

# Call for Proposals

## NAASR 2015: Theory in a Time of Excess

Although the terms “method and theory” can now be found in course titles, curricula/degree requirements, area/comprehensive exams, and listed as competencies on the CVs of scholars from across a wide array of subfields, and while a variety of groups at annual scholarly conferences itemize theorizing among the topics that they routinely examine, it seems that few of the many examples of doing theory today involve either met-reflection on the practical conditions of the field or rigorously explanatory studies of religion’s cause(s) or function(s). So, despite the appearances of tremendous advances in the field since NAASR’s founding as the lone place for carrying out theory in the study of religion—when “theory” was indeed a rare word and was often replaced with the more neutral “approach”—it can be argued that little has changed.

The upcoming 2015 meeting in Atlanta marks the organization’s 30th anniversary and so the NAASR program will be divided into two related parts: (i) an invited Presidential Panel on the history of NAASR and the changing (or not) circumstances of its present and possible future and (ii) four separate panels (all leading up to the Presidential Panel), two hours in length each, all exploring a variety of views on how one carries out theorizing in the academic study of religion today—when almost everyone claims to be a theorist but few seem to do theory.

Each of the four panels will focus on one substantive statement on what theory is (or is not) and what can (or cannot) be accomplished by adopting a particular understanding of the requirements of theorizing in the human sciences. This call for proposals is therefore devoted to having NAASR members submit approx. 250 word abstracts from which the Program Committee will select four papers, each of which presses members to consider different issues involved with defining and doing theory in the academic study of religion. The abstract must make clear the submitters understanding of what constitutes theory while also summarizing the direction of his/her argument and any examples/data domains with which the presenter will work.

Note: Proposals selected will need to result in substantive and original essays, of approx. 4,000-5,000 words in length, that will be submitted to NAASR in PDF form by no later than October 1, 2015, for pre-distribution to all members. Also, these papers will not be read in Atlanta but, due to the pre-distribution, presenters will have 15 minutes to orally summarize their arguments. Respondents will then be invited by the Program Committee to work with each paper, applying and testing its argument.

Our goal is to publish the collection in *MTSR* or another appropriate venue.

Submit all proposals, by no later than **February 15, 2015**, as PDF file attachments to:

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