



ISSRPL News

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{New Website Launched}

With the new year comes a new look for the ISSRPL website. The website is user-friendly and contains information about the International Summer School on Religion and Public Life that more clearly reflects our vision. We encourage you to have a look and share it with anyone interested in religion and public life. The address remains the same: www.issrpl.org

The International Summer School on Religion and Public Life catalyzes change through decentering our experience of difference.

{ISSRPL Expands through Seed Projects}

As part of the ISSRPL effort to support the network of fellows dedicated to share the ISSRPL vision of living with difference, we have begun collaborating with ISSRPL alumni to support projects that build upon their ISSRPL experience and serve as a catalyst for change in their home community. The seed projects are intended to continue the momentum of the school by supporting small projects that invite an exchange of ideas, a pragmatic orientation to the realities of the local environment, and a furthering of a praxis of tolerance. Seed Projects being developed include:

Albania

- Living with Difference: Urban and Suburban Migrant Youth in Tirana, Albania
- Media and Religion in the Public Sphere: Engaging Journalists in Understanding the Post-Atheist Religious Context of Albania

Israel

- Developing Applied Health Ethics in the Multi-Cultural, Multi-Religious Israeli Setting

{2008 Call for Fellows}

The Sixth International Summer School on Religion and Public Life will take place from 19 July – 1 August 2008 in Birmingham, United Kingdom. Birmingham is one of two major English cities likely soon to have an “ethnic minority, majority”. Our particular concept this year will be emergent norms of life in multi-confessional, multi-ethnic and hence, global cities, thus our title: **The Good City: Living Together Differently**. The University of Birmingham is our local host and John Holmwood, a 2007 ISSRPL Fellow, is the Local Codirector in Birmingham. Online applications are being accepted through 1 April 2008, so please encourage those who you think may be interested to apply soon.



2006 Fellows Radko Popov and Bojan Arula contribute to rebuilding a destroyed mosque building in Stolac.

{ISSRPL Co-Sponsor Dali Lama with Emory IRCP}

In October 2007, the ISSRPL joined our Friends and Affiliates at the Initiative in Religion, Conflict and Peace Building at Emory University in co-sponsoring the First Emory Summit on Religion, Conflict, and Peacebuilding. Speakers at the event included his Holiness the Dali Lama, Rabbi David Rosen, Sister Joan Chittister, Rajmohan Gandhi, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, and 2007 ISSRPL Fellow Laurie Patton.

{ISSRPL Fellows Blog Created}

Fellows from the 2007 ISSRPL have created a blog to initiate discussions about issues of religion and public life and to create a forum for both keeping in touch and exchanging ideas with ISSRPL alumni. The blog can be found at: <http://issrpl2007.blogspot.com/>

Excerpted from Selma Sevkli's ISSRPL blog entry: Sevkli was a 2007 ISSRPL Fellow.

...Living semi-together (under the same roof, in different rooms), however, was something new and it changed the concept of the meeting more than I had expected. First, I saw myself trying to categorize people hastily. Earlier I do it, earlier my mind would be rested.... I think I worked unconsciously on that for a few days and then I gave up. I had to come up close to 30 different rooms in my brain. Day by day, I realize everybody was unique.... By the end of the second day, I was physically excited to be part of the summer school. At the first processing session, I caught myself with so many prejudices.... This situation reminded me of other similar experiences in life. We feel not ready to make choices, commitments, but we have to do them anyway. It never feels like the right time, right place. So we go with quick judgments. In such limited time, without knowing people well, I did so.... In this summer school, I questioned the limits of this control... and this potential gives me hope.

The first five ISSRPLs have brought together 106 Fellows from 27 countries.

{Ways to Further the ISSRPL Vision}

The ISSRPL seeks to better institutionalize our work of creating space for developing new resources for tolerance, reciprocity and shared well-being in a world increasingly defined by public differences and mutual distrust. We ask all who share our vision to tell others about our work and consider ways of furthering our mission through a general gift, sponsoring a fellow to attend the summer school, or extending the work of alumni by supporting a Seed-Project.

We hope past alumni will be in touch and let us know how the ISSRPL has influenced the work you do. We aim to build a network of fellows who have had an ISSRPL experience and are working to create a better future. To do this, we need to hear from you.

Excerpted from the 2008 ISSRPL Local Codirector, John Holmwood's, blog entry:

The issue of conversion and marriage across religious faith communities is currently a very hot topic among Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims.... To a very large degree, it is evident that this is something that sociologists call a 'moral panic', where particular kinds of 'anxieties' become focused upon a particular phenomenon, which then becomes amplified and distorted (especially through the role of the media).... Yet the different communities are convinced something is happening.... What cultural anxiety might underlie the phenomenon of alleged 'forced conversions'? Several things seem relevant, quite apart from any historical tensions among the communities.... [For it is there that] the boundary itself can become inflated and itself the source of threat.

[These are among the countless issues to be explored in the 2008 ISSRPL, **The Good City: Living Together Differently.**]



2007 Fellow Rev. Walter Cuenin in the ruins of the Church of Nicaea talking to fellows about the significance of the Council of Nicaea.

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