

CALL FOR PAPERS

Researching Religious Controversies Conference

Dates: October 31st to November 2nd, 2016

Venue: The Sigtuna Foundation (Sigtuna, Sweden)

CONFERENCE THEME

The *Researching Religious Controversies Conference* aims to discuss and delve into a range of themes and challenges that researchers may face when studying religious controversies, not least with regards to disseminating research findings to the wider public. The conference is organized and funded by [CoMRel](#) in collaboration with the [Sigtuna Foundation](#). CoMRel is an acronym for the Scandinavian project *Engaging with Conflicts in Mediatized Religious Environments*, headed by Professor [Knut Lundby](#) at the University of Oslo. CoMRel researcher [Mona Abdel-Fadil](#) is the lead organizer of this event.

Please note that this conference has a particular twist to it. All paper presentations (or excerpts of these) are to be published on the [Religion: Going Public](#) blog. The *Researching Religious Controversies Conference* takes pride in its efforts to integrate public communication as a central part of the conference. (Details below).

The *Researching Religious Controversies Conference* aims to:

- further develop the methodologies and theories of research on religious controversies
- improve public outreach strategies for academics studying controversial topics
- facilitate conversations across disciplines, research projects and countries
- generate blog posts for *Religion: Going Public*, in an effort to disseminate research presented at the conference to the general public in a reader-friendly manner.

CFP

We welcome abstracts that discuss theoretical and empirical research on religious controversies, and how religious controversies are constructed, understood, mediated, debated, and resolved in a variety of contexts such as media, civil society, and legal bodies. We are interested in presentations that shed light on the dynamics of controversy, conflict, and conflict resolution. We also welcome submissions that deal with public outreach challenges related to the study of religious controversies. How do we meet the high demand for popular dissemination about such highly sensitive topics, and how can we engage with and inform public debates? How can we as researchers improve our toolbox with regards to public outreach when dealing with highly sensitive topics, shy from pulling out of public debates all together?

Abstracts that deal with one of the following four pre-defined themes are welcome:

- Religion, Conflict and Media
- Policies, lawmaking and case law related to religious controversies

- Civil society and religious controversy
- Challenges and experiences with blogging and public communication about religion and religious controversies

We also welcome abstracts that deal with other aspects of religious controversy research, than those listed in the four pre-defined themes. The deadline for abstracts is April 15th. Abstracts are to be submitted to Dag Grytli (dag.grytli@media.uio.no) and Mona Abdel-Fadil (mona.abdel-fadil@media.uio.no) by **12 pm (ECT) April 15th**. Early admissions are highly recommended, as there are a limited number of fully paid conference seats. We are happy to receive expressions of interest by email, both regarding submission of papers, as well as interest in acting as respondent. Abstracts are to be submitted in standard Word formats (.doc or .docx).

KEYNOTE

We are very happy that the prominent digital anthropologist (and blogger) [John Postill](#) has confirmed his attendance as keynote speaker, and will be speaking to us about social media and conflict, as well as academic blogging and public outreach.

John Postill is Vice-Chancellor's Senior Research Fellow at RMIT University, Melbourne, and Digital Anthropology Fellow at University College London (UCL). His publications include *Localizing the Internet* (2011), *Media and Nation Building* (2006) and the co-edited volume *Theorising Media and Practice* (2010, with Birgit Bräuchler). Currently he is writing a book provisionally titled *Freedom Technologists: Digital Activism and Political Change in the Early 21st Century*, and the co-edited volume *Theorising Media and Change* (with Elisenda Ardèvol and Sirpa Tenhunen)

BACKGROUND

The Researching Religious Controversies Conference develops out of a collaboration between [CoMRel](#), and two other research projects funded by the [Norwegian Research Council's SAMKUL](#) program, namely:

- [Good Protestant, Bad Religion? Formatting Religion in Modern Society](#) (GOBA)
- [Muslim Politics and Governance of Islam: Interactions of Structure and Culture in Multi-religious Europe](#) (Muslim Politics)

The three SAMKUL projects share common challenges, including how to research religion and religious controversies and communicate research findings and participate in and inform public debates, in a politicized climate. Together CoMRel, GOBA and Muslim Politics launched the blog *Religion: Going Public* in the beginning of 2016.

CONFERENCE FORMAT

The conference will alternate between keynote talks, paper sessions and workshop sessions. All types of sessions rely on a high level of interaction and

discussion. All presentations will be assigned respondents. Papers are to be presented in 15 minutes or less (unless otherwise specified). We encourage all participants to stay for the entire conference, in order to maximize the possibilities of the interactive conference format.

TARGET GROUP

This conference aims to bring together scholars who research religion and religious controversies from various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, including religious studies, theology, media and communication studies, sociology, anthropology and political science.

UNIQUE CONFERENCE OUTPUT

The *Researching Religious Controversies* conference is directly linked to the blog, [Religion: Going Public](#). All papers submitted to this conference are to be submitted with the intention of becoming either a blog post or being published as a written conversational exchange on a special section of the website, currently under development and tentatively named "The Sandbox". Blog posts may be a shortened version of a paper, an excerpt of a paper, or a written version of an oral presentation at the conference (maximum 1500 words). Sandbox content may consist of a longer excerpt (maximum 3000 words), and will be posted with the intent of a dialogue with other scholars. Invitations to participate in Sandbox discussions will be issued in collaboration with the editorial board of the Religion: Going Public blog. The Researching Religious Controversies Conference is designed so as to facilitate public outreach through the production of texts for Religion: Going Public.

Author guidelines for [Religion: Going Public](#) blog posts are attached.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Deadline for Abstracts

The deadline for abstracts is **April 15th**. Abstracts are to be submitted to Dag Grytli (dag.grytli@media.uio.no) and Mona Abdel-Fadil (mona.abdel-fadil@media.uio.no) by 12 pm (ECT) April 15th. You will be notified by May 15th whether or not your abstract was accepted.

Arrival and Departure Times

The conference spans from the morning of October 30th until the early afternoon of November 2nd. (Current time estimates, start at 10 am on Oct 30th, ending at 1 pm on November 2nd). Exact times will be allocated once the abstracts are in and the programme is set.

Venue

The [Sigtuna Foundation](#) is conveniently located 15 minutes by taxi from Arlanda Airport, and is a great location for academic dialogue in beautiful surroundings.

Costs

CoMRel (backed by Research Council of Norway) and the Sigtuna Foundation cover costs of food and accommodation and the conference itself for up to 30 participants. Priority will be given to paper presenters and respondents. All participants must pay for

their own travel expenses. In the event that more than 30 participants wish to participate, we shall allow for participants who pay full participations fees.

Registration

You will receive a registration form once your abstract is accepted.

Organizing Committee

CoMRel research assistant Dag Grytli, CoMRel researcher Audun Toft, GOBA researcher, Helge Årsheim, and Muslim Publics researcher, Ragna Lillevik. The organizing committee works in close collaboration with the Director of the Sigtuna Foundation, Alf Linderman.