

## JOINT MEETING ACSRAL - RC22 ISA

**Secretary RC22 ISA:** Olga Olivas (Mexico)

**Program coordinator:** Hugo Rabbia (Argentina)

**President RC22 ISA:** Maria del Mar Griera (Spain)

**Vice President ACSRAL:** Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga (México)

**President ACSRAL:** Néstor Da costa (Uruguay)

### PROGRAM

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Semprún Building</b>
<b>Joint meeting Inauguration</b>	Auditorium
<b>Round Table</b> Nonreligion Across the Globe: Challenges and Opportunities in South-North Dialogue Spirituality in the North and the South	Auditorium
<b>WG.1</b> Diversity management and politics in the (in) visibility of religious pluralism.	Room S101
<b>WG.2</b> New Methodologies for the Study of Religious and Spiritual Phenomena	Room S101
<b>WG.3</b> Religious Actors, Social Movements, and Politics: Exploring Intersections and Emerging Dynamics	Room S102
<b>WG.4</b> Exploring Spirituality in Social Science: Southern Contexts, Flows and Theories	Room S201
<b>WG.5</b> Gender, Religion, and Migration in contemporary societies	Room S102
<b>WG.6</b> Organized Forms of Nonreligion	Room S201
<b>Round Table</b> Spirituality in the North and the South	Auditorium

## TIMETABLE

Monday 22 Joint Meeting ACSRAL – RC22 ISA		
08:30 – 18:00	Registration	Edificio Semprún Hall de entrada
09:00 – 11:00	Inauguration of the Joing Meeting RC22 ISA – ACSRAL	Edificio Semprún Auditorio
	Round table Nonreligion Across the Globe: Challenges and Opportunities in South–North Dialogue	
11:30 – 13:00	Working groups 1 5 6	Edificio Semprún S101 S102 S201
13:15 – 14:45	Workshop Academic publication for young researchers. (in Spanish)	Edificio Semprún S202
15:00 – 17:30	Working groups 2 3 4	Edificio Semprún S101 S102 S201
18:00 – 20:00	Round Table Spirituality in the North and the South	Edificio Semprún Auditorio

Tuesday 23 Joint Meeting ACSRAL – RC22 ISA		
09:00 – 11:00	Working groups 2 4	Edificio Semprún S101 S201

## ROUND TABLES

<b>RT Nonreligion Across the Globe: Challenges and Opportunities in South-North Dialogue</b>
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<b>July 22, 9:00 – 11:00, Semprun Building, Auditorium</b>
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Coordinators: Jacqui Frost (USA), Hugo H. Rabbia (Argentina)
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Participants: Ryan Cragun (USA), Paula Montero (Brazil), Jennifer Selby (Canada), Juan Marco Vaggione (Argentina)
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<b>RT Spirituality in the North and the South</b>
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<b>July 22, 18:00 – 20:00, Semprun Building, Auditorium</b>
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Coordinators: Mar Griera (Spain) and Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga (Mexico)
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Participants: Anna Halafoff (Australia), Rodrigo Toniol (Brazil), Verónica Giménez Believau (Argentina), Sol Prieto (Argentina), Olga Olivas Hernández (México)
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## WORKING GROUPS

### **WG. 1 Diversity management and politics in the (in) visibility of religious pluralism**

**July 22, 11:30 – 13:00, Building Semprún, Room S101**

**Session Organizers:** Roberta Ricucci (Università di Torino, Italia) and Juan Cruz Esquivel (UBA – CEIL-CONICET, Argentina)

**Description:**

The session will focus on the state's approach to religious diversity, primarily encouraging empirical study and theoretical reflection on how to deal with the greater heterogeneity of religious identities in the contemporary era. Requests for places of worship, recognition of rights, and invitations to participate in the political decision-making process are handled at the local rather than the national level: these are just some of the problems that need to be addressed due to the increasing visibility of different religious expressions in the public sphere. Across the world, there are various approaches to breaking down the social construction of the Muslim/Sikhist/Buddhist/Christian exception. The concepts of "spatial regime," "street-level bureaucracy," and "secular place-making" can be used to compare (and contrast) what each social reality grants to religions, creating a specific spatial order negotiated between the state, urban administration, secular space, and different religious affiliations.

1. ***Secularism in Nepal: State Behaviour and People's Perception***

Uddhab Pyakurel / Niraj Bhandari (Kathmandu University, Nepal)

Abstract:

Scholars across the world comprehend secularism in various ways. The main motive behind the concept of secularism is to separate religion from politics and state affairs. Nepal's democratic journey from a Hindu kingdom to a secular republic is one of the most remarkable political and social developments of the twenty-first century. The Constitution of Nepal 2015 reaffirms Nepal as a secular state; however, its ambiguous definition has left the door open to disputes. This research will attempt to understand the situation of secularism from the perspective of religious institutions and study the gains and losses that have been incurred in this process of change that Nepali society has gone through. This will be qualitative research by interviewing people and government stakeholders to achieve a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being investigated, the perception of secularization in Nepal, and to establish the linkages between the social-political happenings and the interpretation of its effects by the people in their lived experiences. This study will look into several key components, including the definition and significance of secularism in the context of Nepal, the perceptions of common Nepali people, and its implementation status. This will further help understand the multifaceted factors that shape the concept of secularism in Nepal.

2. ***Liberal Social Work values vs. conservative ultra-Orthodox Values: How Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jewish social work students deal with value clashes***

Ari Engelberg. (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel)

Abstract

Issues of diversity and pluralism alongside equality, equity and other liberal values are at the fore of academic social work studies programs for Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) Jews in Israel. Social work values, as they are understood and defined in the Israeli social work code of ethics often differ, and may even conflict with, the religious values of Haredi students. Over the last few decades, the Israeli government has supported the opening of specialized academic programs for Haredi men and women, the goal being to encourage them to join the workforce. These programs attempt to cater to the needs of their Haredi students, firstly by separating men and women and thus creating what they consider to be a religiously safe environment, and secondly, by avoiding exposure to academic material that they would consider inappropriate or sacrilegious. This second goal is only partially achievable due to academic requirements. Subjects studied in these programs include engineering, business management, law, and social work. The latter is especially susceptible to rousing religious doubts among students, due to the values that accompany the professional socialization process. The research to be presented here is a work in progress. It is based on qualitative interviews conducted with Haredi social work students. The research seeks to identify what issues Haredi students find to be problematic or lead them to question their religiosity while studying for their degree, and how they deal with these challenges

3. ***Secularism and religion among Brazilian adolescent public school students.***

Guilherme Ramalho Arduini. (Instituto Federal de São Paulo, Brasil)

Abstract

This paper presents the results of a study that combines documentary research and ethnographic observations in public schools (municipal and state) attended by students aged between eleven and eighteen in the Campinas region (located in the interior of the state of São Paulo, Brazil). The study addresses national issues, such as legislation on religious education and legal definitions of secularism. Simultaneously, we will observe how relationships and the production of meanings regarding these issues occur among students, education professionals, and families within the school community. The chosen region for observation is located in an urban area with religious diversity and a high population concentration. These elements create situations that require public bodies to manage religious diversity. In dialogue with studies on the subject in the landscape of large urban centers in Argentina (J. C. Esquivel) or Brazil (E. Giumbelli), this presentation examines how school spaces in São Paulo are where divergent proposals about the coexistence of different (ir)religious options among their occupants clash.

**4. Management of religious diversity? No. That is a private matter. Perspectives from Uruguay**

Néstor Da Costa, (Catholic University of Uruguay)

Abstract

Uruguay is a very particular country in terms of religion in Latin America, which has historically tried to remove religion from the public sphere and assign it to the private sphere. It has developed a model very close to the French "laïcité". Nobody talks or debates in Uruguay about the "management of religious diversity". The presentation will give an account of the roots of this phenomenon and the attention or not, on the part of the State, to the demands coming from different religious groups.

## WG.2 New Methodologies for the Study of Religious and Spiritual Phenomena

July 22, 15:00 – 17:30, Building Semprún, Room S101

July 23, 9:00 – 11:00, Building Semprún, Room S101

**Session Organizers:** Hugo José Suárez (UNAM, Mexico) Juan Martín López Fianza (IICS-UCA/CONICET, Argentina), María Pilar García Bossio (IICS-UCA/CONICET, Argentina)

**Description:**

In recent decades, religious phenomena have become increasingly complex on a global level, with unique characteristics present in different regions. Meanwhile, the field of social studies of religion itself has undergone a significant transformation, thanks to new technologies, the globalization of knowledge, and the emergence of new analytical tools.

In this context, it is vital to explore and discuss the new methodologies that are redefining the way we study and understand religious phenomena in and from different regions of the world, incorporating innovative and multidisciplinary approaches that transcend traditional boundaries.

This is why our Working Group aims to foster interdisciplinary collaboration and critical reflection on traditional and emerging methodologies in the study of religion. We will prioritize cutting-edge approaches that facilitate a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the interplay between religion, culture, and society. We are interested in research that addresses regional particularities as well as research that seeks to capture phenomena on a global or inter-regional scale.

To this end, we invite papers that address the following topics and welcome other related discussions:

- Data science as a tool to analyze online and offline patterns of religious behavior and beliefs.
- Surveys conducted using new technologies
- Digital Ethnographies
- Visual analysis
- Audiovisual Research
- Cultural Cartographies
- Collaborative research with study subjects
- Methodological strategies for communicating results to diverse audiences

We encourage academics, researchers, and professionals from a wide range of disciplines to present their research and experiences using these methodologies and to share their findings, challenges, and successes. In pursuing this goal, our objective is to facilitate a productive dialogue that contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of ever-changing religious phenomena.

**1. *Zen TikTok: Exploring the Intersection of Secularism, Spirituality, and Social Media***

Gabriela Pimenta Martins (PUC Campinas, Brazil. The New School, UK)

Abstract

Remarkably, TikTok, known for its swift and superficial content, hosts a diverse array of religious and meditation profiles, challenging conventional expectations. These profiles offer a unique opportunity to democratize spirituality and make practices like meditation accessible to a diverse audience. Yet, it is crucial to acknowledge the paradox between the platform's fast-paced, superficial nature and the pursuit of spiritual connection and mental well-being that these profiles aim to provide, highlighting the complexity of interactions between spirituality, social media, and contemporary culture.

**2. *Spiritual Threads in the Political Tapestry: Examining Religious Elements in Javier Milei's Presidential Campaign in Argentina***

Juan Martín López Fianza (IICS-UCA/CONICET, Argentina)

Abstract

In this presentation, we delve into the exploration of the presence and significance of religious elements from diverse traditions, including Catholicism, Evangelism, Judaism, and Esotericism, within Javier Milei's presidential campaign in Argentina. The assertion is made that these elements not only serve as a means of expressing the candidate's personal identity, biography, and beliefs but also function to establish connections with various social and cultural sectors. Additionally, they play a role in crafting an alternative discourse to that of traditional political options. To analyze how these religious elements manifest in online journalistic media, we employ data science methodologies such as web scraping to gather data. Subsequently, sentiment analysis, text classification, and network visualization are applied for a comprehensive analysis. This study is anticipated to contribute significantly to our understanding of religious and spiritual phenomena in the Latin American context. Furthermore, it aims to prompt reflection on the evolving landscape of political communication in the digital era.

### **3. The website as a tool for the study of the religious phenomenon**

Hugo José Suárez, (UNAM, México)

#### Abstract

The new technologies have posed challenges for researchers in various fields. On the one hand, they aid in reevaluating the nature of the subjects under study, and on the other hand, they suggest and necessitate new approaches to construct and convey this understanding. This presentation will analyze two studies that, in addition to being included in an academic book, were complemented by a website. Firstly, the published research titled "Creyentes Urbanos" (Suárez, 2015) and its corresponding technical support (<https://hugojosesuarez.com/creyentesurbanos/site/index.html>) will be presented. Secondly, the book "Guadalupanos en París" (Suárez, 2023), accompanied by the website [www.guadalupanosenparis.com](http://www.guadalupanosenparis.com) (still under construction), will be discussed. What challenges do new technologies pose in contemplating the religious phenomenon? What are the successes and failures? What knowledge can we glean from these two experiences?

### **4. Ethnographic Record, Sociological Imagination, and Aesthetic(s) in Conflict: Photography in the Study of Religion**

Alejandro Frigerio (CONICET, IICS-UCA/CONICET, Argentina)

#### Abstract

This paper delves into the diverse applications of photography within anthropological practice. Beyond its role as a fundamental tool for ethnographic documentation, it underscores its broader significance in spotlighting, disseminating, and aesthetically framing cultural expressions often overlooked, undervalued, or stigmatized. Through diverse examples drawn from Argentine religiosity, it navigates the potential analytical biases inherent in aestheticization, highlighting the varied lenses through which it can be approached. These lenses encompass the aesthetic standards of professional photography, insights gleaned from social theory, and the challenging yet attainable goal of capturing the native aesthetics of the involved actors. In an era marked by the widespread circulation of images self-produced by "natives" through mobile devices



and social media platforms, the discourse questions the anthropologist's role as both an image producer and interpreter vis-a-vis the narratives of the primary actors.

**5. *Sacred Places as a tool to apprehend Mexican religious diversity***

Armando García Chiang (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Iztapalapa, México)

Abstract

The current political situation and the complicated relation of the West with Islamic countries have provided evidence that the most significant mistake in the theories of secularization is the conviction that modernization inevitably leads to the loss of the importance of religion. In Mexico secularization exists in the sense that it is a no confessional society differentiated in the structures concerning the religious institution and demonstrating an internalized acceptance of laicism. On the other hand, a syncretic and racially mixed religiousness persists among the population. In this context, pluralism has been taking place gradually and it is possible to maintain that diversification is becoming the new paradigm in the Mexican religious context. This work aims to approach the diversification of religion through an analysis of the proliferation of sacred places in the metropolitan area of Mexico City, based on the thought that the process of sacralization of the space provides a new meaning to ordinary elements in the urban landscape and that that meaning depends on the religious belief to which it is ascribed. Likewise, this paper attempts to use the concept of wayside shrines as a methodological tool to apprehend the proliferation of new sacred places in Mexico's streets.

**6. *The postsecular turn in the social sciences: an exploration of the theoretical-empirical performance of research agendas on postsecularism***

Albert Soto Vilches (Universidad Diego Portales, Chile)

Abstract

This working paper develops an analysis of the conceptualization and explanatory capacity that contemporary research agendas on the postsecular provide for investigating the relationship between religion and secularism in the public sphere of contemporary societies. Specifically, four empirically informed theorization trends on the postsecular are described and analyzed: (i) a functionalist trend oriented towards the analysis of workspaces within religious institutions where a shared professional ethics is developed a round social integration; (ii) a trend grounded in human geography oriented towards the analysis of two social phenomena: the relationship between public spaces in everyday life and the flows of religious affiliation and belief, and the dispute over the historical and cultural significance of contemporary cities, with a focus on the debate around the meaning of traditionally religious places; (iii) a trend grounded in egalitarianism oriented towards the normative analysis of institutional management of comprehensive pluralism in the public sphere; (iv) a post structuralist trend oriented towards the analysis of processes of political agency and political resistance in contexts of social and political conflict. Consequently, this working paper aims to contribute to the contemporary academic debate on the postsecular by providing answers to the following questions: What is the postsecular? How has the postsecular been studied in



contemporary academic production? What are the epistemological and analytical advantages and disadvantages that the postsecular offers for the analysis of the relationship between religion and secularism in contemporary societies?

7. ***"Everything Everywhere at Once": Challenges of online/offline fieldwork in the social sciences of religion***

María Pilar García Bossio (IICS-UCA/CONICET, Argentina)

Abstract

In recent years, any ethnographic fieldwork in urban spaces has to take into account, to some extent, what is happening through the Internet. This has become even more important during the pandemic, when all of life has been digitized, which poses interesting challenges for the field of religions. In this paper, we propose to reflect on the challenges of fieldwork today, based on research on the state management of religion in Argentine municipalities. We are particularly interested in the methodological challenges that exist in three aspects. First, the narratives that are constructed between what we study offline and the ways in which it is presented online. Second, the place of the researcher in this process, where each connection to the field presents advantages and challenges. Finally, the difficulties of drawing boundaries at the beginning and end of fieldwork, when we find ourselves embedded in the social networks in which the communities and people we study participate. In this way, we seek to explore some of the challenges of our fieldwork in order to outline new methodological tools.

### **WG.3 Religious Actors, Social Movements, and Politics: Exploring Intersections and Emerging Dynamics**

July 22, 15:00 – 17:30, Building Semprún. Room S102

**Session Organizers:** Geoffrey Pleyers (UC Louvain, Belgium / ISA President) and Mar Grier (UAB, Barcelona / RC22 ISA President)

**Description:**

This session aims to delve into the intricate relationships between social movements and religious actors in the contemporary world. In contrast to the longstanding perspective of progressive secularization that has dominated the sociology of social movements, religious movements have significantly gained public and political influence in recent decades. Despite this, research in this area remains in its early stages. In addition, while both social movement studies and the sociology of religion have provided valuable analytical and methodological tools for understanding contemporary religious/social movements, these perspectives are rarely combined.

This panel welcomes contributions that analyze contemporary movements or campaigns from local, national, regional, or global perspectives, encompassing both progressive and reactionary movements across various global regions. We are particularly interested in the ways religious groups contribute to socializing the next generation of activists, fostering distinctive political and activist cultures, and actively shaping the resources and networks utilized in social and political mobilization. Papers presented in this session should provide empirically-grounded analysis, shedding light on the intricate dynamics at the intersection of religious actors, social movements, and politics.

**1. *The rejection and/or support of presidential candidatures by pentecostal evangelicals in the Brazilian political scenario from 1989 to 2022***

Janine Bendorovicz Trevisan (PUC RS, Brazil), Bianca Elizabeth Suthoff Lunkes (UFRGS, Brazil)

Abstract.

The paper analyzes the rejection and/or support of the Workers Party (PT) candidacies for the position of president of the republic, by Pentecostal evangelicals, in the Brazilian political scene from 1989 to 2022. In 1989, 1994 and 1998, the PT candidacy was rejected by the main evangelical Pentecostal leaders in the country, seen as a possible incarnation of the devil, against which the faithful should fight to protect the nation. In the elections of 2002, 2006, 2010 and 2014, PT members managed to get closer to this religious group, winning their support. However, some policies implemented during the years of PT management led to the rupture of this political alliance established in 2002. In 2018, this group supported the candidate Jair Messias Bolsonaro, in the name of God, family and country, and the PT candidacy returns to be the target of rejection and demonization, a situation that intensifies in the 2022 elections with the confrontation between Jair Bolsonaro and Luís Inácio Lula da Silva. In the end, Lula is elected as the first president of the republic to be elected without the support of the evangelical segment since the country's redemocratization after the proclamation of the 1988 Constitution.

**2. *How to Build an Antifundamentalist Christianity? Navigating Digital Tactics and Strategies through an Ecological Organizational Perspective***

Carolina Falcão (Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco, URFPE, Brazil)

Abstract

This work proposes an exploratory analysis of the growth and diversification of Novas Narrativas Evangélicas (New Evangelical Narratives, NNE), an interdenominational Brazilian group formed in 2022 aiming to unite diverse Christian representations and identities. Employing an ecologist organizational perspective, the study delves into NNE's strategies and actions, particularly its digital activism, that claims for an anti fundamentalist agenda among Christian denominations in Brazil. The group presents itself as a community-platform, leveraging digital media for political engagement while navigating a space of tactics and strategies. The dual approach reflects a shift in how progressive Christian movements in Brazil organize and act, emphasizing the tactical sense of community in crafting engaging content and the strategic aspect in establishing a power project and anti fundamentalist unity. This dualism challenges the hegemony of

established Christian elites, highlighting the complex nature of progressive evangelical activism. The analysis underscores the importance of an ecologist approach in understanding NNE's activities and suggests its relevance in mapping similar groups across Brazil and Latin America. Overall, this study contributes to the discourse on religious contestation and dissent against dominant religious narratives.

### **3. *Evangelicals and Political Participation in Chile's Rural South***

Isabel Castillo (Universidad de Chile, Chile), Rodrigo Medel (Universidad Andrés Bello, Chile)

#### **Abstract**

Recent literature has documented an urban-rural or center-periphery cleavage in support for far right parties in Europe and the United States, with rural areas supporting parties that tend to defend traditional Christian values. In Chile, similar trends have been observed in recent elections, with rural areas strongly supporting Kast and his Republican Party. Similarly, studies have shown that evangelicals have greater propensity to vote for Kast (Meléndez et al 2021). Distrust of liberal elites (Cramer 2016), weakening of social bonds (Bolet 2023) and economic decline (Broz et al 2021) are among the relevant explanations for these patterns. Using qualitative data from focus groups and interviews with evangelical communities in a rural municipality of the Araucanía region (one of the poorest in the country and with a high concentration of evangelical population), we explore their preferences, networks, and views of poli/cs. We pay special attention to the role of churches as intermediary organizations and the variations the linkages between churches and local state institutions can have on evangelicals' political participation and preferences.

### **4. *Catholic environmental activism in Brazil: a look at the paradigm of integral ecology***

Breno Botelho (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ, Brazil)

#### **Abstract**

Over the last decade, a term has gained prominence within Catholic groups attentive to the socio-environmental transformations taking place on the planet, reconfiguring narratives and practices within Catholicism, this term is integral ecology. Systematized in the encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015), one of the most important documents of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, in it, the notion of integrality is structurally worked in order to build bridges between different matrices of knowledge and social realities. Understanding the interdependence between ecological and social crises, it promotes criticism of the "developmental paradigm" (FRANCISCO 2015) proposing elements of the human economy and socio-ecology (DELGADO 2021). Finding anchor in the concept of Anthropocene, it articulates an approach to Earth Sciences, referencing the understanding of the Earth as a living organism (LOVELOCK 1979) and as a new political actor (MANIGLIER 2020). Based on data collected over two years of fieldwork in Catholic groups linked to the socio-environmental agenda in different Brazilian states, as part of a PhD ongoing at the UFRJ, this work will focus on orbiting influences and inspirations in the concept of integral ecology as adopted by groups linked to Catholic environmental activism in Brazil.

**5. *Evangelical activism and political use: the multiple ways of transnational conservatism in Guatemala***

Thierry Maire (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales de Paris, France)

Abstract

Guatemala has recently shown some traits of political right-wing religious activism, conflating evangelical actors and conservative politicians and organizations. Their objective crystallized around a law proposal (Iniciativa 5272) regarding sexual reproduction rights, the LGBTI community and same-sex marriage all at once. Upon closer study, my doctoral investigation helped to reveal the many intricate relationships which lay behind the 'Asociación la Familia Importa', the core NGO at work in the public sphere. Using actor-network theory analysis, I reconstructed both the internal Guatemalan map of actors. I also underlined some various exterior actors who took a strong interest in the debate, especially ones from Latin American pressure groups. The operating dynamics of said dispute were more complex than what was previously thought and shed light on transnational influence in such matters.

**6. *The Color of Modernity is Grey: Religious Organizations, Political Activism and Decision-making in Contemporary India***

Sumedha Dutta (Central University of Punjab, India)

Abstract

The dominant discourse on modernity prophesized that, as nation-states made the shift from tradition to modernity, the influence of religion shall increasingly diminish in the public sphere, as religion would eventually get privatized. While this Euro-American perspective on modernity has been challenged time and again, it has rarely reflected the social realities of countries of the Global South. While wars are still being fought in the name of religion elsewhere in the world, religious actors and movements are clearly governing everyday politics, even in countries such as India. In this context, this explanatory study seeks to explore the current intersections of religion and politics in India, particularly with reference to the political engagement of the Hindutva based Rashtriya SwayamSevak Sangh (RSS), and its influence on the decision-making apparatus of the ruling party. It also attempts to unravel the association of Sikh organizations with the year-long farmers' protests, that were primarily against three farm acts that had been passed by the Indian Parliament, and with the farmers' ongoing demand for a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP). This paper shall be based on primary data gathered through observation and semi-structured interviews, which would be substantiated with secondary data collected from articles published in journals, books and newspapers, along with data gathered from organizational websites and literature.

**WG.4 Exploring Spirituality in Social Science: Southern Contexts, Flows and Theories**

July 22, 15:00 – 17:30 hs. Building Semprún. Room S201

July 23, 9:00 – 11:00 hs. Building Semprún. Room S201

**Session Organizers:** Anna Halafoff (Deakin University, Australia), Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga (Universidad de Guadalajara, Mexico) and Verónica Giménez-Beliveau (CEIL-CONICET-University of Buenos Aires, Argentina)

**Description:**

This session invites contributions to a session on the social scientific study of spirituality, focused on Southern contexts, flows and theories. We encourage submissions from Latin American scholars, and also scholars from Oceania, Africa and Asia, given spirituality in these contexts has rich Indigenous, immigrant and settler dimensions. Much of the scholarship on spirituality from the Global North, focuses on flows of spirituality from the so-called East. To contribute to decolonizing studies of spirituality and religion, we focus here on previously under-appreciated South-South flows of spirituality, and Southern spiritual theories.

We encourage submissions that investigate the interplay of Southern spirituality in the following areas:

**Body and Health:** exploring the role of the body, and the work of the body, within contemporary spirituality, and new healing approaches.

**Nature:** Analyzing the relationship between spirituality and the natural world, including how spiritual beliefs shape attitudes and actions toward environmental conservation.

**Emerging Rituals:** Investigating the development of new rituals and spiritual practices in response to contemporary societal changes.

**Dis/misinformation:** Exploring the spread of dis/misinformation, and conspiracy in spiritual communities.

We especially welcome contributions from the Global South, with an openness to diverse and indigenous perspectives on spirituality. We also encourage innovative theoretical approaches that offer fresh insights into the study of spirituality within an interdisciplinary framework.

**1. *Interreligious and Spiritual Alliance for the Climate in Chile: Climate Activism from the Spiritual Diversity of the South***

Elisabet Noemí Aylwin Pincheira. (University of Groningen RUG, Netherlands)

**Abstract**

The presentation examines Chile's climate activism through the Interreligious and Spiritual Alliance for the Climate (AIEC) case study. This study delves into the attitudes and actions of this alliance regarding climate activism, highlighting its capacity to foster collaboration for environmental protection, which also includes the creation of interreligious rituals among diverse spiritualities and religions in the Latin American context. At the same time, it incorporates the influence of the dictatorship in Chile from 1973 to 1990 in shaping climate activist groups and faith spaces in order to provide a crucial historical understanding. The presentation addresses how the AIEC responds to contemporary challenges of the climate crisis, examining the relationship between spirituality and the environment. All of this is framed within my master's thesis, conducted between 2023 and 2024 in the "Religion, Conflict and Globalization" program at the University of Groningen, which focuses on the AIEC. For this presentation, I utilize

part of this research, which is based on interviews, participatory observation, and documentary research.

**2. *Body, Health, and Spirituality. Perspectives in and from Latin America.***

Olga Olivas & Olga Odgers. (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, México)

Abstract

This paper aims to discuss some theoretical-analytical and methodological perspectives proposed in and from the South (mainly Latin America) to analyze the interrelation between body, health, and spirituality. Such perspectives have focused on the study of healing rituals and wellness in different contexts, paying particular attention to three dimensions: the epistemologies of the body in illness and healing processes and experiences, agreements and disagreements between healing processes and health institutions, and the bodily involvement of those who investigate healing processes. Likewise, it is proposed to account for some dialogues and appropriations that Latin American scholars have deployed on studying religion and spirituality in the face of the turn of the body in Social Sciences.

**3. *Lived Religion and Religious Practice in Latin America: a Review of the Central Religious Categories of Classical Social Theory***

Felipe Orellana. (Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Chile)

Abstract

The paper seeks to assess a conceptual framework to interpret religion in Latin America in the XXI century. Based on the conditions of mobility, globalization and/or distancing - a product of the Covid-19 pandemic- challenges are posed to understand religiosity in religious institutions and beyond them. Along with this, the current conditions of globalization cause a social scenario different from the theorization of the founders of the sociological discipline; with which it is necessary to analyze the religious categories of classical social theory, where the sacred/profane and magic/religion present different characteristics from the Latin American context to those formulated by Durkheim and Weber. The paper focuses on lived religion, as an approach to contemporary analysis of Latin American religiosity, and proposes that certain religions give Latin America an enchanted trait that questions Weber's thesis of disenchantment with the world by the presence of spirits or by the interrelation of magical and religious practices.

**4. *The politics of spirituality***

Rodrigo Toniol. (Universidade Federal de R o de Janeiro UFRJ, Brazil)

Abstract

For seven years, I followed a growing and curious network that articulates the World Health Organization, neuroscientists, MRI machines, clinical protocols, and public policies. From this heterogeneous set of actors, documents, and machines, I identified a typical formulation: spirituality impacts human health. This presentation deals, from a dialogue with the social science literature, with the emergence and consolidation of the relevance of spirituality in the medical field in Latin America. The issues that arise from



this phenomenon are broad and consequential both for health policy thinking and for the debate conducted by researchers of religion. In the end, it is worth provoking if the primary agency for global health management, the WHO, legitimizes the understanding that the human being is invariably a spiritual being and medical-scientific research affirms that spirituality is a determinant factor for health I ask: Would it be up to the State to watch over the spirit? Or would the neglect of spirituality be, in the limit, a neglect of public health? Furthermore, how can the State operationalize care provision with the spiritual dimension without violating principles such as secularism and religious freedom? This paper presents this complex web of interest and debates on the relationship between health, spirituality, and official policies in Latin America.

##### **5. New Age Spirituality and Decolonial utopias: a view from Mexico**

Renée de la Torre (CIESAS, Mexico) Cristina Gutiérrez Zúñiga (Universidad de Guadalajara, México)

Abstract

The New Spirituality is not only a market (Van Hove, 1999; Hanegraaf 1999). In its hybrid versions generated in the Global South has shown itself as a powerful matrix that gives value to elements excluded by modernity, such as ethnic traditions, women's knowledge and practices, alternative economies, rational thought. It has contributed to the awakening of new post colonial disputes that animate projects and activisms with decolonizing utopian horizons. We propose to describe four strands of Neo Mexican Spirituality (a hybridization of New Age based on the recovery of pre-hispanic cultures) from this perspective: a) the rise of post-national ethnic nations, b) the criticism of patriarchy and the emergence of ecofeminist spiritualities, c) the critique of capitalism and the alternatives of sustainable economy, and d) the consumptions of sacred plants and medicines as a spot where the struggle of indigenous ontologies and modern epistemologies takes place.

##### **6. Religious Traditions and Liberal Components in India**

Abhishek Srivastava. (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)

Abstract

India is a multi-religious country and it has a long tradition of spirituality and coexistence. Liberal tradition in Indian thinking dates back to the third century BC epistemological development of rationalism. Whereas in the pre-liberal tradition, the systems of faith and theological understandings dominate to make sense of true knowledge. The Indian liberal tradition today is standing almost at a crossroads. It is anxious to retain the forces of the centuries of its tradition through which it has grown, and yet it cannot afford to overlook the 'scientific facts' and 'the empirical attitude' of the present-day world. The characteristics of liberal thinking emanate the quest of reason in making sense of something, giving prominence to individual subjectivism, autonomy as well as pluralistic coexistence. This system of thought continued through various successions viz. Fifth-century heterodox philosophy of Gautam Budhha, Charvaka, and Jainism and in the medieval phase of the benevolent kingship of Ashoka, Akbar to British renaissance and again from Indian Independence movement to modern Indian constitutionalism.



### **7. Spirituality on the Margins: An Analysis of 'Hijra' Engagements in Sufi Shrines and Sacred Spaces**

Usman Shafeek Cha Maka Parambil. (University of Hyderabad, India)

#### **Abstract**

Before becoming an enduring presence in the political discourse in very recent times, hijras have been an active part of South Asian imaginaries since ancient texts, medieval courts, and colonial laws. Being India's major third gendered or trans populations, hijra engagements were recorded in different dimensions beyond the typical understanding of gender and sexuality. Hijras' religious engagements go beyond the idea of religion as a set of normative rules and morals. It leads us towards another phase of their lives having divine and spiritual dimensions. Their active participation in major Muslim religious festivals, pilgrimages, and everyday rituals and their historical and cultural affinity with the various traditions of Islam like Sufism; all point towards a distinct realm of spirituality hijras try to possess in many ways. Apart from different modes of everyday spiritualities hijras construct and perform from going to mosques, performing daily prayers and visiting shrines of Sufi saints, hijras go for major pilgrimages like Haj, visit the holy sites of Islam like Mecca, Medina, Masjid Aqsa, Karbala, etc. All these hijra engagements inspire us to think of a spiritual vocabulary hijras try to construct and studying the same definitely leads us to explore an interesting intersection of gender, religion, spirituality and sexuality. Tracing out this dimension along with searching for the possibility of a distinct spiritual identity hijras strive for, the proposed paper tries to figure out how hijras relate to God, spiritual and divine exploration. Overall, this study wants to look deeply at hijras' religious imaginations and spiritual longings across South Asia, which will open doors towards understanding deeper dynamics of how hijras engage with the notion of faith.

## **WG.5 Gender, Religion, and Migration in Contemporary Societies**

**July 22, 11:30 – 13:00 hs. Building Semprún. Room S102**

**Session Organizer:** Milda Ališauskienė, Vytautas (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania)

#### **Description:**

This session aims to unravel the multifaceted dynamics that unfold at the nexus of gender, religion, and migration. We encourage papers that explore the experiences of migrant communities, examining how religious beliefs shape and reflect gender identities within these contexts. Additionally, we seek to investigate the profound impact of migration on religious landscapes, especially in regions where traditional understandings of faith intersect with new cultural perspectives.

Papers may employ diverse methodological approaches, ranging from ethnographic inquiries and survey-based research to policy analyses and theoretical explorations. By fostering an

interdisciplinary dialogue, this session endeavors to advance our understanding of the subtle and often unexpected ways that religion and identity intersect in the lives of individuals.

**1. Gender and Spirituality in Spaces of Waiting: Sacralization Practices of Men and Women in Migrant Shelters at the US-Mexico Border**

Olga Odgers-Ortiz, Olga Olivas-Hernandez and Javier Jiménez-Royo (El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, México)

Abstract

The tightening of border controls and the externalization of borders has resulted in migrants being stranded (Collyer, 2010; Hess, 2012; Odgers, Olivas, Bojórquez, 2022) within their migratory journeys, for indefinite periods of time, in precarious conditions, and facing profound uncertainty (Gil-Evraert, 2020). Based on our field observations, carried out in three different migrant shelters (one Catholic, one Evangelical and one secular), in this paper we are interested in analyzing the way in which spirituality is mobilized in places of "entrapment" or "strandedness" to cope with uncertainty, paying particular attention to the differences in the practices of sacralisation (Martín, 2009) deployed by women and men.

**2. Paradigms of Victimization: Gender and Accusations of Women Human Trafficking Against "Cults" in Latin America and Europe**

Massimo Introvigne (CESNUR, Center for Studies on New Religions, Torino, Italy) Maria Vardé (University of Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Abstract

Human trafficking of women for labor or sexual exploitation is a global plague, to which several countries reacted by adopting tougher laws, including Argentina in 2012. As detailed in the book by feminist academic and prosecutor Marisa Tarantino *Ni víctimas ni criminales: trabajadores sexuales. Una crítica feminista a las políticas contra la trata de personas y la prostitución* (Neither Victims nor Criminals: Sex Workers. A Feminist Critique of the Policies Against Human Trafficking and Prostitution, Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica de Argentina, 2021), one of the effects of the new law was the "victimization" and "criminalization" of independent sex workers, strippers, and others who, unlike the real victims of trafficking, had freely chosen their jobs. Both in Argentina and in other countries, including in Europe, the notion of "human trafficking" has recently been extended to religious minorities stigmatized as "cults." It was argued that, just as sexual workers are considered by definition manipulated victims, women in "cults" may be categorized as mentally manipulated by male leaders and exploited for free labor (which also affected their male co-religionists) and, in most cases, sex. In Argentina a special prosecutorial office called PROTEX in the last few years raided several "cults" and arrested its leaders for alleged "human trafficking," with considerable media publicity. While the case of the Buenos Aires Yoga School (BAYS) is still pending, both the Argentinian branch of the Australian movement Jesus Christians and the Evangelical community Iglesia Tabernáculo Internacional won their cases in court, where PROTEX was censored by the judges. The same model was followed in raids in France against several groups and has been applied elsewhere. The peculiarity of these cases is that most or, in some cases, all the women allegedly "trafficked" deny that they are victims

of human trafficking or other crimes. According to the victimization paradigm, however, the fact that a woman “victim of trafficking” denies being a victim simply proves that she is under the physical or mental control of her victimizers. While this is certainly true for immigrant women compelled to work as prostitutes by organized crime, applying the same paradigm to female “members of cults” is problematic. It implies both accepting the theory of “cultic brainwashing,” which most scholars of new religious movements reject, and excluding by definition that women who decide to join a controversial religious movement (including some experimenting with alternative forms of sexuality) may do so freely. The risk of leaving abuse of women (which certainly does occur in religious contexts) unpunished should be assessed against the opposite risk of fabricating false victims and harassing the very women the anti-trafficking agencies proclaim they are trying to protect.

### 3. *Unlikely feminisms*

Elsa Correia Pereira (University of Porto, Portugal)

Abstract

Gender Equality is the 5th Sustainable Development Goal of the 2030 Agenda. UN highlights that actors within faith communities are critical for dismantling the stereotypes that structure inequalities between men and women. This presentation arises from the reflections already conducted within the scope of our doctoral research on the theme “The role of women in evangelical Christian communities in Europe.” We will thus bring a new sociological approach, which allows us to collect multidirectional data revealing examples of how feminism in international evangelical Christian circles has proliferated in various directions in recent decades. This has paved the way for the democratization of theology, woven with a reformulation of religious discourse to include an egalitarian dimension. We will present the main ideas gathered through a focus group with women. The lucid and multifaceted perspectives of these women on (in)equality between men and women in evangelical churches manifest the diversity of practices in these religious communities in this regard, from the most democratic and egalitarian to the most traditionalist and patriarchal. We will also talk about a new space/territory that is impossible to overlook in the study of feminism(s) and within religious contexts, where the voices of equality rise when they are silenced in the physical spaces of faith communities. This new space we speak of is the Internet, with all its online statements, the networks established on social media and beyond, and how this cause, the fight for equality between men and women, was and continues to be constructed in evangelical communities.

### 4. *Queer Migration in the Catholic Majority Country: the Case of Lithuania*

Milda Ališauskienė (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania)

Abstract

The paper will approach the question of the intersection of sexual and religious identities in the context of transnational migration, focusing on the case of predominantly Roman Catholic Lithuania. Religion is inseparable from questions of the body and sexuality, as stated by Michel Foucault. This paper will follow this idea in discussing the way LGBTIQ+

people reflect their sexuality and religiosity and what attitudes they hold towards the dominant Roman Catholic Church. The research into tensions and conflicts that LGBTIQ+ people face in a predominantly Roman Catholic milieu has disclosed different strategies they apply in coping with hostility from the Church and its believers; among them are leaving the church and abandoning religious life, leaving the church for another church which is more inclusive and staying in church (Hall 2013). This paper discusses transnational migration as another strategy to negotiate the intersection of sexual and religious identities. Grounding on 10 semi-structured interviews with people who have migrated from Lithuania, this paper will analyze the patterns of their religious life before and after the migration as well as the critical factors for migration and the role of religion in this process. The research showed that interviewed LGBTIQ+ people were mainly not religious; however, some sustained relations with their family religious tradition, and some identified as somewhat spiritual but not religious. Research showed that religion and informants' religious identity did not serve as the critical factor for migration. In contrast, sexual identity was seen as one of the migration factors, together with education, work, and social inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in the host society. The analyzed narratives disclose the role religion and particularly the dominant Roman Catholic Church, plays in defining the social inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people in Lithuanian society and its influence on state institutions.

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## WG.6 Organized Forms of Nonreligion

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July 22, 11:30 – 13:00 hs. Building Semprún. Room S201

**Session Organizer:** Jacqui Frost, (Purdue University, USA)

**Description:**

This working group invites papers focused on organized forms of nonreligion (i.e. atheism, humanism, secularism, etc). Many countries around the world are experiencing rising rates of religious disaffiliation and declining participation in formal religious organizations. In the wake of this religious decline, the number of nonreligious social and political organizations devoted to cultivating explicitly atheist/humanist/secular community, identity, and activism has been growing. However, there is still much to learn about how nonreligious people around the world organize their beliefs and identities in groups. We encourage papers focused on nonreligious political or social organizations/movements, “secular religions” like transhumanism or atheist churches, online nonreligious communities, and/or how nonreligious organizations shape identities and beliefs among individual nonreligious people.

**1. *Cultivating Imaginaries: Nature and Nonreligion in Brazilian and Argentine Community Gardens***

Giovanna Paccillo (University of Campinas, Brazil), Iriana Sartor (National University of Córdoba, Argentina)

**Abstract**

This paper aims to discuss how participants in community gardens from Brazil and Argentina construct imaginaries about nature and how it shapes their “way of living”. This proposal is part of a larger research project called Nonreligion in a Complex Future, headed by Lori Beaman, ph.D. (University of Ottawa). In this sense, community gardens are seen as a place where nonreligious lives could be explored, that is, the way in which people who do not identify themselves as religious see themselves and the world, and how it manifests in everyday practices. The data were constructed from 22 semi-structured interviews and the findings point that participants’ relationship with nature goes through food and the daily practices of the garden: observing the plants’ cycles; the presence of animals; the centrality of water; and their own interference in these processes. Thus, we argue that acknowledging plants, insects and other animals as living beings and their contribution to food growth underpins the idea that human beings are also “part” of nature and there is a continuity with these other non-humans. These imaginaries find expression in the defense of agroecological and sustainable ideals, i.e. valuing the ecosystem, respecting nature cycles and opposing the use of pesticides that pollute the soil and modify food.

**2. *The Lycée Français (French School) System as Vector of Nonreligion: The Case of the French “National Secularism Day” in Montréal, Canada***

Jennifer Selby (Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada)

Abstract

This paper examines the international lycée français network as a significant organizational vector of the French Republic’s sociolegal conceptions of secularism across the francophone world (Fourny 2007; Deberre 2018; Soufiane 2018). There are nearly 600 lycées français worldwide, with almost 400,000 students, of whom only one-third are French nationals. More specifically, I draw on qualitative interviews undertaken with Amélie Barras (York University) with 100 French immigrants to Montréal and Toronto, Canada; on focus groups conducted at a lycée français in Montréal; and on policy documents produced by the French government for instructional use at these lycées. I examine the Day for Secularism events on December 9th, a newly created ritual inaugurated in 2021 and celebrated in these lycées, within a longer trajectory of French laïcité, colonialism and secular identitarian debates in France and Québec. Our data reveal the importance of the longstanding outreach of the Republican version of secularism through this international network, and show the significance of the lycées for conceptions of nonreligion, secularism, and diversity in Montréal.

**3. *Estimating Membership and Participation in Organized Secular Groups in Eight Countries***

Ryan Cragun (University of Tampa, USA)

Abstract

While there is a growing body of research exploring the characteristics of both organized secular groups and their members (Cragun et al. 2017; Frost 2019), to date there are no published estimates of what percentage of a given population belongs to such groups. Drawing on representative surveys fielded in eight countries – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Norway, the USA, and the UK – we estimate the membership and participation in organized secular groups in each of these countries. We also compare the demographics of members with those who are: (a) religious and (b) those who are not religious but not members of such groups. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

**4. *Becoming a Secularist Activist: Autobiographical Narratives of Activists from Organizaciones Laicistas de Argentina (OLA)***

Hugo H. Rabbia (CONICET - IIPsi, National University of Cordoba and Catholic University of Cordoba, Argentina)

Abstract

The study of political organized forms of non-religion organization has sometimes overlooked the past individual trajectories of collective actions and the psychological motives for becoming a secular activist. Not everyone who identifies as non-religious became an activist for secularism, the laïce state and the promotion of the non-religious in the public sphere. This study explores the personal trajectories of activists in Argentinean secularist organizations, based on 20 semi-structured interviews with

activists from organizations linked first to the Coalición por el Estado Laico (CAEL, Argentinian Coalition for the Laic State) and then, many of them, members of the network of Organizaciones Laicistas Argentinas (OLA, Argentinian Laicists Organizations). I analyzed the personal narratives of "becoming a secularist activist", in which emotions in the face of the injustice evidenced by a religious normativity, the social and political context of emergence, as well as previous individual political and intellectual trajectories stand out. In this sense, it is relevant their militancy in LGBTQ+, feminist and Masonic groups, but also their advocacy in human rights movement. Emotions (such as anger and indignation) are especially motivated by the regional context or personal experience of discrimination for being non-religious or religious dissident.

### **5. *Sacralizing Science in Secular Congregations in the United States***

Jacqui Frost (Purdue University, USA)

#### **Abstract**

In many of our foundational social scientific theories, there is this pervasive narrative that the loss of religion is a largely negative experience that comes with an inevitable loss of meaning, morality, and community. But rather than a decline in meaning and community or an increasing sense of anomie and social isolation, the growth in the nonreligious population in the United States has instead coincided with a growth in the number of secular, atheist, humanist, and other nonreligious social and political groups that cater specifically to this demographic. As part of this organizational growth and diversification, there are now numerous "secular congregations" across the United States where nonreligious people gather in church-like spaces to build community, engage in ritual practices, and celebrate secular beliefs and values. In this paper, I present findings from an ethnographic case study of two secular congregations in the United States and explore the ways that non religious people in these secular congregations are appropriating religious rituals and rhetorics while at the same time drawing on a shared faith in science to create moral identities, engage in meaningful ritual practices, and imagine secular futures without religion.



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