

BSA Socrel Study Group Annual Report (2021/22)

Name: Socrel (Sociology of Religion study group)

Established: 1975

Number of members: on 1 July 2022, we have 118 active members, of which 58 are BSA members, 31 are standard Socrel members, and 29 are PG/Low Income/Retired members.

Income: closing balance at 01/07/22 is £27384.

Aims: Socrel is the primary professional group for UK-based academics and postgraduate researchers in the social scientific study of religion. Whilst primarily sociological in orientation, the group also welcomes involvement from members from a range of academic disciplines who share an interest in the empirical study of religion and the analysis of religion in contemporary society.

The group aims both to provide a forum for the sharing of current work in the field, as well as shaping theoretical and methodological debates in the field through its meetings and related publications. It also seeks to support the development of emerging researchers in this field through its postgraduate study days and through the active support of postgraduate presenters at other study group events (both intellectually and through the provision of limited postgraduate bursaries).

The group also aims to provide support to women in academia, through its mentoring scheme.

Review of the year:

- Prof. Mat Guest became Chair of Socrel in July 2021, taking over from Prof. Sophie Gilliat-Ray
- Dr Rob Barward-Symmons became Events Officer in July 2021, taking over from Dr Rachael Shillitoe
- Dr Isabella Kasselstrand became Communication Officer in July 2021, taking over from Dr Michael Munnik
- Gillian Chu became PG/ECR Officer in July 2021, taking over from Dr Josh Bullock

It is worth noting 2 officers' terms were extended due to COVID-19 and the cancellation of our AGM in 2020 (events officer and PG/ECR officer). This explains why there were so many changes in 2021. To ensure stability within the group, the convenorship was extended for another year, and Dr Céline Benoit will step down in July 2022 (instead of July 2020).

- Dr Sarah Harvey was awarded £5000 to conduct a research project on the history of Socrel. Initial findings will be presented at the 2022 annual conference.
- The study group organised an online annual conference in July 2021, which was held over Zoom. The theme was *Beyond Binaries in the Sociology of Religion*. The conference lasted three days, and included keynotes and a special keynote panel to celebrate our 45th anniversary.

The special keynote panel consisted of prominent scholars in our field: **Grace Davie** (University of Exeter), **James Beckford** (University of Warwick), **Eileen Barker** (LSE), **Linda Woodhead** (Lancaster University), and **Colin Campbell** (University of York).

Our keynotes were:

Sarah-Jane Page (Aston University): *Moving the Sociology of Religion Forward Using a Queer Feminist Lens.*

Colin Campbell (University of York): *“Where is the Damn Thing?” In Search of the Cultic Milieu*

Samuel Perry (University of Oklahoma): *No Immortal Gospels: How Religious Nationalism Forces Us To Transcend Religious Binaries*

- The study group organised a PG/ECR day, which was held via Zoom in July 2021
- The study group held a Chair’s Response Day at the University of Nottingham. The theme was *Teaching Religion* and the programme can be accessed [here](#). The event was well attended. It included a free online session for teachers and non-academics to join us between 16:30 and 17:30. This was co-organised with TRS-UK (of which Socrel is a member organisation – see annual report for 2018). The session attracted over 90 delegates.
- The study group organised a stream plenary session at the BSA Annual Conference (April 2022) to address the conference theme. We had two parallel sessions for papers and a plenary discussion on Wednesday 20th at 16:45-17:45.

The plenary session was chaired by our chair Mathew Guest and featured **Professor Gordon Lynch, Professor Gerardo Marti, and Dr CL Nash**. Speakers explored *The role and responsibility of scholars of religion in building equality and justice*. The panel discussed their own experiences of engaging with diverse issues of equality and justice through their work. There was an opportunity for a Q&A to discuss these as a community.

- The study group hosted a series of online coffee chats – these were drop in sessions for members. The aim was to help overcome the lack of face to face interactions. These will become mentoring café sessions, to be held 3 times a year.
- The study group continues to publish its newsletter (SocrelNews) twice a year. Each edition includes news from the study group and features 3 interviews with colleagues. Past editions can be accessed on our website (see link below).

Concluding remarks:

Socrel looks forward to the forthcoming year and the opportunity to meet face to face again.

Website

<https://www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/study-groups/sociology-of-religion-study-group/>

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