

BASR Annual Conference, 6-7 September 2021
School of Divinity, University of Edinburgh

“From Religious Studies to the Study of Religion/s:
Disciplinary Futures for the 21st century”

Revised call for papers: New deadline **31 May 2021**.

We warmly invite contributions to the BASR annual conference 2021. Following extensive discussion we have decided to move the conference entirely online, to be held on Monday and Tuesday 6-7 September 2021. We believe that an online platform offers the best opportunity to maximise participation and extend international access in the current health crisis. We are circulating these revised details accordingly and warmly encourage your participation.

The BASR 2021 conference falls in the 175th anniversary year of the foundation of New College, home of the School of Divinity, and marks the 50th anniversary of the teaching of Religious Studies at Edinburgh. The conference is also designated an IAHR Special Conference and we look forward to welcoming our international colleagues.

The aim of the conference is to discuss disciplinary and interdisciplinary pasts and futures in Religious Studies or the Study of Religion/s, with a particular focus on the future shape of the field in the 21st Century. After a period of sharp critique of many of the field’s basic categories and axioms, it feels timely now to reflect upon what the field has positively achieved, the challenges it has faced (and overcome), and the direction(s) it should now pursue.

The scope of the conference is the post-1960s period up to and including the present moment, during which Religious Studies emerged, consolidated and diversified as a recognised disciplinary field or ‘brand’. Local and regional histories of the field during this period are welcome, particularly where they identify problems or strengths for the future, or can illuminate regional or international developments.

We are particularly interested in exploring the grounds for positive and constructive disciplinary futures based on concrete methods and models for research and teaching. Questions to consider here might include: What intellectual benefits does the Study of Religion/s bring to academic research in

colleges and universities? What are its particular strengths in teaching, what pedagogical contributions does it make to secondary school and adult education, and how might its curriculae be improved in practical ways? What kinds of impact does the field have in wider society, and in what directions might its impact be developed? Who are the different audiences for the Study of Religion/s, and how can we engage new audiences whilst fostering existing strengths? Which academic disciplines offer strongest synergies for our field, whether established partners or new approaches, and how can we make the most of these while retaining a sense of our own identity? And what's in a name – what is the best disciplinary title for what we've been doing since the 1960s (and earlier)?

We are delighted to confirm the titles of our two keynote papers:

'The Collective Ownership of Knowledge: Implications for the Study of Religion/s in Local Contexts'

*James Cox, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies,
University of Edinburgh*

'Studying Religions critically in Universities and Schools: bridging the gap?'

*Wanda Alberts, Professor in the Study of Religion,
Leibniz University Hannover.*

The programme will also feature an international panel on the conference theme and a parallel online video and art installation, "RITES".

We encourage proposals for both individual papers and panels that address the above themes and questions. We will also make room for presentation of BASR members' research on alternative topics.

Standard panels will last one hour. Proposals should include a 200 word abstract for the panel as a whole and should identify a panel chair as point of contact. A panel may be made up of three papers in the standard model. We encourage panel organisers to propose creative ways of customising the structure of their panel to facilitate stimulating and meaningful online engagement.

Individual abstracts for papers are also welcome. They should be no longer than 200 words and carry a title plus author's name and institutional affiliation.

Papers should last no more than 20 minutes *including* time for Q&A. We will group individual abstracts into optimum panels as far as possible.

All papers and panels should contribute to the remit of the BASR as a member organisation of the International Association for the History of Religions: specifically, to advance research and education through the academic study of religions by providing a forum for the non-confessional, critical, analytical and cross-cultural study of religions, past and present. We will edit a peer-reviewed volume of selected papers under the conference title.

Registration for the conference will open in late Spring 2021. The cost of registration, for both presenters and non-presenters, will be as follows:

- Members of the BASR: Free
- Non-members (waged): £30
- Non-members (unwaged): £15

Note that for non-members, registration for the conference will also include entitlement for one year of membership of the BASR.

Please submit proposals via email attachment **by 5pm on 31 May 2021**, to Dr Claire Wanless (claire.wanless@ed.ac.uk).

Proposals will be considered by the conference committee – Dr Steven Sutcliffe, Dr Claire Wanless and Dr Chris Cotter – in consultation with the BASR Executive Committee. Outcomes will be communicated in early June.