

8th Biennial Conference



Religion & American Culture

June 13–16, 2024 Indianapolis, IN

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HOTELS & RESORTS

FIRST FLOOR



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8th Biennial Conference on Religion & American Culture

Thursday, June 13

5:00–7:00 PM	Registration (Capitol Overlook)
7:00–9:00 PM	Opening Reception & Graduate Research Presentations (Capitol Overlook)

Friday, June 14

All Morning Sessions in Capitol II

8:30–9:00 AM	Registration (Capitol II)
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THEORIZING RELIGION

9:00–10:30 AM	Session 1: Religious Studies Divide: People and Categories
10:30–11:00 AM	Morning Break
11:00 AM – 12:30 PM	Session 2: Religion and Non-Religion
12:30–2:00 PM	Lunch Break

All Afternoon Sessions at the Eiteljorg Museum, Allen Whitehill Clowes Sculpture Court SPACE AND PLACE

2:00–3:00 PM	Session 3: Juneteenth, Black Religion, and the Ambiguities of Freedom
3:00–4:00 PM	VIP Tour of the “Acts of Faith” Exhibit
4:00–5:15 PM	Session 4: Religion, Material Culture, and Museums

Saturday, June 15

All Sessions in Capitol II

CULTURAL IDENTITIES

9:00–10:30 AM	Session 5: Latinx Religious Diversity
10:30–11:00 AM	Morning Break
11:00 AM –12:30 PM	Session 6: Religion and Disability
12:30–2:00 PM	Lunch Break

POLITICAL FUTURES

2:00–3:30 PM	Session 7: When Academic Terms Go Popular
3:30–4:00 PM	Afternoon Break
4:00–5:30 PM	Session 8: Religion and Politics
6:00–8:00 PM	Closing Reception (Capitol Overlook)



The Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art is located in the heart of downtown Indianapolis. The Eiteljorg was opened in 1989 with the mission to inspire the appreciation and understanding of the art, history, and cultures of the Indigenous peoples of North America and of the American West. The museum collects, conserves, and displays beautiful and inspiring art and history from Indigenous Peoples and renowned artists such as Georgia O'Keefe, Allan Houser, N. C. Wyeth, Andy Warhol, Kay Walkingstick, and Charles Russell. The Eiteljorg has been ranked among the best Native American art collections in the world.

In 2015, the Eiteljorg began a celebration to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Juneteenth. The event became popular and loved within the community and has become an annual tradition for the museum. In partnership with the Eiteljorg's 2024 Juneteenth Celebration, a portion of the Eighth Biennial Conference will take place at the museum, including a keynote presentation titled: "Juneteenth, Black Religion, and the Ambiguities of Freedom."

Juneteenth became a day for celebration in 1865 when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to ensure that all enslaved people were freed, more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. In 2021, the U.S. Federal Government acknowledged Juneteenth as a national holiday.

For directions to the Eiteljorg, scan the QR code below. Find this special presentation and more Juneteenth celebrations there.



8th Biennial Conference on Religion & American Culture

5:00–7:00 PM

Registration (Capitol Overlook)

7:00–9:00 PM

Opening Reception &
Graduate Research Presentations

During this session advanced graduate students will give 3–4 minute mini-presentations describing their research projects and the importance and impact of their work on American religion. This session is sponsored by the Center's journal, *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. The journal seeks to publish work that revises or considerably extends our understanding of the relationship between religion and other aspects of American culture, and presentations will focus on that goal.

Alternative America/Alternative Religion

- **Gerard Jameson** (Temple University), “#FollowMe: Common Features of Black New Religious Movements in the Age of Social Media”
- **Humberto Perez** (Florida State University), “Wiccan Great Awakening: The Maturation and Development of Wicca as a Uniquely American Religion”
- **Courtney Rabada** (Northwestern University), “House of the Lorde: Audre Lorde, the Erotic, and Burlesque as Power”

Modern Empire and Religious Bureaucracies

- **Lisa Beyeter-Yvarra** (Yale University), “Parish Empire: Catholic Imperial Space and the Transpacific World”
- **Shakir Stephen** (University of California, Santa Barbara), “Working Between Worlds: Evangelical Professional Organizations and the Making of American Modernity”
- **Avalon Jade Theisen** (Arizona State University), “Religious Environmental Nonprofit Organizations in the United States”

New Frontiers in American Religion

- **Nicholas Covalesski** (Boston University), “Frontiers in American Religion: Myth, Technology, and the Making of Frontier Communities”
- **Sarah Hedgecock** (Columbia University), “Living Memory: Nostalgia and Evangelical Girlhood from the Cold War to the Present”
- **Izzak Novak** (Northwestern University), “[Not Going Hunting] Feels Like Not Calling My Mother’: An Ethnography of the Religious, Gendered, and Political Valences of White Settler Hunting in the US”

Religion, Art, and Sacred Texts

- **Gabriel Chazan** (University of Wisconsin, Madison), “Devotional Aestheticism: Steinberg, Sontag, Koestenbaum and the Question of a Queer Jewish Art History”
- **Christina Pasqua** (University of Toronto), “Drawing out the Word: Remediating the Bible Through Comics”
- **M. Stang** (Yale University), “Crypts of Fear: A Cultural History of America’s Haunts”

THURSDAY, JUNE 13

9:00–10:30 AM (Capitol II)

Session 1: Religious Studies Divide: People and Categories

Many humanities programs are facing existential threats, including religious studies. But beyond that there was already a developing rift between works that focus on the “lived religion” of people and works that focus on religion as a socially, even academically, constructed category. What are the stakes here? What is the core of the disagreement? In a field where theory has always been important, this debate at this moment seems especially resonant.

Panelists:

Tazeen Ali is Assistant Professor of Religion and Politics at Washington University in St. Louis. Her research focuses on Islam in America; women’s religious authority; and Islam, gender, and race. Her book *The Women’s Mosque of America: Authority & Community in US Islam* (NYU Press: November 2022) analyzes how American Muslim women negotiate the Islamic tradition to cultivate religious authority and build gender-equitable worship communities.

Joseph Blankholm is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His research focuses on anthropology of religion, secularism, atheism, and the meaning of religion. His first book titled *The Secular Paradox: On the Religiosity of the Not Religious*, published by NYU Press in 2022, focuses on the secular and why being secular can “feel so weirdly religious.” He is currently working on an intergenerational study of religion, values, and spirituality.

Kathryn Lofton is Lex Hixon Professor of Religious Studies and American Studies as well as Professor of History and Divinity at Yale University. Her research focuses on capitalism, secularism, popular culture, and more. She is author of *Oprah: The Gospel of an Icon* (University of California Press, 2011). Her second book, *Consuming Religion* (University of Chicago Press, 2017) focuses on the relationship between religion and consumerism, with case studies focusing on the Kardashian family, Goldman Sachs Group, and more.

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM (Capitol II)

Session 2: Religion and Non-Religion

In a moment when the traditional boundaries between religion, non-religion, and the secular continue to be blurred, the time is ripe to return to these categories, examine emerging theorists and theorizations, and explore their uses and descriptive capacities. The panel will explore their many and varied meanings and how different constructions of religion and non-religion help us narrate contemporary phenomena. How does attention to religion and non-religion help us theorize what social scientists have identified as the “losing of religion,” as well as reconfigure traditional and new religious movements? How do the categories of non-religion and non-belief help thinkers of religion better understand such things as the current white evangelical revival, discourses on race and Afro-pessimism, and rising political partisanship?

Panelists:

Michael Brandon McCormack is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Pan-African Studies, Associate Professor of Comparative Humanities (Religious Studies), and former Director of the Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research at the University of Louisville. He earned his PhD in religion in 2013 from Vanderbilt University. His research explores the intersections between Black religion, popular culture, the arts, and activism. His work has been published in *Black Theology: An International Journal*, the *Journal of Africana Religions*, *The Black Scholar*, and *Moved By the Spirit: Religion and the Movement for Black Lives*.

Jacqui Frost is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Purdue University. Her work focuses on an investigation of causes and consequences of religious disaffiliation in the United States. She is currently working on projects that examine conceptions of ritual and community in nonreligious congregations, the ways religious change shapes health and well-being, and conceptions of science as sacred in the transhumanist movement. Her recent research has been published in *American Sociological Review*, *Social Forces*, *Poetics*, *Social Currents*, and the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*.

Jaime Kucinkas is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology at Hamilton College. Her book *The Mindful Elite* (Oxford University Press, 2018) investigates how Buddhist modernist meditators transformed meditation in America into a mainstream practice embraced by secular organizations. Her interests focus on the intersections of the sociology of morality and meaning-making, religion/spirituality, social movements, cultural and organizational change, and inequality.

2:00–3:00 PM (Eiteljorg Museum, Allen Whitehill Clowes Sculpture Court)

Session 3: Juneteenth, Black Religion, and the Ambiguities of Freedom

Several discourses in the humanities are challenging how we talk about freedom and its relationship to religion. During the keynote presentation, Dr. Keri Day will explore on the fraught relationship between religion and freedom, especially Black freedom. Her recent work has foregrounded the Azusa Street Revival of 1906 and the complex questions that emerge when talking about Black freedom. She suggests that Azusa's non-statist, apocalyptic account of Black freedom troubles and complicates the assumption that directing Black energies and political agency towards nation-state building primarily secures the ends of Black freedom. Dr. Day will highlight these complex questions that emerge when discussing Black freedom, from political agency to securing liberation and flourishing.

Keynote Speaker:

Keri Day is Professor of Constructive Theology and African American Religion at Princeton Theological Seminary. Her teaching and research interests are in womanist/feminist theologies, social critical theory, cultural studies, economics, and Afro-Pentecostalism. She has authored four academic books: *Unfinished Business: Black Women, The Black Church, and the Struggle to Thrive in America* (2012); *Religious Resistance to Neoliberalism: Womanist and Black Feminist Perspectives* (2015); *Notes of a Native Daughter: Testifying in Theological Education* (2021); and her most recent book, *Azusa Reimagined: A Radical Vision of Religious and Democratic Belonging* (2022). She has also been recognized by NBC News as one of six Black women at the center of theological education in America. She is a fourth-generation preacher in the Church of God in Christ (COGIC).

Directions to The Eiteljorg Museum



4:00–5:15 PM (Eiteljorg Museum, Allen Whitehill Clowes Sculpture Court)

Session 4: Religion, Material Culture, and Museums

The importance of material culture to religion is now widely acknowledged, even accepted. Over the past decade, especially after recent philanthropic investment in the area, museum directors and curators have grappled with how to present faith and practice for a diverse public. This interactive forum session seeks to address how different religions are portrayed, and the nature of religious objects when they are also artifacts—or seemingly mundane objects that were religious for a different culture. How does a material object convey a culture's values, both past and present? What ethical issues are at play in this unique educational setting?

Panelists:

Erika Gault is Director of the Center for the Study of African American Religious Life and the Lilly Endowment Curator of African American Religious History at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. Her research focuses on the intersection of religious history, technology, and Black life. She is the author of *Networking the Black Church: Digital Black Christians and Hip Hop* published by NYU Press in 2022.

Sally M. Promey is the Caroline Washburn Professor of Religion and Visual Culture at Yale University, where she holds appointments in American Studies, Religious Studies, and Divinity. She directs the Center for the Study of Material and Visual Cultures of Religion (MAVCOR). Her new book, *Religion in Plain View: Public Aesthetics of American Display*, is forthcoming in 2024 from University of Chicago Press. She is also editor and contributing author of *Sensational Religion: Sensory Cultures in Material Practice*.

Marci Reaven is Curator of the exhibit “Acts of Faith: Religion and the American West” and most recently served as Vice President for History Exhibitions at The New-York Historical Society. She is a scholar of American history and urban planning and she completed a Ph.D. in American history at New York University in 2009.

Lois Silverman is Professor of Museum Studies at Indiana University Indianapolis. She is the author of the book *The Social Work of Museums* published by Routledge in 2010. Her current focus includes museums, health, and well-being; the spiritual potential of museums; and the field-wide need for more just and inclusive museum practices.

9:00–10:30 AM (Capitol II)

Session 5: Latinx Religious Diversity

In many of our syllabi, Latinx religion is solely discussed in terms of Catholicism and Pentecostalism. What are we missing with this oversimplification? What are the variations within those categories, as well as altogether different faiths? How does the Latinx experience in North America shape the diversity of these faiths, and vice versa?

Panelists:

João Chaves is Assistant Professor of the History of Religion in the Americas at Baylor University. His research focuses on the history of religion in the Americas, the influence of U.S. Protestantism in Latin America, and the development of Latin American/Latinx religious networks in the United States. He is author of the book *The Global Mission of the Jim Crow South: Southern Baptist Missions and the Shaping of Latin American Evangelicalism* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2022) and *Migrational Religion: Context and Creativity in the Latinx Diaspora* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2021).

Gerardo Martí is William R. Kenan, Jr. Endowed Professor of Sociology at Davidson College. The main focus of his research and teaching is race, religion, and social change. He is interested in examining the dynamics of contemporary issues like inequality, religious innovation, and political power. He is author of *Worship Across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation* (Oxford University Press) and an upcoming book titled, *Racial Justice in White Progressive Churches*, co-authored with Mark T. Mulder and Kevin D. Dougherty (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

Daisy Vargas is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Arizona, co-chair of the Religions in the Latina/o Americas unit, and steering committee member of the Catholic Studies unit for the American Academy of Religion. She specializes in Catholicism in the Americas; race, ethnicity, and religion in the United States; Latina/o/x religion; and material religion. Dr. Vargas is author of numerous articles including, "Latinos/as/x, Pilgrimage, and Embodiment," in the *Oxford Handbook of Latinx/o/a Christianities*, Oxford University Press (2022).

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM (Capitol II)

Session 6: Religion and Disability

Religious communities have often been at the forefront of providing services and support for people with varying health, social, and economic needs. However, this attention to difference has not always translated to a thoughtful encounter with the ways in which ability operates differently regarding neurodiversity, varied abilities, and access. Considering questions of access that focus on embodied religious practice and embodiment more broadly, how do the contested concepts of “disability” and “religion” provide a novel space to think critically about inclusion, visibility, and access? How have theories around embodiment, ability, and activism opened new arenas for protest and belonging—particularly with regard to religious spaces?

Panelists:

Erik Carter is Luther Sweet Endowed Chair in Disabilities at Baylor University. He serves as Executive Director of the Baylor Center for Developmental Disabilities, which aims to promote the thriving of people with disabilities and their families. He has published more than 100 articles on the intersections of faith and disability. Dr. Carter’s work in this area addresses the spiritual lives and flourishing of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families, the practices and postures of inclusive churches, and faith-based partnerships with disability service systems.

Andrew Walker-Cornetta is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at Georgia State University. His work explores United States religion, Catholicism, and the history of disability. He is currently working on a book project about US Catholics and cognitive impairment in the middle of the twentieth century. He contributed to the book, *American Patroness: Marian Shrines and the Making of US Catholicism* (Fordham University Press, 2024).

Hannah Zaves-Greene is Visiting Professor of Religion at Sarah Lawrence College. Zaves-Greene’s research focuses on the intersection of American Jewish history, migration studies, disability studies, gender and women’s history, and American legal and political history. Her current book project is titled *Able to Be American: Disability in U.S. Immigration Law and the American Jewish Response*.

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

2:00–3:30 PM (Capitol II)

Session 7: When Academic Terms Go Popular

Critical Race Theory. White Christian Nationalism. The “nones.” Spiritual but not religious. Whiteness. Intersectionality. Climate change. Culture Wars. These are terms that were initiated in scholarly work but have become part of the common lexicon in today’s news and politics. What happens when the academy loses control of terminology that is then politicized, racialized, or gendered in popular conversation? How should those working in religion respond, and how should we think about our work when this popularization is always a possibility?

Panelists:

Anthea Butler is Geraldine R. Segal Professor in American Social Thought and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. A historian of African American and American religion, Dr. Butler’s research and writing spans African American religion and history, nationalism, race, politics, Evangelicalism, gender and sexuality, media, and popular culture. She has served as President for the American Society of Church History and the Society for Pentecostal Studies. She is author of the award winning book *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America* (UNC Press, 2021).

Mark Silk is Professor of Religion in Public Life at Trinity University. He earned his Ph.D. from Harvard in medieval history and was the founding director of the Greenberg Center from 1996 to 2023. Dr. Silk is the author of *Spiritual Politics: Religion and America Since World War II* (Touchstone, 1988) and *Unsecular Media: Making News of Religion in America* (University of Illinois Press, 1998), which explores the inherent tensions between religion and the news media and traces the ups and downs of religious news coverage from Benjamin Franklin to David Koresh.

Carlton Waterhouse is Professor of Law at Howard University. He is an international expert on environmental law and environmental justice, as well as reparations and redress for historic injustices. He recently testified on the importance of reparations for African Americans before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States. He is a Fulbright research scholar and is a board member of the Environmental Law Institute. Dr. Waterhouse examines civil rights and human rights issues in his scholarship and service.

4:00–5:30 PM (Capitol II)

Session 8: Religion and Politics

2024 is an election year with multiple local, state, national, and even global implications. What do you think will be the role of religion in it? Is it changing, or is it like what we've seen in the past? If it is different, is it a difference of kind or degree?

Panelists:

Johnathan Coley is Associate Professor of Sociology at Oklahoma State University and Deputy Editor of *The Sociological Quarterly*. His research interests include social movements, politics, religion, education, gender and sexuality, and race and ethnicity. His first book, *Gay on God's Campus: Mobilizing for LGBT Equality at Christian Colleges and Universities*, was published by the University of North Carolina Press in 2018.

Jamil W. Drake is Assistant Professor of Religion at Yale Divinity School. He teaches and researches in the area of American Religious History, with a specific concentration in African-American religion and politics. His work explores the relationship between race, science, and state governance. Jamil is author of *To Know the Soul of a People: Religion, Race, and the Making of Southern Folk* (Oxford University Press, 2021). He has written many articles on the topics of race, ethnicity, civil rights, and more.

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd is Professor and Chair of Religious Studies and Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University. She co-directs the transdisciplinary Global Religion & Politics Research Group and is a core faculty member in the Middle East and Northern African (MENA) Studies program. She is the author of *The Politics of Secularism in International Relations* (2008) and *Beyond Religious Freedom: The New Global Politics of Religion* (2015), both published by Princeton University Press.

6:00-8:00 Closing Reception (Capitol Overlook)

SATURDAY, JUNE 15

Philip Goff is Chancellor's Professor of American Studies, History, and Religious Studies at Indiana University Indianapolis. Since 2000, he has been Executive Director of the Center for Religion & American Culture and co-editor of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. His most recent publications include *Civil Religion Today: Religion and the American Nation in the Twenty-First Century*, edited with Rhys Williams and Raymond Haberski (NYU Press, 2021), and *Religion and Philanthropy in the United States*, edited with David P. King (Indiana University Press, 2022).

Sarah Imhoff is Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University Bloomington. Her research explores how bodies and their attributes, such as gender, race, and ability, shape and are shaped by religion. Dr. Imhoff has published two books: *Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism* (2017) and *The Lives of Jessie Sampter: Queer, Disabled, Zionist* (2022). Her current research project is a hemispheric history of Judaism in the Americas, bringing together the stories of Latin America and the Caribbean with those of North America. She is the founding co-editor of the journal *American Religion*.

Andrea R. Jain is Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University Indianapolis, editor of the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, and author of *Selling Yoga: From Counterculture to Pop Culture* (Oxford, 2014) and *Peace Love Yoga: The Politics of Global Spirituality* (Oxford, 2020). Dr. Jain's current work, including the documentary film *Predation*, centers on questions about our current planetary crisis with special attention to the relationships between human societies and non-human animals, a diagnosis of capitalism's multispecies injustices, and attention to activists who build multispecies coalitions in order to imagine radically different futures.

Jessica Nelson is Assistant Visiting Professor of History at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and one of the curators who contributed to the "Acts of Faith" exhibition. She is the editor and contributing author of the exhibit's companion book: *Religion and the American West: Belief, Violence, and Resilience from 1800 to Today* (University of New Mexico Press, 2023). Her research focuses on the intersections of religious and racial identity in North America in the 18th and 19th centuries. She previously served as the Director of Religion and Cultural Initiatives at the Eiteljorg Museum of Native Americans and Western Art.

Robert Saler is Associate Professor of Theology and Culture at Christian Theological Seminary. Prior to coming to CTS, Dr. Saler was a pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church in Gary, IN, and also taught at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. His first book, *Between Magisterium and Marketplace*, deals with issues of ecclesiology and theological creativity, while his second book, *Theologia Crucis*, examines how the theology of the cross impacts global theological literature. He is also the author of *All These Things Into Position: What Theology Can Learn from Radiohead*, *Planning Sabbaticals: A Guide for Congregations and Their Pastors*, and *Arvo Pärt: Sounding the Sacred* (co-edited with Peter Bouteneff and Jeffers Engelhardt).

Peter J. Thuesen is Professor of Religious Studies at Indiana University Indianapolis, Director of Humanities Research in the Center for the Study of Religion & American Culture, and co-editor of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. His books include *Tornado God: American Religion and Violent Weather* (Oxford, 2020), *Predestination: The American Career of a Contentious Doctrine* (Oxford, 2009), and *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles Over Translating the Bible* (Oxford, 1999). He is also the editor of a major critical edition, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 26, Catalogues of Books* (Yale, 2008).

Joseph L. Tucker Edmonds is Associate Professor of Africana Studies and Religious Studies at Indiana University Indianapolis' School of Liberal Arts. He is also a Associate Director for the Center for the Study of Religion & American Culture and co-editor of *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*. Dr. Tucker Edmonds writes on religion and the Black body and his first book, *The Other Black Church: Alternative Christian Movements and the Struggle for Black Freedom*, explores the relationship between the Black body and radical religious traditions.

Andrew L. Whitehead is Professor of Sociology and Director of the Association of Religion Data Archives (theARDA.com) at the Center for the Study of Religion & American Culture at Indiana University Indianapolis. He is the co-author of *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States*, along with Samuel Perry, which won the 2021 Distinguished Book Award from the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. His work has also won Distinguished Article Awards from both the Association for the Sociology of Religion and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. His newest book, *American Idolatry: Why Christians Must Confront White Christian Nationalism*, was released in 2023.

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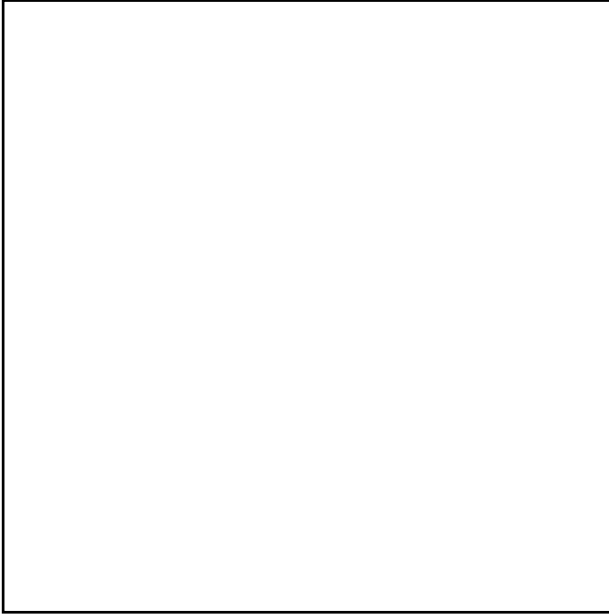
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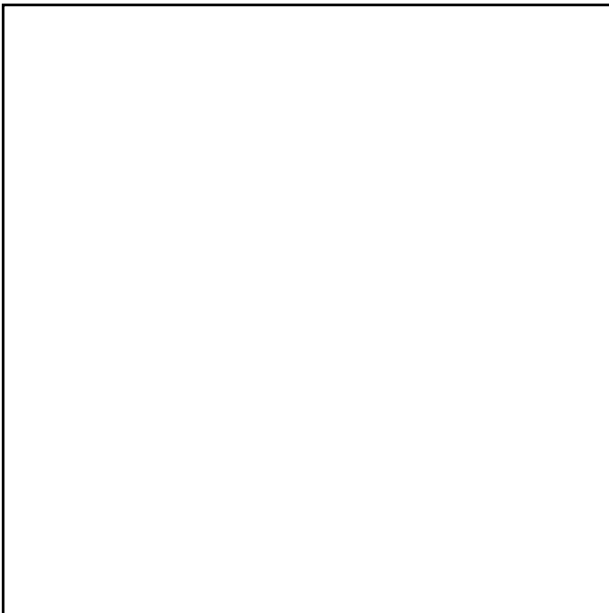
Notes

For Use During Facilitated Discussion

If your comment or question is intended to **continue** the current topic of discussion, please signal the moderator with green.



If your comment or question is intended to **change** the topic of discussion, please signal the moderator with red.



Religion & American Culture Acknowledgments

The Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture wishes to thank Lilly Endowment, Indiana University, and Indiana University Indianapolis for their generous support of the 8th Biennial Conference on Religion & American Culture.

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Where to Eat

