



NORTH AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION

## **“The Field”: Assessing and Critiquing the Academic Study of Religion**

### **Call for Proposals**

At our 2018 meeting, NAASR sponsored a panel commemorating the work, legacy, and influence of former NAASR President, Jonathan Z. Smith. Much of the discussion addressed his important work *Imagining Religion*, where Smith famously called scholars to be mindful of the ways they “imagine” religion and so-called religious data. Building off this crucial insight, NAASR 2019 will highlight the field of the academic study of religion and its impact on the ways that scholars and others imagine religion. NAASR 2019 will explore various factors that influence the production of academic discourses on religion and their dissemination in the classroom, in academic literature, in public debates, and in other forms of information dissemination. Specifically, the program for 2019 will focus on four topics: **History of the Field, The Role and Influence of Private Funding of the Field, Teaching the Field, and International Perspectives on the Field.**

A few of the issues that we intend to address are: How is religion constructed and depicted in the academic study of religion? How do private donors selectively privilege certain descriptions of religion, and to what ends? How do instructors communicate and/or critique these descriptions to students and to broader audiences? Scholars are increasingly called to engage in public scholarship. What is public scholarship, who answers these calls, and how do scholars imagine religion in this scholarship?

Following the model used for the past several annual meetings, four main, substantive papers will be invited and distributed both to respondents and to NAASR members approximately one month prior to the meeting. The authors of the main papers will summarize their papers at the meeting. Each paper will then have four respondents, who will have fifteen minutes each to reply to the main paper. An open discussion will follow for the remainder of the session.

Following the precedent set over the past four years, the aim once again is to publish these sessions as a book (with responses from the main paper presenters) under the NAASR Working Papers series with Equinox Publishing (edited by Martie Smith Roberts).

This is therefore **a call for respondents.**

The four main papers will be invited, each to examine the implications of framing our research as focusing on one of the following topics:

- **History of the Field**
- **The Role and Influence of Private Funding of the Field**
- **Teaching the Field**
- **International Perspectives on the Field**

The main presenters will be asked to analyze the construction of religion in academic literature in light of their assigned theme (or articulated theme, given theme, specific theme), to advocate/critique scholarship carried out in that vein, and to explore its implications both for the field and for the broader imagining of religion. Submissions for possible respondents (16 in total are needed) must each:

1. identify the key theme (one of the four immediately above) on which they wish to focus in their reply
2. provide a brief (max. 500 words) statement on the most pressing issue(s) in need of consideration when addressing scholarship on religion and one of these themes
3. as part of (2), discuss how their scholarship and/or field of study explores the theme

We would like to pair scholars from diverse data domains.

*NAASR especially invites submissions from early career scholars who have an interest in the topics explored in our sessions.*

**Please send your proposal as a file attachment by March 1, 2019, to NAASR VP Rebekka King at [rebekka.king@mtsu.edu](mailto:rebekka.king@mtsu.edu)**

*#naasr2019 • Nov. 23-26 • San Diego, CA*