

SORAAAD 2017

Appropriation and the Analytical Study of Religion

The Study of Religion as Analytical Discipline Workshop at the
University of Regina, Department of Religious Studies.

November 17, 2017

Philosophy and Religious Studies Department

Northeastern University

Boston Massachusetts

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Appropriation and the Analytical Study of Religion

American popular culture has always been enamored with blue-eyed soul, rewarding it to the detriment and exclusion of the very black artists who pioneered these musical traditions.

[Dr. Brittney Cooper - Rutgers University, cosmopolitan.com](#) on Adele's win of Album of the Year for *25* over *Lemonade* by Beyoncé

I dream it, I work hard, I grind 'til I own it,
I twirl on them haters, albino alligators.
Beyoncé "Formation," *Lemonade*

In year seven, SORAAAD will focus on appropriation. How is appropriation defined with respect to power and consumption? How is appropriation considered an act of interpretation and exchange? How are appropriation and its contestation meaningful for those we study? What do instances or ongoing acts of appropriation tell us about the politics of representation and classification? In this workshop we will consider the implicit and overt acts of exogenous and endogenous appropriation deployed by the subjects of our research, as well as those that we deploy ourselves when designing qualitative research. We shall look at appropriation as a function of exchange, agency, erasure, classification, and power. Jamel Velji, Annette Yoshiko Reed, Sean McCloud, Jennifer Knust, and Ipsita Chatterjea will address the erasure of the Islamic origins of coffee, provenance, looting, and the Bible, Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity, avenues for assessing mixing and power in new religious movements, and the endogenous appropriation and erasure of Black women's labor. Finally, we will discuss how we as scholars cite, borrow, and adapt from other scholars.

Religious studies is an interdisciplinary field. But does its status as such justify our sometimes undisciplined mechanisms of "borrowing" — methodological, topical, conceptual, or otherwise — from other fields? We routinely witness scholarly acts of appropriation that silence points made by other scholars and also ignore their standards for substantiation. To move beyond our own acts of appropriation by name-dropping, can we begin to talk about what we owe to other religion scholars and scholarship in other disciplines by way of disciplined adaptations? Can we justify our borrowings such that they might be viewed as sensible adaptations and complementary or logical extensions by those from whom we have borrowed?

Participants and panelists in this year’s workshop will explore questions crucial both to their areas of specialization and to religious studies as a discipline. How can we track the varied and dynamic ways that ‘appropriation’ morphs as an assertion of hegemony across space and time? How do we relate event specific studies of relatively small populations to larger discourses without distorting particular expressions as either definitively representative or dismissible as insufficient evidence? Who gets to appropriate without stigma? How do we track and contextualize fixations on specific narratives, persistent erasures, and outcomes? To what end and with what pivots can we productively compare observed appropriation and scholarly appropriation? In the case of the latter, how can we self-check a tendency to invoke theories and other disciplines developed in other contexts without clarifying the context of exchange and carrying out the methodological labor demanded by these approaches? How do we continue to integrate research that demonstrates how appropriation has warped our study of religions both in- and outside a “Western context,” e.g., by privileging some forms to the detriment of scholarly understandings of factionalisms, esotericisms, indigenous religions, fictional religions, and new religions?

“Appropriation and the Analytical Study of Religion” will be of interest to scholars who already enact social science and critical humanities research methodologies; to those who want to develop techniques to denaturalize appropriation and examine the nature of acquisition; and to anyone who wants to rethink how acts and claims of appropriation manifest and function to normalize activity within specifically heterogeneous power structures.

The SORAAAD Workshop Committee William Arnal, Ipsita Chatterjea, David Walker, Edward Silver, Rebecca Raphael, Randall Styers, and Jens Kreinath.

[SORAAAD and University of Regina Religion Department](#)

Northeastern University - Institutional Sponsor

Wellesley College - Religious Studies Department.

Texas State University - Philosophy Department

Suggested Reading

Appendix, “Beyoncé, Adele and Structures of Appropriation.” see page 21.

Given the diverse material foci and technical training of those assembled and reading along at home, we thought it might aid discussion to have an accessible case study where we could focus on the visible mechanics of appropriation (consumption, rationalization, etc.) somewhat displaced from a focus on religion. For this reason,

please read the Appendix on page 21, and review the videos associated with Beyoncé's and Adele's acceptance speeches for Urban Album of the Year and Album of the Year respectively at the 2017 Grammy awards and some of the subsequent coverage. Here we will also compile other articles addressing appropriation that we have encountered and have been sent to us.

Gray, Briahna Joy. "The Question of Cultural Appropriation" Current Affairs, [CurrentAffairs.org](https://www.currentaffairs.org/2017/09/the-question-of-cultural-appropriation). September 6, 2017, <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2017/09/the-question-of-cultural-appropriation>, access date November 1, 2017.

The workshop thanks Megan Goodwin for drawing our attention to this article that insightfully sums up recent public discussion of appropriation in the media.

Rodgers, Richard A. [From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation](#). *Communication Theory* 16, 2006, 474-503. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00277.x

This literature review highlights work on appropriation across Communication Studies, Sociology, Cultural Studies, Anthropology, Indigenous Studies, and History.

Further reading

Altglas, Veronique. *From Yoga to Kabbalah: Religious Exoticism and the Logics of Bricolage*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.

Schedule

10:45-11:00 Pre-Workshop Refreshments & Check-In

Introduction: Appropriation and the Analytical Study of Religion

11:00-11:50 **Opening Remarks**

A statement from William E. Arnal - as read by David Walker.

Appropriation, Human Behaviors, and the Study of Religion

Ipsita Chatterjea

Workshop Overview and Themes

Sean McCloud, Jennifer Knust, and Jamel Velji

Introductions

Meet your fellow participants.

11:50-1:00 **LUNCH** and continued conversation

Case Studies: Appropriation, "Amnesia," Narrative, Plunder, and Erasure

1:00-1:35 **(Re)narrativizing Origins: the Case of Coffee**

Jamel Velji

1:40-2:15 **The Bible as Plunder The Theft of Codex Bezae and the Problem of Provenance**

Jennifer Knust

2:20-2:55 **Endogenous Appropriation: Gendered Labor, AME Women**

Ipsita Chatterjea

2:55-3:10 **BREAK**

Analytical Frames: Appropriation, Taking, Territoriality, and Identity

3:10-3:45 **What's in a Word? Appropriations, Bricolage, Syncretisms, Hybrids, and Combinations in our Teaching and Research**

Sean McCloud

3:50-4:25 **Identity before and after 'Cultural Appropriation': Test-cases from Christian Origins, Jewish-Christianity, and Jewish-Christian Relations**

Annette Yoshiko Reed

4:25-4:55 **Discussion Across Segments**

David Walker - Moderator

4:55-5:10 **Announcements and Queries**

David Walker

5:15-5:30 **Walk over to the Reception** ¹

5:30-7:00 **SORAAAD RECEPTION**

¹ If you have mobility issues, please indicate this so we can arrange transportation for you.

About Us

SORAAAD at the University of Regina

SORAAAD was created as a means to further the reach of the best qualitative analytical work in the study of religion. Our objective has been to function as both a workshop and a medium of scholarly exchange respecting critical, social, and behavioral theories, methodology, conceptualization, and research design. Having served as SORAAAD's primary sponsor since 2014, as of 2017, The University of Regina Department of Religious Studies is now the official institutional center for SORAAAD's activities. This alliance has been established to sustain the innovation of research design, proliferate techniques, and further the immediate integration of findings into the training of graduate students and undergraduate curriculum.

Our Sponsors

We want to thank our hosts the Philosophy and Religious Studies Department at Northeastern University, most especially Elizabeth Bucar. The 2017 SORAAAD workshop is sponsored by the University of Regina Religious Studies Department, Texas State University's Philosophy Department, and Wellesley College's Department of Religion. SORAAAD wants to thank Ed Silver and Stephen Marini for Wellesley College's sponsorship, Craig Hanks and Rebecca Raphael for Texas State University's sponsorship. Since 2014, the SORAAAD workshop has been underwritten by the University of Regina, Religious Studies Department, whom we thank for its ongoing support and the support of William Arnal, Head of Department.

Acknowledgments

SORAAAD's committee would like to thank Tim Jensen, David Frankfurter, Megan Goodwin, David Walker, Sean McCloud, the Critical Theories and Discourses on Religion Group, Matthew Sheedy, Stacie Swain, [The Bulletin for the Study of Religion blog](#), Christopher Cotter, and David Robertson for their ongoing support of the workshop.

Citation

Chicago Manual of Style

Individual Papers

First Name, Last Name. "Paper Title." Paper presented at the Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline Workshop, Boston, MA, November, 2017.

The workshop program

The SORAAAD Workshop at the University of Regina, Religious Studies Department. "Appropriation and the Analytical Study of Religion" the Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline Workshop, Boston, MA, November, 2017.

Registration

Please send an email to william.arnal@uregina.ca . Place "registration" in the subject line, and include your name, indication of rank (independent scholar, graduate student, professor, etc.), and institution, if applicable, in the body of the email. You might wish to review the [SORAAAD Workshop Ethos](#).

Registration is free. SORAAAD thanks its sponsors for making this possible.

Participation Limit: 40

Social Media

[#SORAAAD2017](#) is the official hashtag for "Appropriation and the Analytical Study of Religion." Please respect the limits expressed by speakers and other participants with regard to circulating their thoughts, ideas, or images on media of any kind.

For news about the workshop, analytical scholarship in religion and cognate fields, the latest from our partners and your peers, and issues facing higher education please follow:

[@SORAAADWorkshop](#), [SORAAAD on Facebook](#), and [SORAAAD on LinkedIn](#)

SORAAAD 2011-2017

2017 [Appropriation and the Analytical Study of Religion](#)

[University of Regina, Religious Studies Department](#)

Northeastern University, Philosophy and Religious Studies Department-
Institutional Host, with thanks to Elizabeth Bucar

[Wellesley College, The Religion Department](#)

[Texas State University, Department of Philosophy](#)

2016 [Aesthetics and the Analytical Study of Religion](#)

In partnership with [Arbeitskreis Religionsästhetik](#)

[Trinity University, Religion Department](#) - Institutional Host,

with thanks to Angela Tarango & Sarah K. Pinnock

[University of Regina, Religious Studies Department](#)

[Texas State University, Department of Philosophy](#)

[Wellesley College, The Religion Department](#)

2015 [Canon and the Analytical Study of Religion](#)

[Georgia State University, Religious Studies Department](#) Institutional Host,
with thanks to Monique Moultrie & Kathryn McClymond

[University of Regina, Religious Studies Department](#)

Critical Theories and Discourses on Religion Group - AAR

Cultural History of the Study of Religion Group - AAR

Metacriticism of Biblical Scholarship Consultation - SBL

Redescribing Early Christianity Group - SBL

2014 [Comparison and the Analytical Study of Religion](#)

[University of Regina, Religious Studies Department](#)

Critical Theories and Discourses on Religion Group - AAR

Redescribing Early Christianity Group - SBL

Sociology of Religion Group - AAR

Cultural History of the Study of Religion Group - AAR

Metacriticism of Biblical Scholarship Consultation - SBL

2013 Methodologies and the Analytical Study of Religion

Critical Theories and Discourses on Religion Group - AAR

Cultural History of the Study of Religion Group - AAR

Sociology of Religion Group - AAR

Ideological Criticisms of Biblical Studies Group - SBL

Metacriticism of Biblical Scholarship Consultation - SBL

Bible and Cultural Studies Section - SBL

2012 The Analytical Handling of Norms and Values in the Study of Religion

Critical Theories and Discourses on Religion Group - AAR

Cultural History of the Study of Religion Group - AAR

Sociology of Religion Group - AAR

Ideological Criticisms of Biblical Studies Group - SBL

Bible and Cultural Studies Section - SBL

Equinox Publishing

2011 The Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline

Critical Theories and Discourses on Religion Group - AAR

Sociology of Religion Group - AAR

Ideological Criticisms of Biblical Studies Group - SBL

Bible and Cultural Studies Section - SBL

SORAAAD Workshop Committee

[Ipsita Chatterjea*](#) - Executive Director

[William E. Arnal](#) - Director

Director - Professor, Head of Department, Religious Studies, University of Regina

[David Walker](#) - Editorial Director

Assistant Professor, Religious Studies Department, University of California, Santa Barbara

[Rebecca Raphael](#) - Editorial Director

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[Randall Styers](#)

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Religion Department, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

[Jens Kreinath*](#)

Associate Professor, Anthropology Department, Wichita State University

[Edward Silver](#)

Assistant Professor, Religion Department, Wellesley College

Former SORAAAD Co-Chairs

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <u>Greg Alles*</u> | 2011 |
| <u>Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley *</u> | 2011-2012 |
| <u>Randall Reed*</u> | 2011-2013 |
| <u>Craig Martin</u> | 2012-2013 |
| <u>Jacques Berlinerblau</u> | 2012-2013 |
| <u>Emma Wasserman</u> | 2014-2016 |

* Founding Co-Chair of the SORAAAD Steering Committee

Program

11:00 - 11:50

Introduction: Appropriation and the Analytical Study of Religion

We will elaborate the premise and ask, “how do we analyze appropriation and associated human behaviors as events or dynamics intertwined with religion?”

William E. Arnal

Opening Remarks - as read by David Walker

Ipsita Chatterjea

Appropriation, Human Behaviors, and the Analytical Study of Religion

Sean McCloud , Jennifer Knust, and Jamel Velji

Overview and Themes

Meet your fellow participants.

Introductions

Opening Remarks

William E. Arnal - as read by David Walker

Appropriation, Human Behaviors, and the Analytical Study of Religion

Ipsita Chatterjea

The behaviors, and utterances we associate with religion are minimally behaviors and utterances among others, the same can be said of appropriation. The workshop will not engage in a debate as to whether or not appropriation is real, or if it is reducible to some sort of mode of exchange, let alone that it should be allowed to operate in our scholarship without analytical regard for context, power relations, agency accorded to the parties observed (or absented,) and other salient valences of context. I use the term “appropriation” and not the phrase “Cultural Appropriation” because appropriation is almost always

simultaneously (among other things) economic, political, personal, and regulatory in its structures and impacts. Reductive, strawman, “click bait” about “yoga and burritos” distracts from exploitation, classification, (ironically) consumption, and representation. Tactically, trivialization is a means of erasure with the appearance of dialog. The suggestion of Rodgers’ (2006), identification and elaboration of exchange, dominance, exploitation, and transculturation is for our purposes a grid that I hope renders literature on appropriation in other fields accessible, and not as a play-doh extruder through which we should constrain our observations. And what of the study of religion? Given a preoccupation with origins and lineage (ourselves and those we study) and our supposed attention to genealogy; our ability to analyze religion at all rests in part on our capacity to examine appropriation and thus examine how those we study understand and assert their own agency, authority, and impose and contest well-rationalized structural inequalities. Given recent broader attention to “decolonizing the field,” will it transparently build on the work of scholars of color over generations and distinct fields or just increase the frequency of references? Given the reception of Martin Bernal 30 years ago, how can we ensure Franz Fanon, W.E.B. DuBois, Angela Davis, Stuart Hall, or Patricia Hill Collins do not become tokens of the white Protestant missionary universalism?

Suggested Reading

Rodgers, Richard A. [From Cultural Exchange to Transculturation: A Review and Reconceptualization of Cultural Appropriation](#). *Communication Theory* 16, 2006, 474-503. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2885.2006.00277.x

Overview and Themes

Sean McCloud , Jennifer Knust, and Jamel Velji

Introductions

Meet your fellow participants.

11:50 pm - 1:00 pm

LUNCH *and continued conversation*

1:00 - 2:55

Case Studies Appropriation, “Amnesia,” Narrative, Plunder, and Erasure

Jamel Velji

(Re)narrativizing origins: the case of coffee

Jennifer Knust

The Bible as Plunder: The Theft of Codex Bezae and the Problem of Provenance

Ipsita Chatterjea

Endogenous Appropriation: Gendered Labor and AME Women

(Re)narrativizing origins: the case of coffee

Jamel Velji

Those of us in the study of Islam frequently talk about how best to address a concept that the prominent American Islamicist Carl Ernst calls cultural amnesia. This amnesia includes the revision or erasure of memory concerning Muslims’ contributions to society more generally: the transmission of philosophical ideas, the development of important forms of medical knowledge, and the hospital are but a few examples. Ernst, like many other scholars of Islam, laments this amnesia, arguing that it helps to facilitate negative portrayals of Muslims while making our tasks as scholar-teachers more difficult.

At the crux of this notion of cultural amnesia is the concept of collective memory: how societies form it, maintain it, revise it, and how they deploy it to construct visions of reality. My book project, “Coffee, Religion, and the Making of Memory,” examines narratives surrounding the origins of one of the world’s most widely consumed beverages – a beverage first domesticated and popularized by Muslims – to elucidate the connections between the deployment of memory and construction of reality. My examination of these narratives will make use of materials from three different geographic regions and time periods: the 16th century, a time in which Muslim theologians debated coffee’s permissibility in the Islamic tradition; the 17th and 18th centuries, when European travelers and physicians encountered the beverage and often attempted to revise the narratives of coffee’s Islamic origins; and the

contemporary period, in which high-end roasters deploy narratives of origins to market their coffees.

For this paper, I will be examining early modern documents (medical treatises, travel narratives, histories), coffeehouse architecture, as well as images and other ephemera concerning the arrival of coffee into selected cities in Europe. What kinds of narratives do these materials convey both about coffee's Islamic past and about its place in Europe? And how, in the transmission of the substance from one cultural context to another, did these narratives acquire new cultural signifiers that displaced coffee's Islamic (and Ethiopian) past?

Suggested Readings:

Ernst, Carl ["Islam as Part of the Contemporary World"](#) (excerpt) in *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004

_____, ["Greek Philosophy as a Source of Ethics"](#) (excerpt) from "Ethics and Life in the World" in *Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2004

The Bible as Plunder: The Theft of Codex Bezae and the Problem of Provenance

Jennifer Knust

In his publication of the facsimile edition of Codex Bezae (D/d 05), an important (and abberant) fifth-century Latin-Greek copy of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, F. H. A. Scrivener, Prebendary of Exeter and Vicar of Hendon, suggested that the manuscript had been stolen from the Monastery of St. Irenaeus of Lyons, rather than simply received by the famous Calvinist scholar Theodore Beza as an (innocent) gift: "It can hardly be doubted that some one who shared in the plunder of the Abbey [in 1562] conveyed this portion of it to Beza, who might naturally assume that of which he could have no direct information, that it had long lain there neglected in the dust." (*Bezae Codex Cantabrigiensis*, London, 1864). Stolen or not, the manuscript was ultimately donated to the Cambridge University Library, where it resides to this day, and the possibility of its theft has long been forgotten. Scrivener's speculations, and their disappearance from view, point to a larger phenomenon,

characteristic of the exchange of biblically related artifacts and manuscripts: it has often been more advantageous for those in possession of such precious items to “forget” where they came from. The dynamics of forgetting and remembering have indelibly marked the Bible’s material witnesses, placing the Bible-as-Object within on-going dramas of ownership, theft, and appropriation. This paper seeks places more recent controversies within a much broader cycle of violation, rescue, and “discovery,” considering the consequences of biblical ownership for both human and textual bodies.

Suggested Reading:

Association for Research into Crimes against Art , “Same church, different pew: Scott Carroll, religious collectors and the old Jiri Frel playbook” <http://art-crime.blogspot.com/2017/11/same-church-different-pew-scott-carroll.html>, November 13, 2017. Please note that the video referenced in the blog post begins at at the 25:01 (5 minutes) is available at <https://vimeo.com/125616160>,

Endogenous Appropriation: Gendered Labor and AME Women

Ipsita Chatterjea

While the Montgomery bus boycott and the entirety of the Civil Rights movement were unimaginable without Black women and their religious and civic networks, organizations and labor, we are lucky if names let alone their organizational expertise are known beyond Ella Baker or Fannie Lou Hamer. The problem predates the mid-20th century civil right movement, in *The Philadelphia Negro*, W.E.B. DuBois never mentions Fanny Jackson-Coppin arguably the most accomplished African American woman in the city, in *The Negro Church*, the AME’s accomplishments were (apparently) the result of the Bishops and not women like Jackson-Coppin who rendered the denomination financially solvent, while locked in combat with the men credited for their work. This talk is part of my ongoing project of addressing a portion of the representative void when it comes to women but particularly Black women and women of color with regard to: religious labor, agency, social change, and organizations. Endogenous (in-group) appropriation shares elements with what we more commonly think of as exogenous (out-group) appropriation routinized erasure, exploitation etc, but also, social regulation and how we talk about agency. Critically, the structures that enable endogenous appropriation in religious communities are not entirely religious: local and state laws, scientific assertions of incapacity, and a work-a-day lack of concern for representing women in all areas of life are factors. I will discuss the gendered dynamics of erasure, accompanying rationalizations, and how AME women asserted

themselves as unmediated religious agents accountable only to God (Hill-Collins, 2000, Collier Thomas 2010). The absence of women, or their minimization is not only a prompt to start looking at power dynamics but to cultivate techniques for observing agency and the associated structures, erasures, and rationales (Lincoln, 1989) .

Further Reading

Collier Thomas, Bettye. “Taxation without Representation” 54-119 in *Jesus, Jobs and Justice: African American Women and Religion*. New York, Knopf, 2010.

Collins, Patricia Hill. “Black Feminist Epistemologies” 251-71, in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment*, second edition, Routledge, 2000

Lincoln, Bruce, “The Dialectics of Symbolic Inversion” specifically, 145-48, “Inversion Counter Inversion, and Reform: Menenius Agrippa and the Plebian Secession” in *Discourse and the Construction of Society*: Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989.

BREAK 2:55-3:10

3:10-5:10

Analytical Frames: Appropriation, Taking, Territoriality, and Identity

Sean P. McCloud

What's in a Word? Appropriations, Bricolage, Syncretisms, Hybrids, and Combinations in our Teaching and Research

Annette Yoshiko Reed

Identity before and after 'Cultural Appropriation': Test-cases from Christian Origins, Jewish-Christianity, and Jewish-Christian Relations

David Walker, Moderator

Discussion Across Segments

David Walker

Announcements and Queries

What's in a Word? Appropriations, Bricolage, Syncretisms, Hybrids, and Combinations in our Teaching and Research

Sean P. McCloud

In this SORAAAD session, I would like the group to discuss how appropriation is defined and understood in our classrooms and research. To do this, I would like to gather a small selection of readings (see below for some possibilities) on the terms we use to describe the appropriations of various idioms in religious practice and how these combinative actions are infused with and spurred by power differentials. Actively at work on their worlds within the constraints of their social locations, those we study and teach about have sought out that which worked and duct-taped together what was at hand. But, one can ask, "so what?" In terms of the analysis of religion, one simple answer would be that attention to the active and unnoticed appropriation of religious, supernatural, and other cultural elements should give us pause when we teach and write about religion solely through the tropes of religious traditions and their leaders. *The process of ordering the messiness of "religion" by narrowing it to the category of traditions conceals more than it reveals.* But even more, we need to develop a method for examining the appropriative bricolage that makes up religious practices. If,

indeed, everything is always already blended, then what do we do with that information, other than point it out? In other words, if picking, mixing, and blending is a constant, then proceeding by pointing out that such and such is syncretic or combinative gets us nowhere. As Deborah Kapchan and Pauline Turner Strong have noted, there have historically been many terms that different fields of focus use to discuss the blending of cultural practices and ideas, with hybridity, syncretism, bricolage, and creolization being the most prominent (Kapchan and Strong 1999). In this workshop session, I am less interested in entering the debate over which term or terms might be the most useful and more concerned with thinking about how the subject of religious/cultural blends might be studied and taught with attention to categories, power, and notions such as “tradition.”

Suggested Readings:

Albanese, Catherine. "The Culture of Religious Combining." *Cross Currents* (2000), 16-22.

Altglas, Veronique "‘Bricolage’: Reclaiming a Conceptual Tool." *Culture and Religion* 15:4 (2014), 474-493.

Kapchan Deborah A. and Pauline Turner Strong, "[Theorizing the Hybrid](#)" *The Journal of American Folklore* 112:445 (1999), 239-253.

Stewart, Charles "[Syncretism and Its Synonyms: Reflections on Cultural Mixture.](#)" *Diacritics* 29:3 (1999), 40-62.

Identity before and after 'Cultural Appropriation': Test-cases from Christian Origins, Jewish-Christianity, and Jewish-Christian Relations

Annette Yoshiko Reed

In this exploratory paper, I use the contemporary American discourse surrounding "cultural appropriation" to highlight and interrogate current assumptions about the character of "identities" and "cultures" as they shape the scholarly study of the histories of "religions." In particular, I contrast ancient and modern narratives of "Christian Origins," and I adduce examples from ancient Jewish, Christian, and "Jewish-Christian" sources to recover ancient perspectives on the transmission and transformation of traditions. In the process, I hope to raise questions about the broader problem of how best to reframe issues of "identity" and "religion" in scholarship on Religious Studies

Suggested Readings:

Reed, Annette Yoshiko "[After 'Origins,' Beyond 'Identity,' and Before 'Religion\(s\).'](#)"
Epilogue to Reed, *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr
Siebeck, in press), esp. pp. 1-5, 11-29. (PDF Available)

Discussion Across Segments

David Walker, Moderator

Announcements and Queries

David Walker

The group will walk to the Reception, we will provide transportation for anyone with mobility issues.

5:30 - 7:00

SORAAAD Reception *and continued conversation*

Appendix: Beyoncé, Adele, and Structures of Appropriation

Given the disparate areas of study among those attending and following along remotely, we have selected the 2017 Grammy Awards – specifically, the announcements of “Urban Album of the Year” and “Album of the Year” – as examples so that we can look at the mechanics of appropriation without concern for defining religion within the example. Furthermore the example provides both a structural act of appropriation and arguably a (further) assertion of agency that acknowledges and disregards that structure.

For those attending the workshop, prior to 17 November 2017, please review the short videos and the commentary on the phenomenon of white artists appropriating black music and recognition and representation in the music industry by Brittney Cooper and Michael Hann.

1. [Beyoncé’s acceptance speech for Urban Album of the Year](#).
2. [Adele’s acceptance speech](#) (uncensored) for Album of the Year, for reference her [back stage statement](#).
3. [Adele breaking her Grammy](#) (.55 mark, warning language up front and in spots)
4. Brittney Cooper, [Adele Was Right to Mention Her "Black Friends" at the Grammys](#) [Cosmopolitan.com](#) February 13, 2017
5. Michael Haan, [From Aretha to Beyoncé: the black artists snubbed by the Grammys](#) [The Guardian](#) February 18, 2017.

In the time after this example was chosen, Taylor Swift released *Reputation*; the track, “See what you made me do,” was observed to have appropriated the visual choices of “[Formation](#)” (NSFW - language) and other songs on from *Lemonade*, this was widely noted on social media ([AJC article](#)).²

Beyoncé’s *Lemonade* invokes many layers of African diaspora religion. We recommend that anyone interested in American Religion, Music or Visual Culture and Religion, Religion and Popular Culture consult Nyasha Junior’s recommended readings and article “[Ten Books to Read After You Have Watched Lemonade](#)” in *Religion Dispatches*, May 10, 2016.

² For the curious, go to frame 2:16 of [Look What You Made Me Do](#), juxtaposed with Beyoncé’s debut of [Formation at the Super Bowl](#) as well as arguably a few other visuals from other songs on *Lemonade*, including “Hold Up”

We have had additional suggestions for resources and articles available online that elaborate different aspects of appropriation or agency.

Annette Yoshiko Reed (@AnnetteYReed) called our attention to [Towards a Structural View of Cultural Appropriation](#) by Dr Adam Elliot-Cooper @adamec87 Dr. Elliot -Cooper outlines the U.S. State Department's Cold War tactic of using Black artists to paint a rosier picture of race relations in the U.S. through tours of countries emerging from colonialism.

David Frankfurter suggested we look into [Asian-American Cuisine's Rise, and Triumph](#) by Ligaya Mishan New York Times, the article focuses on food as a function of assimilation, appropriation, and expression.

Dr Ellie Mackin Roberts (@EllieMackin) pointed us to Candice Benbow's [Lemonade Syllabus](#) (@CandiceBenbow) as a crowd-sourced canon of the Black women's cultural references that contextualize *Lemonade*.