



Chasms and Bridges: Religion and Secularity in a Polarised World
TASA Sociology of Religion Symposium
29th September 2017: Western Sydney University, Sydney City Campus

The contemporary world is marked by growing polarisation across a number of spheres: economics, sexuality, medicine, science, feminism and the family are places of ideological contest and large, seemingly insurmountable chasms are opening up between opposing positions. Populist, far-right, and ethno-nationalist parties and politicians enjoy increased popularity and electoral success; these conservative political impulses are matched by a reinvigoration of anti-fascist, feminist, anti-racists, and democratic movements. This polarisation is not specific to one region or culture, but is rather a global phenomenon. Increased migration and knowledge mobility, coupled with significant changes in social attitudes and practices, increasingly bring citizens into contact with radically different people and divergent ideas, requiring the (often fraught) process of negotiating living in the same spaces (both physical and online) with deeply different others. As pluralism in religion and politics increases, how will societies manage relationships across lines of difference? What 'bridges' can we discover to encourage citizens to communicate and form connections across these chasms, and see moral value in people across difference? In this vein, multi-faith, ecumenical, and centrist efforts to bridge the gaps in these polarising issues are also part of the picture. This symposium seeks to open discussion amongst emerging and established sociologists on the place of religion (including secular and non-religious views) in these various debates and movements. We welcome contributions analysing the role of religions and religious actors in any of these spheres (globally or within Australia), and encourage reflections on the limitations of religion or religious framing in such environments. The Symposium runs over a full-day at the University of Western Sydney's Sydney City Campus, with two key note lectures and a series of work-in-progress roundtables.

Key Note Addresses

Professor Marion Maddox and Associate Professor Alpha Possamai-Inesedy will present key note lectures.

Call for Participation

We are accepting expressions of interest to participate in the roundtables and/or attend the symposium: please send a short (200 word) statement about your research area/interests and how they relate to the theme. Although we will prioritise the presentation of PhD and ECR work in the roundtables, we encourage established scholars to attend to provide feedback on the work of emerging sociologists and to participate in the event.

Registration

There will be a nominal registration fee for all attendees and presenters: \$20 non-TASA, \$15 TASA member and \$10 TASA student member. Please [register here](#).

Bursaries

We are pleased to announce the availability of 8 travel bursaries for rural and out-of-state post-graduate students and unwaged/unaffiliated ECRs (up to 5 years post-PhD) of up to \$150.

If you would like to apply for a bursary, please provide a short statement indicating your place of residence, details of your student status/candidature (for post-graduate students), or details of your PhD award and current work status (for ECRs). You must be a TASA member to be eligible for a bursary.

Funding

The Symposium has been generously supported by grants from TASA and the Religion and Society Research Cluster in Western Sydney University's School of Social Sciences and Psychology.

Please send your expressions of interest and bursary applications to rosemary.hancock@nd.edu.au by **18 August 2017**.