

reporting on

RELIGION



rethinking the ways
journalists & scholars
communicate

16 March 2018 | #NEUrelreport

Hosted by Northeastern University

Reporting on Religion

rethinking how journalists and scholars communicate

SCHEDULE

- 9:00-10:00 Coffee, light breakfast, and informal conversation
- 10:00-10:50 Journalist roundtable discussion
(moderated by Carlene Hempel)
- 10:50-11:00 Coffee break
- 11:00-11:50 Scholar roundtable discussion
(moderated by Liz Bucar)
- 12:00-1:30 Lunch and conversation with Matt Carroll
- 2:00-2:50 Case study discussion
(moderated by Jung Lee)
- 2:50-3:00 Coffee break
- 3:00-3:30 Student Q&A
(moderated by Megan Goodwin)
- 3:30-4:00 Next steps?
(moderated by Liz Bucar)

Case Study: Religious Violence in Myanmar

“Buddhists in Myanmar Are Unifying Behind a Deadly Nationalism” (*The Nation* | September 15, 2017)

<https://www.thenation.com/article/buddhists-in-myanmar-are-unifying-behind-a-deadly-nationalism/>

“The Myanmar government has stated that 176 Rohingya villages have been emptied of their inhabitants, and satellite images show that more than 80 have been burned to the ground. Eyewitnesses describe indiscriminate killings of civilians. But international alarm doesn’t end at the bloody accounts emerging from western Myanmar. Instead, it has extended into the country’s center, where the government of Nobel Peace Prize–winner Aung San Suu Kyi sits. Despite reports that the military’s response to insurgent attacks has not distinguished between civilian and militant and despite the imploring of her fellow Nobel laureates, Suu Kyi’s office refuses to criticize the military. Likewise, few inside the country, subjected for so long to the military’s oppressive rule, appear to see anything wrong in the actions of soldiers.”

“Why Are We Surprised When Buddhists Are Violent?” (*New York Times* | March 5, 2018)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/05/opinion/buddhists-violence-tolerance.html>

“While few sophisticated observers are shocked, then, by the occurrence of religious violence, there is one notable exception in this regard; there remains a persistent and widespread belief that Buddhist societies really are peaceful and harmonious. This presumption is evident in the reactions of astonishment many people have to events like those taking place in Myanmar. How, many wonder, could a Buddhist society — especially Buddhist monks! — have anything to do with something so monstrously violent as the ethnic cleansing now being perpetrated on Myanmar’s long-beleaguered Rohingya minority? Aren’t Buddhists supposed to be compassionate and pacifist?”

Workshop Participants

bios and select clips

Adelle M. Banks joined the staff of Religion News Service in 1995. She is now its production editor and national reporter. In addition to reporting on topics such as Christians and Christianity and religion and race, Banks also is a copy editor, photographer and occasional videographer for RNS. She previously was the religion reporter at the *Orlando Sentinel* and a reporter at *The Providence Journal* and newspapers in the upstate New York communities of Syracuse and Binghamton. Her work has appeared in *USA Today*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Jet* magazine. Banks spearheaded an RNS multimedia project on the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington that in 2014 won a Wilbur Award from the Religion Communicators Council, won a first-place award from Associated Church Press, and was recognized by the Religion News Association.

<https://www.religionnews.com/2018/03/01/black-churches-host-screenings-of-black-panther/>

<https://www.ncronline.org/news/politics/religious-leaders-hail-hammer-president-trumps-first-state-union-speech>

Jason C. Bivins is Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at North Carolina State University. He is a specialist in the religions of the United States, particularly the intersection of religions and politics since 1900. He is the author of *"Spirits Rejoice!": Jazz and American Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2015), *Religion of Fear: The Politics of Horror in Conservative Evangelicalism* (Oxford University Press, 2008), and *The Fracture of Good Order: Christian Antiliberalism and the Challenge to American Politics* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), in addition to many articles on religion in America, religion and politics, and theory and method in the study of religion. He is currently working on *Embattled Majority: "Religion" and Its Despisers in America*, a genealogy of the rhetoric of religious bigotry among conservative Christians and their critics since the 1960s.

<http://religiondispatches.org/sing-the-glory-of-the-smoke-the-spiritual-history-of-jazz/>

<http://usreligion.blogspot.com/2012/11/embattled-majority-religion-and-its.html>

Liz (Elizabeth) Bucar is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Northeastern University. An expert in comparative religious ethics, she teaches courses on sexual ethics, Islam, the politics of the veil, and a popular comparative religion summer program in Spain that includes a 175-mile hike on the Camino. Bucar's research revolves around questions of gender and politics in everyday religious practices. Over the years she has conducted fieldwork in Iran, Indonesia, Spain, Turkey, and Italy.

Bucar's written several books, including *Creative Conformity: The Feminist Politics of U.S. Catholic and Iranian Shi'i Women* (Georgetown University Press, 2011), *The Islamic Veil: A Beginner's Guide* (Oneworld Publications, 2012), and most recently, *Pious Fashion: How Muslim Women Dress* (Harvard University Press, 2017). Her public-facing scholarship includes op-eds, blogs, radio interviews, and podcasts. Bucar is currently working on a new book project—*Stealing My Religion*—which uses topics ranging from pilgrim tourism to male circumcision to explore the ethical implications of cultural appropriation.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/02/muslim-women-fashion-political-influence/550256/>

<http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-bucar-muslim-fashion-20171001-story.html>

Tara Isabella Burton has followed a female hermit into the remote Caucasus, gotten love amulets from Turkish Islamic shamans, and held signs with the street preachers of Las Vegas.

Her work on religion, culture, and place can be found at *National Geographic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Al Jazeera*, *The Economist's 1843*, *Smithsonian*, *Aeon*, *The BBC*, *The Atlantic*, *The American Interest*, *The*

Village Voice, *Salon*, *The Guardian*, *The New Statesman*, *The Telegraph*, and more. Her fiction has appeared at *The New Yorker's* Daily Shouts, Great Jones Street, Tor.com, PANK, Shimmer, and other places. She has received The Spectator's 2012 Shiva Naipaul Memorial Prize and a 2016 Lowell Thomas Award.

Her first novel, *Social Creature*, is forthcoming from Doubleday (US) and Bloomsbury/Raven (UK) in June 2018, and is set to be translated into eight more languages, including Italian, French, and Russian. Tara recently completed a doctorate in theology as a Clarendon Scholar at Trinity College, Oxford. She is currently a staff writer on the religion beat at Vox.

<https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/3/8/17090084/a-wrinkle-in-time-faith-christianity-movie-madeleine-lengle>

<https://www.vox.com/2018/3/1/17067894/church-bullet-crowns-ar15-world-peace-unification-sanctuary-moonies-moon>

Megan Goodwin is a Visiting Scholar with the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Program at Northeastern University. She previously held positions as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Race, Religion, and Politics at Syracuse University, and as a Mellon Postgraduate Fellow in Creative and Innovative Pedagogy.

Goodwin's work focuses on race, gender, sexuality, and American minority religions. Her most recent project examines the coding of religious difference as sexual danger; the next considers how and why Islam threatens American whiteness. Most recently, she has published in *The Muslim World* and *Nova Religion*. Her next articles will appear in *CrossCurrents* and *Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses*.

<https://www.themaydan.com/2017/08/roundcorner-responses-linda-sarsours-jihad-speech/#journal2>

<http://bulletin.equinoxpub.com/2017/05/theorizing-religion-in-the-age-of-trump-megan-goodwin/>

Carlene Hempel is Associate Teaching Professor in the School of Journalism at Northeastern University. A journalist for more than 25 years, she began her reporting career at *The Middlesex News* (now *The MetroWest Daily News*) in Framingham, Massachusetts, and then moved to North Carolina, where she worked for MSNBC in the NBC affiliate in Raleigh and later, as a technology and culture reporter for *The News & Observer*. She joined the faculty at Northeastern in 2002.

Carlene specializes in teaching students how to engage in public records reporting and long-form narrative writing. She has also launched an international reporting program at Northeastern for which she has taken students to countries including Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Greece and Spain—as well as Cuba in Spring 2018—to function as international press teams. She lives in Concord (MA) with her husband, Washington Post arts reporter Geoff Edgers, and her children Lila and Cal.

<http://concord.wickedlocal.com/news/20170128/letter-to-editor-helping-high-school-students-in-concord-deal-with-stress>

<https://news.northeastern.edu/2017/07/students-report-from-eye-opening-and-heart-filling-dialogue-in-greece/>

Aymann Ismail is a video editor and producer at Slate whose work focuses on identity and politics. His current project is "Who's Afraid of Aymann Ismail?" a video series that critically examines the Muslim American experience. Before joining Slate, Aymann was the video and photo editor for art and city culture blog ANIMAL New York, where he documented violent protests in Egypt, climbed bridges above the East River, explored subway tunnels with graffiti writers, and asked pet owners what they thought their dogs were thinking.

http://www.slate.com/articles/video/whos_afraid_of_aymann_ismail/2017/06/aymann_ismail_s_muslim_series_confronts_who_s_afraid_of_islam_in_america.html

<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/02/mosquemetoo-exposes-how-hard-it-is-for-muslim-women-to-speak-up-about-sexual-violence.html>

Jung Lee is Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Northeastern University. He is in the fields of comparative religious ethics, early Chinese philosophy, and social justice. His current research focuses on the moral lives of the Dalit women of Nepal, examining in particular their strategies of resistance against the caste system and practices of untouchability. He is also conducting research on the influence of cities on the experience of religion, specifically in regard to a Tibetan Buddhist community in Cambridge, MA.

Lee's publications include *The Ethical Foundations of Early Daoism: Zhuangzi's Unique Moral Vision* (Palgrave, 2014), *The Dalit Women of Nepal: Strategies of Resistance* (Routledge, 2018), and many articles on comparative religious ethics. He was a founding member of the Ethics Institute at Northeastern University.

https://www.amazon.com/Ethical-Foundations-Early-Daoism-Theological-ebook/dp/B00NC4Q056/ref=la_B00P2I8WB4_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1520864555&sr=1-1

Adam McGee is the Managing Editor of the *Boston Review*. He earned his Ph.D. in African, American Studies, and Religion from Harvard University. He also holds an MTS from Harvard Divinity School. His research focuses on religions of the black Atlantic, Haitian Vodou in particular. His dissertation examined how representations of Vodou (or “voodoo”) in U.S. popular culture and news media reinforce racist and gendered stereotypes. An initiate of Haitian Vodou, he lectures and offers consulting services on Vodou and other black Atlantic religions.

<http://bostonreview.net/podcast/walter-johnson-souls-white-folk-talking-social-justice-and-reparations-under-trump>

<https://dreamsofginen.wordpress.com>

Anthony Petro is Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion and in the Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies Program at Boston University. His teaching and research interests include religion and culture in the United States; religion, medicine, and public health; and gender and sexuality studies. His first book, *After the Wrath of God: AIDS, Sexuality, and American Religion* (Oxford, 2015), investigates the history of U.S. American religious responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis and their role in the promotion of a national moral discourse on sex. He has published essays on a number of topics, including histories of Catholic sexual abuse, critical disability studies and religion, the religious politics of camp, and approaches to studying race, gender, and sexuality in North American religion.

Petro is currently developing two projects. The first, called *Provoking Religion: Sex, Art, and the Culture Wars*, examines how a range of feminist and queer artists have engaged religious themes and rituals in their work. A second project looks at the history of U.S. Christian engagements with health and disability policy in the U.S. since the 1950s. It demonstrates how Christian leaders and activists have shaped cultural understandings of health and moral citizenship through debates about topics such as alcoholism, end of life care, disability rights, vaccination, abortion, and the war on drugs.

<https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/02/21/that-naked-public-squares-really-a-drag/>

<http://voices.uchicago.edu/religionculture/2017/02/15/scholars-roundtable-trumps-america-and-the-academic-study-of-religion/>

Simon Rabinovitch is Assistant Professor of History at Boston University, where he teaches modern Jewish and European history and is a 2017-18 ACLS/Luce fellow and visiting scholar at Northeastern University. Simon's publications have examined Jewish politics in revolutionary Russia, Jewish nationalist thought,

and the history of folkloristics and ethnography. He was an editor for five years at Marginalia (<http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/>) and is an occasional contributor to Haaretz.

<https://www.haaretz.com/life/books/the-ultimate-jewish-road-novel-1.5380874>

<http://marginalia.lareviewofbooks.org/searching-for-the-meaning-of-russian-by-simon-rabinovitch/>

Amanda Randone is an editorial manager at Barneys New York. She is also a freelance reporter whose work has appeared online and in print for publications including *Elle*, *Teen Vogue*, *Coveteur*, *Sorbet*, *Refinery29*, *The Huffington Post*, *E! News*, and *Seventeen*. During her time in Paris, Amanda reported on a range of topics from lifestyle and fashion to international current events, identity, and women's health issues. As a regular contributor for *Teen Vogue*, Amanda interviewed Muslim women about government-imposed clothing bans and menstruation during Ramadan, allowing a young audience access to authentic voices and opinions directly related to these topics. Amanda has also examined the impact of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on children's rights, unpacking the unlawfulness of the Israeli Youth bill and the imprisonment of minors in Israel.

Amanda also cofounded *The Gazelle*, the first student newspaper at NYU's satellite campus in Abu Dhabi. While in Paris, she earned an MA in Civilization, Culture, and Society, which focused on French identity in its overseas territories through the lens of education. In her current role, Amanda manages all editorial features in *The Window*, the magazine at Barneys New York, and pitches ideas to introduce readers to compelling culture and interview topics beyond the realm of fashion.

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-happens-when-you-get-your-period-during-ramadan>

<https://www.teenvogue.com/gallery/muslim-women-react-to-moroccos-burqa-ban>

Jeb Sharp is Senior Editor and Correspondent at the public radio program PRI's *The World*, a co-production of the BBC World Service, Public Radio International and WGBH in Boston. She has been with the program for twenty years, including stints as reporter, podcaster, host, show producer, special correspondent and now editor. She has long had a special interest in human rights and US foreign policy and has twice won the Lowell Thomas Award from the Overseas Press Club of America for best interpretation of international affairs (*History of Iraq*, 2003, and *How Wars End*, 2008). Other honors include a Dart Award for Excellence in Coverage of Trauma, and a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard. In her current role, she commissions stories for the show and edits staff reporters and freelancers around the world. She is teaching audio journalism at Northeastern this semester.

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-02-10/how-drones-and-robotics-may-shape-future-conflict-under-president-trump>

<https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-11-30/how-obama-administrations-drone-program-normalized-targeted-killing>

Simran Jeet Singh is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion at Trinity University and Senior Religion Fellow for the Sikh Coalition. For the 2017-2018 academic year will be the Henry R. Luce Post-doctoral Fellow of Religion and International Affairs at the NYU Center for Religion and Media. He also currently serves as a Truman National Security Fellow for the Truman National Security Project. Simran's academic expertise focuses on the history of religious communities in South Asia, and he has taught at Columbia University and Trinity University on Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, and Sikh traditions. Simran's recent scholarship and public engagement examines xenophobia, racial profiling and hate violence in post 9/11 America. He is currently working on two books for publication – one explores the intersections of race and religion in modern Islamophobia, and the other historicizes the formation of the Sikh tradition around the earliest memories of its founder, Guru Nanak.

Simran is a prolific writer who contributes frequently to various news outlets and digital platforms. He has become a consistent expert for reporters and news outlets around the world in television, radio, and print media. Singh also serves on the board for the Religion Newswriters Association.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/victories-savor-sikhs-article-1.3724301>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/video/life-stories-simran-jeet-singh-705582147853>

Bonny Symons-Brown joined the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 2013. She has worked in radio and TV news was most recently the supervising producer of “The Drum,” a political talk show providing analysis of the day’s biggest stories from a diverse range of perspectives. Previously Symons-Brown was based in Jakarta and anchored a daily news program on Indonesian television. She is the winner of the 2017 Elizabeth O’Neill Journalism Award. Her career started in the Australian parliamentary press gallery for the AAP wire service.

Symons-Brown is currently a Neiman Fellow at Harvard studying the intersection of Islam, democracy and human rights, drawing comparisons between Indonesia and the rest of the Muslim world.

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2016/s4660279.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-09-24/muslims-gather-in-sydney-to-celebrate-aid-al-adha/6801534>

Kayla Wheeler is a Visiting Scholar in the African American Studies Program at Boston University, where she is conducting research for her book on Black Muslim fashion tentatively entitled *Fashioning Black Islam: Race, Gender, and Belonging in the Ummah*. Her research expertise is in African-American Islam, material culture, Muslims’ usage of social media, and Islam in pop culture.

Wheeler is the curator of the #BlackIslamSyllabus, a resource for scholars and journalists that seeks to center the experiences of Muslims of African descent. She is also working on a digital humanities project called, “Mapping Malcolm’s Boston: Exploring the City that Made Malcolm X,” which is an interactive map that highlights sites in Boston central to Malcolm X’s political and religious development.

<http://www.mizanproject.org/mapping-malcolms-boston/>

<https://kaylarenewheeler.wordpress.com/blackislamsyllabus/>