

## **Call for Papers**

**The Working Group on Lived Religion in Eastern Europe and Eurasia  
Annual Conference**

### **The Materiality of Lived Religion: Evocations, Persuasions, Outrage**

**22-24 June 2022,  
Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia  
(Covid-permitting; otherwise online)**

**Deadline for Submission of Abstracts: 15 February 2022**

Bruno Latour provocatively asserts that we fabricate the beings in which we believe (2010, 39). By making manifest divine, spirit, and ghostly beings, the immateriality of belief and appeals to otherworldly forces become imminently material. Anthropologists and other scholars have increasingly turned their attention to the processes by which materiality allows immaterial sensations to become an effective means to generate religious experiences, establish power structures, and forge lifeworlds. Devotional acts, such as singing, praying, and other forms of movement, involve the use of images, sounds, and objects to evoke an otherworldly presence and experiences of a transcendent realm. Religious institutions use the sacred sites where these experiences and practices occur and the material representation of religious concepts, virtues, and vices to define how one should live as well as who one is and to whom one is related.

This workshop invites us to think about how the creation, authentication, and authorization of material forms of religion - as well as their desecration and destruction - might inform the dynamics of social change and patterns of everyday life in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. We encourage interdisciplinary research that uses qualitative methods and innovative styles of argumentation.

We ask: How do various confessional traditions lend themselves to the fetishization of material objects and sacred sites as manifestations of divine presence? How might the presence of religious elements in the public sphere reveal worldviews, ethical repertoires, and moral convictions? How might a building, image, or sculpture come to embody spiritual power and the moral authority of the past, and what might be the culmination of such projections of supernatural agency residing in places and objects?

The materiality of lived religion engages, but is not limited to, such topics as:

- Covid and contaminated/contaminating religious objects, practices and peoples
- religious sites, symbols, and practices as material forms of cultural heritage

- religious underpinnings to citizenship and sovereignty
- manifestations of transgression, blasphemy, and desecration of the sacred
- empathic/hostile representations of the Other
- translocal, transnational, transborder frameworks for developing material forms of lived religion
- infrastructure and connections, regularized contact, and networks of exchange through lived religion
- religious means of stabilizing/destabilizing regions and countries through colonial/empowering relations, hierarchies, and other forms of dis/enfranchisement

**Format:** Each participant will make a 20-minute presentation, followed by commentary from a discussant, and open discussion. The working language is English.

**Logistics:** The costs of travel to Tbilisi and three nights of accommodation will be provided, should the conference be onsite.

**Proposals:** Please submit a 250-word abstract and a 3-page CV by **15 February 2022** to [soc.injener@gmail.com](mailto:soc.injener@gmail.com).

Notification of acceptance will be sent by **1 March 2022**. At that time, a decision will also be made as to whether the conference will be in-person, online, or a hybrid version of both.

**Organizing Committee:** **Denis Brylov**, Drahomanov National Pedagogical University; **Melissa Caldwell**, University of California-Santa Cruz; **Tsy pylma Darieva**, ZOiS; **Bruce Grant**, New York University; **Ketevan Gurchani**, Ilia State University; **Tetiana Kalenychenko**, European Center for Strategic Analytics; **Jeanne Kormina**, Higher School of Economics-St. Petersburg; **Catherine Wanner**, Pennsylvania State University; and **Yulia Yurchuk**, Umea University.

**The Working Group on Lived Religion in Eastern Europe and Eurasia** brings together scholars from different disciplinary backgrounds to consider how religion has shaped histories, politics, and entanglements in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. It supports research on institutionalized religion as well as contemporary forms of lived religiosity. By conceptualizing a broad geographic area as a common research site, from the Balkans to the Caucasus mountains to the Ukrainian and Russian steppe to Anatolia, this Group aims to think critically about how religion - and its twin secularism - have organized political space and encounters over time. The Working Group sponsors an annual conference, a monthly seminar series, a workshop for junior scholars, and an intensive summer program on anthropological theory and ethnographic methods. Catherine Wanner is the convener of the Working Group.

The Working Group is sponsored by the **Center for Governance and Culture in Europe, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland** .