

## **Courting Controversy? Teaching Theology and Religious Studies in the 21st Century**

The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies is organising a two-day conference to explore issues around the policy and practice of teaching Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) in higher education (HE) in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. The conference is aimed at TRS academics, diversity officers, staff developers and students.

**Event type:** Conference

**Organiser:** Rebecca O'Loughlin

**Location:** University of Leeds, Leeds

**Country:** Great Britain

**Date:** 8th July 2010 to 9th July 2010

**Deadline for submission of abstracts:** 14th May 2010

**Registration Deadline:** 25th June 2010

**Contact name:** Rebecca O'Loughlin

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**Details:**

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**The call for papers for this event is now closed, but registration is open until 25th June**

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**Keynote speakers: Anthony Reddie (The Queen's Foundation) and Dan Cohn-Sherbok (St Mary's University College, Twickenham)**

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The Subject Centre for Philosophical and Religious Studies organised a two-day conference to explore issues around the policy and practice of teaching Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) in higher education (HE) in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society. The conference was aimed at TRS academics, diversity officers, staff developers and students in the UK.

The conference had two key strands, which aimed to provide space for discussion and reflection on:

## **Policy**

The profile of religion in UK society is higher than it has been for many years. How can we, as TRS academics and Cultural and Religious Diversity (CRD) experts, feed into growing public and corporate interest in such issues as CRD, identity, citizenship and community cohesion, and the interrelation of religion, society, politics, law and the media?

## **Practice**

How can we best approach the practicalities of teaching TRS in a multi-faith and multi-cultural society, which includes managing the sensitivities involved in teaching controversial topics, such as gender and sexuality, moral decision-making, and the relationship between religion and terrorism? What responsibilities are involved in teaching students to interpret sacred texts, especially when they belong to students' own religious traditions? How should we engage students in the critical analysis of issues of belief that go to the heart of personal, political and religious identity? Are there ways we can manage the emotive discussions, and the fall-out from them, which can ensue? What if this fall-out includes the destabilisation of students' previously-held beliefs?

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## **Conference programme**

### **Thursday 8 July**

**1100** Arrival, registration, coffee

**1130** Welcome, introduction

**1145** Keynote 1: **Christian Triumphalism and The Hook-nosed Elephant in the Corner**  
Dan Cohn-Sherbok (St Mary's University College, Twickenham)

**1245** Lunch

**1345** Session 1: Courting Controversy in the Classroom (chair: Rebecca O'Loughlin)

**1345** **Interfaith Teaching, Teaching Interfaith?**  
Rachel Muers and Melanie Prideaux (University of Leeds)

**1430** **'The more there is to offend, the less there is to say'**  
Richard Benda, Anna Snape and Katja Stuerzenhofecker (University of Manchester)

**1515** Break

**1530** Session 2: Courting Controversy in the Field (chair: Simon Smith)

**1530** **'Do they really believe that?': Experiential Learning outside the Theology and Religious Studies Classroom**

Denise Cush and Catherine Robinson (Bath Spa University)

**1615 Strategies for students to get more out of Field Visits: Faith Guides and iPods**

Deirdre Burke (University of Wolverhampton)

1700 Free time

1900 Conference dinner

## **Friday 9 July**

**0930 Keynote 2: 'If Heaven is such a wonderful place, then why would White people tell Black people about it?': Problematising Black Christian confessional belief in Postcolonial Britain**

Anthony Reddie (The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham)

1030 Break

1045 Session 3: Courting Controversy: Policy and Practice (chair: Simon Smith)

**1045 Cross-cultural Preparation for Mission at Home and Abroad: The SOCMS Experience**

Rachele E. Vernon (The Queen's Foundation, Birmingham)

**1130 World Religion, Internationalisation and Global Citizenship: Teaching Christian Theology in the 21st century**

Kirsteen Kim (Leeds Trinity University College)

**1215 The exoteric-esoteric distinction and the changing interests of the state: handling 'diversity' in the teaching of Theology and Ethics**

Carys Moseley (Edinburgh University)

1300 Lunch

1345 Session 4: Courting Controversy: Schools and Higher Education (chair: Rebecca O'Loughlin)

**1345 Speed Dating and TRS - How to Court Controversy**

Sharon Harbottle (Bury Church of England High School and Specialist Humanities School)

**1430 A Study of the Discourse of 'Terrorism' in Pupil Conversations (aged 16-18) and Questionnaires in a Selection of Warwickshire Secondary Schools**

Angela Quartermaine (University of Warwick)

1515 Break

1530 Closing plenary

1600 Close, depart