. Proclamations made about Paganism offer a case study to explore how scholars may (intentionally or otherwise) manipulate data to shape perceptions of their topic. This paper therefore urges more reflection and caution on the terms employed to describe data.

**Phoebe Jane Miller** (*Yale Divinity School*)

### **The Love God is, The Love God Works: Karl Barth and Julian of Norwich on The Universally Salvific Will of the Trinity**

Essential to contemporary theology and its treatment of the *other* in society is the question of whether or not God actively wills eternal salvation for all people. In this paper, I will look at two theologians from radically different contexts who agree on how to answer one of the central questions of our time: is universal salvation, with its radical embrace of the *other*, possible? Julian of Norwich and Karl Barth both base their theological framework on God's being as Love. Barth's and Julian's writings speak of the continuity between God's being and work, making it clear that one can not separate who God is in Godself from what God does in creation. Because their trinitarian theology posits God as unequivocally loving, they are able to state definitively that God wills and works only salvation for all, including the *other*. To back up my thesis, I will draw upon a careful analysis of Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* and Karl Barth's “The Being of God as The One Who Loves in Freedom” (CD II:1).

In presenting this paper, I hope to foster discussion about the intersection of Christian soteriology and marginalization. It is my aim to illustrate how embracing a universal view of God's salvific will has tremendous social and political implications. After all, if God wills the salvation of

all, then God must will that human beings work for the good of all, especially those considered as *others* by the strictures of our divisive cultural landscape.

**Marcel Parent** (*Concordia University*)

**Imperial Gays: The Qatar World Cup, the Gay International, and the (Neo-)Colonial Gaze**

The 2022 World Cup football tournament was hosted by Qatar, chosen by the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association*, or FIFA. This was the first time that the tourney was held in West Asian country, and notably the first held in an Arab country. Much controversy heralded the decision to award Qatar the winning bid to host the tourney with accusations of abuse of migrant workers, corruption, questioning of human rights, anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments and more. Much of this controversy fits well-established patterns of global discourse that fit a neo-colonial, Orientalist-laden framing that serves to posit the rational, liberal West from the despotic and irrational Other. Using the work of Joseph Massad, I will explore Western media engagement about the world cup as an example of the politics of the “Gay International,” or as Dennis Altman calls it the “Global Gay.” Joining this work with that of Jasbir Puar, I will argue that much of the Western discourse about non-Western homophobia is rather a wedge to promote Imperial chauvinism. The hypocrisy of these critiques of Qatar is not about the veracity of the claims, many of which are true, but how they fit within a broader structure of discursive power. The work of Giorgio Agamben will help frame the Gay International as reflecting the exceptional Western position of superiority about LGBTQ+ rights even as those rights are being stripped or under threat in the West.

**Florence Pasche-Guignard** (*Université Laval*)

**Betraying his Caste? Frédéric Leboyer, Birth without Violence, and the Other**

Frédéric Leboyer (1918-2017) was a French obstetrician famous for promoting “birth without violence.” Born into a Jewish family, he changed his name during World War 2 and, in his forties, became the disciple of Swami Prajñanpad a Hindu spiritual master in Bengal, teaching a form of non-dualism. This contribution will share the results of a recent study on his spiritual lifepath at the intersection with his medical career, which he subsequently renounced. This study examined Leboyer’s own writings about childbirth and spirituality, media articles published about him (in the 1970s and 1980s especially), obituaries, and, more centrally, interviews that I conducted in 2022 with people who were close to him during his life.

The spiritual dimensions that Leboyer saw in birth and his insistence on “non-violence,” inspired by the notion of *ahimsā* central to several South Asian traditions, did not meet a sympathetic response in his field. “Othered” by his medical colleagues and criticized by feminists, Leboyer resigned from his professional order (*Ordre des médecins*) in 1976. That same year, he published his first book, *Pour une naissance sans violence (Birth without Violence)*, and his spiritual master died. This contribution will focus on how notions tied to “religion” were used against Leboyer at the time, in a process of ostracization and exclusion, and how his encounters with three Indian women played a significant role in his transmission of then-revolutionary ideas around childbirth within and then outside of the field of obstetrics.

**Aaron Ricker** (*Independent Scholar*)

**Believe it or Not: Narrative Self-Othering as Self-Assertion**

Thanks to the missionary zeal and productive apologetics industry of mainstream Christianity, moderns often take it as a given that religious insiders are naturally and deeply invested in making their beliefs seem reasonable and attractive to outsiders. In this study, I argue that insider groups sometimes work in the opposite direction, defining insider identity partly by making sure that



their characteristic beliefs are calibrated to be just alienating enough to most outsiders. My particular focus is the tendency of miracle stories to “push the envelope” of believability in the process of being shared, and my method involves triangulation: 1) I review scholarship relevant to the question of what miracle stories are and do. 2) I propose a social-scientific explanation for the tendency of miraculous tall tales to grow even taller in the telling: tales widely perceived as unbelievable can work as identity markers and “loyalty tests” in the self-exclusion/self-promotion of in-groups. 3) I review documents from the ancient Christian world to show this principle at work in stories about Jesus. 4) I review some local storytelling from our own time to show the principle at work in stories about a modern Canadian miracle man. The payoff of this methodological triangulation is an argument for social utility: the tendency to push the limits of believability to the breaking point in the sharing of miracle stories is concretely useful in community projects of defining “us/insiders” versus “them/outside,” i.e., in testing the relative limits of the willingness to believe.

**Tony Scott** (*University of Toronto*)

**Standing Reserves of Energy: Glacial-fed Rivers, Dinosaur Fossils, and the Alienation of the Land in the Photography of Joseph Burr Tyrrell**

In 1884, Joseph Burr Tyrrell was sent by the Geological Survey of Canada to survey the Canadian West and find resources to fuel the expansion of the colonial settler state. In the process, he “discovered” the skull of the first carnivorous dinosaur in Canada, *Albertosaurus sarcophagus*. In this paper, I will analyze the photography of Tyrrell to argue that he viewed the pristine rivers, native prairies, pine-covered coulees, and Cretaceous-age dinosaur fossils not as integral features of the land, but as standing reserves of energy, fodder for both the future Canadian economy and the ever-expanding Pascalian sphere of knowledge. Yet the dinosaur fossils of the Alberta badlands played a critical role in the epistemology of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) people. For the Niitsitapi, the dinosaur fossils were not systematically excavated, but functioned as vital nodes connecting the people and the land, the past and the present, the spirit and the body. By excavating the skull of the *Albertosaurus*, Tyrrell broke this link, helping to initiate a process whereby the land and its animals became alienated from the indigenous communities that once thrived in the area. The logic of extraction in the excavation of dinosaur fossils, a logic also captured in the colonial gaze of Tyrrell’s camera, was and continues to be an intellectual justification for the dispossession of indigenous land by the Canadian settler-state. The purpose of this paper is to show how this justification was catalyzed by scientists like Tyrrell and is still at work in the bourgeoisie museum display.

**Colin H. Simonds** (*Queen's University*)

**Caring for Ecological "Others": Buddhist Responses to the More-Than-Human World**

While typically left at the margins of justice discourse, the othering of nonhuman animals, plants, and other ecological beings remains a pernicious source of harm to humans and nonhumans alike. Not only does the othering of nonhuman beings justify their continued exploitation, but it also serves to reinforce unjust human hierarchies and the causes of widespread climate change. Like other religious traditions, Buddhism has historically participated in this process of othering and has contributed to the ongoing exploitation of nonhuman ecological others. However, it also possesses resources for challenging this exploitation and for responding to issues in the more-than-human world.

This paper will trace these conflicting views and will interrogate some of the tradition’s assumptions by drawing from recent works in posthumanism, environmental philosophy, and critical animal studies. It will argue that while notions of human exceptionalism undergird its soteriological project, the Tibetan Buddhist ethical tradition can lay a strong foundation for an intersectional environmental ethic that works for the liberation of marginalized humans and

ecological others alike. To this end, it will unpack the socioecological implications of relevant Buddhist ideas including the centrality of sentience as its qualifier for moral considerability, its distribution of personhood to nonhuman beings through the notion of rebirth, and its emphasis on dependent origination in both its philosophy and practice. Ultimately, this paper will draw from these points and from Tibetan Buddhism's rich moral phenomenological ethical tradition to articulate an intersectional Buddhist ethic of care inclusive of these nonhuman ecological others.

**Eve Sotiriadou** (*Queen's University*)

### **The Making of The Muslim Terrorist: Multiple Modernities and Islamic Fundamentalism**

The first decade of the twenty-first century saw American foreign policy and military intervention almost exclusively focused on fighting so-called "Islamic terrorism" under the guise of the "War on Terror." Although much work has been done to examine the roots of extremist movements, including but not limited to *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* by Shiraz Maher, *Anatomy of Terror: From the Death of bin Laden to the Rise of Islamic State* by Ali Soufan, and *Inside Terrorism* by Bruce Hoffman, in this paper, I suggest that it is imperative to take a closer look at the underlying historical dynamics that have fostered these movements, an understanding of which further allows for developing more effective ways to address this phenomenon. As such, I explore the dialectic binary between modernity and tradition, particularly as it manifested in twentieth-century Egypt, where European colonialism and imperialism imposed a kind of modernity that gave rise to what has been called Islamic fundamentalism. This brand of fundamentalism is critical to understand if we are to make sense of twenty-first-century Muslim terrorist movements.

**Ael Spence** (*York University*)

### **"As literal as possible, as free as necessary": The NRSV-UE and English Bible translations of ἀρσενοκοίτης and μαλακὸ**

The roles different English Bible translations have had in the shifts in cultural response to LGBTQ+ persons are significant. I argue that when cultural shift overly influences translation, the translator risks bringing the injustices of the culture into the tradition of a holy text. Translations and revised versions of The Bible are a reflection of the social conscious of their time. We can look back at different translations and discover what was important to the people and societies that revised them based on what they chose to emphasize. One of the most contentious issues in English biblical revision is the translation of ἀρσενοκοίτης and μαλακὸ in chapter six verse nine of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. There are many who believe that this passage and these terms condemn homosexuality of any kind. Stemming from this belief, homosexuality has been criminalized in many countries – some to this day. There are, however, scholars who do not believe that the Bible condemns homosexuality. These scholars are quick to point out that the people of the ancient societies that wrote the bible viewed sexuality quite differently than we do today. In light of recent scholarship and changing cultural norms, has the NRSV-UE changed anything in regards to the terms μαλακὸ and ἀρσενοκοίτης? What does this revision tell us about our modern perceptions of the LGBTQ+ community? In this paper, I explore what is emphasized within the NRSV-UE and other Bible translations of our time.

**Erin K. Vearncombe** (*University of Toronto*)

### **If Eve ain't in your garden... Lil Nas X and the Queering of Eden**

The release of Lil Nas X's music video for his eponymous song "MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name)" in 2021 created a storm of media controversy focused primarily on the ending scene of the video, a scene depicting Lil Nas X, in Hell, performing a lap dance for Satan. What this controversy missed, however, was Lil Nas X's nuanced performance of the Garden of Eden



narrative from the Book of Genesis at “MONTERO”’s opening. Rich in symbolic and historical-textual reference, Lil Nas X – who co-directed the video alongside Tanu Muino – performs a queer Eden in which he plays all parts: Adam-Eve, the serpent, God, hero, martyr, and, at the video’s conclusion, assumes the person and power of Satan for himself. The artist has been clear that “MONTERO” is a direct response to processes of othering and persecution, and his performance of the Adam and Eve story – here, an ‘adam story – offers an unprecedented intervention into historical readings of creation(s) in Genesis. This public intervention invites academics and interpreters to look further than the binary arguments that continue to characterize arguments about Edenic gender. Instead of asking, is gender in Genesis a relationship of hierarchy or equality, subordination or mutuality, “MONTERO,” in queering creation, asks more nuanced questions about the power of gender in creating self and other, and about the relationship between sexuality and self. As counteractive and curative mythmaker, Lil Nas X argues that “if Eve ain’t in your garden,” a traditionally heteronormative Eden is transformed.

**James W. Watts** (*Syracuse University*)

### **Banning Books: Rituals to Discourage and Encourage Inspiration**

Banning books from public and school libraries has sharply increased in the U.S. in recent years. This paper analyzes the phenomenon of book banning from the theoretical perspective of how books can be ritualized in different textual dimensions. Book bans have a long cultural history in shaping literary and religious canons. They have often been deployed together with strategies of book destruction. Like book burning, book banning aims to draw public attention through media spectacle and to offend political opponents. In contrast to ritualized destruction of iconic books, however, book banning attacks the expressive dimension of reading texts by trying to prevent access to them. Both books bans and book burnings are political media spectacles more than effective suppression strategies given the multiple paths to access available to many people today. But whereas book burnings aim to offend opponents’ sensibilities, book bans aim to prevent inspiration from reading certain kinds of books. That goal is apparent from the disproportionate focus on banning books with multi-cultural and LGBTQ+ themes. The ban acts as a warning against embracing certain opinions and identities. However, analyzing book banning as ritual draws attention to well-developed, ongoing traditions of counter-ritualizing by many libraries. They publicize banned book lists and encourage reading them during “banned book weeks” and similar events. Through this ritual analysis of iconic and expressive texts, book banning emerges as a traditional site of symbolic conflict over the means and goals of textual inspiration.

**Sarah Wicks-Potter** (*McGill University*)

### **Reclaiming Hope in the Face of Eschatological Ambivalence: A Feminist Perspective on Luther**

In this paper, I will bring forward both feminist and eschatology while looking at the works of Martin Luther and their interactions with contemporary feminist theologians. I have previously argued in my paper “Luther’s Eschatological Void as a Result of his Dependence on Worldly Powers” that Luther’s theology does not include a well-thought-out eschatology. This does not come from a lack of interest in eschatology but is pragmatically difficult to achieve because Luther relies on support from worldly kingdoms, not the kingdom to come. I will briefly summarize the argument I made there. We will then move on to an examination of some of Luther’s views on women using his works *Lectures on Genesis Chapters 21-25* and *Against the Spiritual Estate of the Pope and the Bishops Falsely so Called*. After examining what Luther has said, and analyzing his own ambiguity and inconsistency, we will see what contemporary Lutheran women have done in the Lutheran tradition to reclaim it. We will eventually conclude that despite Luther’s ambiguous views of women

– and the role Lutheranism played in limiting women’s autonomy in the Reformation – Lutheran feminist theologians have reclaimed his perspective, building an eschatology that joyfully looks for the world to come.

**Jeff Yaneff** (*Wycliffe College, University of Toronto*)

**The Challenge Scholarly Consensus Poses to Minority Voices in Interdisciplinary Studies**

How should religious scholars interact with majority consensus, whether within or without their discipline? What parameters or frameworks might assist the amplification of minority or marginalized voices?

In this proposed paper I examine the appropriateness of including minority and marginalized voices within discussions where majority or "consensus" positions have been firmly established. Specifically, I aim to explore the challenge that “consensus” poses in interdisciplinary work, since the very nature of segregated disciplines implies variegated methodological approaches and commitments. Indeed, a "majority" voice in secular sciences may be a "minority" voice in religious studies and vice-versa. To be sure, attaining consensus is an integral task within intellectual endeavors. However, there is perhaps the need for critical examination of how consensus is formed, which voices are excluded, and what scaffolding might be offered to minority and/or marginalized participants.

To carry out this task, I will draw from my PhD dissertation which challenges a two-millennia consensus in the Christian epistle to the Romans. In my work I explore the power dynamics associated with consensus, examine the nature and meaning of consensus, offer proposals for incorporating minority voices within intra- and inter-disciplinary work and suggest that a healthy consensus remains self-critical and open to welcoming alternative voices.