

Methodologies and the Analytical Study of Religion

Friday, November 22, 1:00 - 5:00 p.m.

In its third year, SORAAAD will address [a long over due need to focus on the methodologies](#) with which the field observes and analyzes the range of activity that falls loosely within or overlaps with [religious experiences or things deemed special](#) and [social responses to and conflicts regarding things designated sacred](#).¹

SORAAAD will focus on the selection, design, and implementation of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, as well as responsible ways to use quantitative and qualitative research generated by other scholars outside of the study of religion.

SORAAAD's *Methodologies and the Analytical Study of Religion* will be of particular interest for graduate students and established scholars who already enact social science and critical humanities research methodologies, who want to implement newer or different methodologies, or who need to integrate existing social science and critical humanities research outside of religion (Sociology, Anthropology, Cognitive Science, Critical and Social Theories) into their research design, data acquisition and analysis.

Part One: *Methodologies and the Study of Religion* will address the implementation of particular methodologies and techniques: Discourse Analysis, Free Listing, Structured Observation, Ethnography and Grounded Theory. Our speakers will include Steven Engler, Kocku von Stuckrad, Michael Stausberg and Bron Taylor.

Part Two: *Interdisciplinary Religious Research: Design, Implementation, and Collaboration* will highlight the experience of integrating work on religion with social scientific methodologies such as fields experiments, GIS network analysis, cognitive science and Ethnography. With remarks from Ann Taves, our speakers will include: John Thibdeau, Michael Kinsella and Philip Deslippe

The *suggested readings* for each segment of the SORAAAD workshop will be, along with the presentations, the basis for discussion during each part of the workshop. *Further readings* are grounding points of reference for scholars new to a methodology or technique.

The SORAAAD workshop is sponsored by the SBL's Ideological Criticisms Group, the Bible and Cultural Studies Section and the AAR's Critical Theories and Discourses on Religion Group, the Sociology of Religion Group and the Cultural History of Religion Group.

For questions about or to reserve space in the workshop send an email to ctdr.group@gmail.com

The SBL and AAR

[Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline Pre-Conference Workshop - SORAAAD 2013](#)

Methodologies and the Analytical Study of Religion

Introduction (1:00 -1:10)

Ipsita Chatterjea - Presider - "SORAAAD Workshop Year Three and 'Methodologies and the Analytical Study of Religion.'"

Part One: *Methodologies and the Analytical Study of Religion* .

(1:10-2:50) Four established scholars will discuss particular methodologies, techniques and their experiences with implementation in their respective studies of religious phenomena.

Speakers (Final Order to be determined by discussion amongst speakers):

[Steven Engler](#) Mount Royal University on Grounded Theory

[Bron Taylor](#), University of Florida, on Ethnography

[Michael Stausberg](#) University of Bergen on Free Listing and Structured Observation.

[Kocku von Stuckrad](#) University of Groningen on Discourse Analysis.

[Steven Engler](#): Grounded Theory (GT) is a structured but flexible process for drawing concepts, categories and theory from data, rather than applying or testing a given theory. This presentation will discuss the presuppositions and motivations of GT as a method and walk participants through the steps of a grounded research process. Steven will end by describing the place of GT in his current research project on spirit-possession in Brazil.

[Suggested Reading for Steven Engler](#)

Engler, Steven "[Grounded Theory](#)" in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler editors, New York: Routledge, 2011.

[Further Reading on Grounded Theory](#)

Dey, I., 2004. Grounded theory. in: Seale, C., Gobo, G., Gubrium, J.F., Silverman, D. (Eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice*. SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks, CA, 80-93.

The SBL and AAR

Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline Pre-Conference Workshop - SORAAAD 2013

Bron Taylor: Ethnography is, in the final analysis, an encounter between a collectivity identified by a researcher who then enters into a relationship with those perceived to be within it. As with any human relationship is fraught with difficulty but also the possibility of new understandings and even intimacy across the fluid researcher/interlocutor boundary, as well as between those directly involved in the encounter and those who read the researcher's perceptions about it (and in rare cases, sometimes talk back from the subjects of the research themselves). The encounter is often complicated by the ways actors outside of the community view it and vice versa and how all of these actors come to understand the researcher. Bron will focus on the relational aspects of fieldwork based on decades of study of actors within the global environmental milieu, especially those involved in grassroots and radical environmental movements.

Suggested Reading for Bron Taylor's segment

Harvey, Graham "Field Research: Participant Observation" in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler editors, New York: Routledge, 2011, 217-244.

Further Readings on Ethnography

H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Fourth Edition), Lanham: Alta Mira, 2006

Emerson, Michael, R Fretz and L.L. Shaw *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Orsi, Robert, *Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2005

Denzin, Norman L. Yvonne Lincoln (eds.) *The Landscape of Qualitative Research: Theories and Issues*. London, Sage 1998

Michael Stausberg: Both methods or techniques that Michael will introduce generate valuable data but work best in combination with other methods. While observation is an established dimension of field research, typically relatively little attention is paid to the act of observing and to its notation. Studying rituals, for example, requires attentive observation, but there is little systematical observation documented in the literature, even when descriptions are impressive. **Structured observation** is a technique of planned, scheduled, systematic observation in natural settings. It yields data that can serve as a strategic antidote to recall and self-report based sources. **Free-listing** is a powerful and simple technique of eliciting data the use of which is all too seldom. It offers insight into the salience of information and distribution of knowledge. It makes relevant concepts and vocabulary easily available. Free-listing can be useful in initial stages, but also in advanced stages of the research process.

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Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline Pre-Conference Workshop - SORAAAD 2013

Readings for Michael Stausberg

Stausberg, Michael. "Free-listing". in: Michael Stausberg & Steven Engler: *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. Routledge: London, New York 2011, 245-255.

_____. "Structured observation". in: Michael Stausberg & Steven Engler: *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. Routledge: London, New York 2011, 382-394.

Kocku von Stuckrad: Discursive approaches to the study of religion have received increasing scholarly attention recently. However, while there is some consensus about the general theoretical framework of an analysis of religious discourse, there are as yet not many concrete examples of how such an analysis can be put into practice. After a brief introduction to the theoretical aspects of historical discourse and dispositive analysis, Kocku will apply these considerations to the research question of how we can reconstruct the transformation of discourses on science and religion at the beginning of the twentieth century. It will be shown that the analysis of 'discursive knots' and 'entangled discourses' helps to understand the new place of religion in secular environments in Europe and North America.

Suggested Readings for Kocku von Stuckrad's segment.

Hjelm, Titus "Discourse Analysis" in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler editors New York: Routledge, 2011. 134-150.

von Stuckrad, Kocku "Discursive Study of Religion: Approaches, Definitions, Implications" *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 25 (2013) 5-25.

Workshop Break (2:50 - 3:30)

The Workshop break is by design long enough to allow a break and for participants to talk to one another without a moderator as well as to enable follow up questions for the speakers for part one and pre-presentation questions for the speakers for part two.

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Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline Pre-Conference Workshop - SORAAAD 2013

Part Two: *Interdisciplinary Religious Research: Design, Implementation, and Collaboration*

Presiding: [Randy Reed](#) 3:30-3:35

Introductory Remarks - [Ann Taves](#), 3:35-3:40

(3:30 - 4:55 p.m.) In this part of the workshop [Ann Taves](#) of the University of California, Santa Barbara's [Religion, Experience and Mind Lab Group](#) will introduce the mission of the group and the work of three associated researchers: [Michael Kinsella](#) (University of California - Santa Barbara), [Philip Deslippe](#) (University of California - Santa Barbara) and [John Thibdeau](#) (University of Colorado Boulder) They will in turn discuss their respective experiences of research design, data collection and analysis at the juncture of religion and ethnography, geographic informational science and social psychology and cognitive science.

[Michael Kinsella](#) applies experimental field methods in an ethnographic study of the near-death experience movement to better understand the roles that experiences and accounts of experiences play in shaping and reinforcing the potency of afterlife beliefs.

Readings for Michael Kinsella's segment

Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler (2012). The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion. Chapter 2.5: "Experiments" Justin L. Barrett, 161-177.

Luhrmann, T.M., Nusbaum, H., and Thisted, R. (2013). "'Lord, Teach Us to Pray': Prayer Practice Affects Cognitive Processing." Journal of Culture and Cognition 13:159-177.

[Philip Deslippe](#) utilizes geographic information science (GIS) methods and Montello's work on quantifying vague concepts (2003 and 2012) to literally map the historical presence of yoga teachers, and to conceptually integrate various understandings of yoga, from history and popular culture to personal experience.

Readings for Philip Deslippe's segment

Montello, D. R., Goodchild, M. F., Gottsegen, J., and Fohl, P. (2003). Where's downtown?: Behavioral methods for determining referents of vague spatial queries. Spatial Cognition and Computation, 3, 185-204. Special Issue on "Spatialvagueness, uncertainty, granularity," B. Bennett, & M. Cristani (Eds.).

-Or-

Daniel R. Montello, Alinda Friedman, and Daniel W. Phillips (Under Review 2013). "Vague Cognitive Regions in Geography."

The SBL and AAR

Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline Pre-Conference Workshop - SORAAAD 2013

John Thibdeau draws upon various methods from social psychology, cognitive ethnography, and videography to develop a study on Sufi Sema and Dhikr (listening and remembrance) that fully integrates the interactive body.

Readings for John Thibdeau's segment

The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion, Michael Stausberg, Steven Engler. Chapter 2.22: "Videography" Hubert Knoblauch, 433-444.

-Or -

The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion, Michael Stausberg, Steven Engler. Chapter 3.1: "Auditory Materials" Rosalind A.J. Hackett, 447-458.

-And-

Williams, R. F. (2006). "Using cognitive ethnography to study instruction". Proceedings of the 7th International Conference of the Learning Sciences. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

-Or-

Alač, Morana, and Edwin Hutchins. "I See What You Are Saying: Action as Cognition in FMRI Brain Mapping Practice." Journal of Cognition and Culture 4.3 (2004): 629-61.

Business Meeting (4:55-5:00)

THE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE WANTS TO THANK CO-CHAIR RANDY REED, ANN TAVES, MICHAEL STAUSBERG, AND STEVEN ENGLER AND FOR THEIR WORK TO DEVELOP THIS YEAR'S WORKSHOP.

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The Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline (2011-)

2011 - The Study of Religion as an Analytical Discipline

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

2013 - Methodologies and the Analytical Study of Religion

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[Randy Reed](#)* - Ideological Criticisms of Biblical Studies co-chair- SBL

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Former Co-Chairs.

Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley * 2011-2012

Greg Alles* 2011

* Founding Co-Chair of the SORAAAD Steering Committee

¹ “Introduction” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*. Michael Stausberg and Steven Engler editors, (New York: Routledge, 2011). Ann Taves, *Religious Experience Reconsidered: a Building Block Approach to the Study of Religion and other Special Things*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) Gordon Lynch, *The Sacred in the Modern World: A Cultural Sociological Approach*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)