

The Research Education Program Religion & Society

**PhD course (lecture & workshop)**

**“RELIGION ON THE MOVE:**

**MAPPING GLOBAL CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION”**

**by Professor of Sociology Peggy Levitt, Wellesley College**

**University of Copenhagen, Dec. 13 and 14, 2010**

**Venue to be announced**

**Preliminary program:**

**Public lecture on December 13, 1-3 pm**

“Migrants, pilgrims, social movement members, and scholars all carry religion. Religious objects, narratives, and spirits circulate actively and frequently within and between the layers of religious social fields. Yet, we still talk of national religions—of American Protestantism or French Islam. Many scholarly and popular accounts are based on the assumption that religious practices and organizations obediently respect national boundaries and that they have unique, identifiable national qualities of their own. We take stasis and boundedness as the organizing principles of religious life while, in fact, religious ideas and practices are constantly and unabashedly in motion. In this lecture, I will argue for the need to study religious movement and connection and suggests ways of thinking through what happens when religious elements collide. Rather than assuming that religious life stays primarily within contained spaces (be they religious traditions, congregations or nations), we should start from the assumption of circulation and linkages. Religion is not a packageable, stable set of beliefs and practices rooted in a particular bounded time and space. Instead, it is a contingent clustering of objects, bodies, and beliefs that come together within a to-be-determined space riddled by power and interests that is shaped and reshaped through constant circulation and contact. It is not a cohesive, rooted whole but a loosely constructed assemblage, created from actors, materiality, and ideas traveling at different rates and rhythms, across different scales and scopes. What explains what happens at these sites of encounter where different religious elements and actors come together? Are there patterns of systematic configuration or blockage and, if so, why? What social and political work gets done, and whose interests are served, when religion is conceptualized as a cohesive, bounded system and therefore controllable as such?”

### **Workshop on December 14, 9-4 pm.**

“In this workshop, I will further develop some of the themes I laid out in my first lecture by focusing on the ways in which immigrants are transforming the American religious landscape. In *God Needs No Passport*, I studied how Gujarati Hindus, Pakistani Muslims, Brazilian Protestants, and Irish Catholics living in the Boston Metropolitan area and their family members back home used religious networks to live lives that cross borders and to understand how the religious landscape changes as a result. I found that, in many ways, American religion is just as global as its economics and politics. New immigrants import new religious traditions, and they “Asianize” and “Latinoize” old ones. To safeguard and expand the parameters of religious pluralism, Christian America has to be willing to recognize that not all religions fit into a Christian box.”

**Students are invited to make presentations, papers (max 5 pages) to be forwarded by November 15.**

**ECTS (lecture & workshop) to be announced.**

**Questions and registration (deadline December 6):[oluf@hum.ku.dk](mailto:oluf@hum.ku.dk)**

#### **Reading materials:**

Levitt, Peggy 2005: *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape*. New York: The New Press, 2007.

Vasquez, Manuel 2005: “Historicizing and Materializing The Study of Religion: The Contribution of Migration Studies” in Karen Leonard, Alex Stepick, and Jennifer Holdaway (eds.): *Immigrant Faiths: Transforming Religious Life in America*, AltaMira Press: Lanham

Glick Schiller et al. 2009. "Towards a Comparative Theory of Locality in Migration Studies: Migrant Incorporation and City Scale", *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*,35 (2):177-2.