Interreligious Perspectives on Contemporary US Politics:
(Inter)Religion in Social Movements, Political Organizing, and the Ballot Box

A Special Call for Papers

*Journal of Interreligious Studies*

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**CFP**

Religion has historically played a central role in American electoral politics, policy making, movements for social change, and democracy in general; this role remains to this day. Religious institutions, communities, ideas, values, norms, and critique continue to shape individual Americans, party platforms, and the larger political discourse. The impact of religion on contemporary politics, in particular the 2016 and 2020 election cycle, is evidence that religious discourse shapes—and increasingly is shaped by—political discourse in the United States.

*The deadline of 8 January 2021 is intended to allow contributors the option to reflect on their research both before and/or after the November 2020 General Election.*

This special issue seeks 6-10 articles of 3000-8000 words. These articles may take the form of academic reflections, novel research, or informed reflections on your experience in the classroom, in your religious community, or in your political or (inter)religious organization. The contributors may be scholar-practitioners of various religious traditions situated in the United States, scholars of religion at the intersection of American domestic and foreign politics, sociologists or political scientists whose work engages religion, theologians who speak to social and political concerns (e.g., public theologians), or activists operating at the intersection of religion and politics. Submissions will be reviewed by the editorial team and publishers, in addition to blind peer review. Submissions need not be directly within the purview of interreligious studies, but the following definition may help frame articles:

**interreligious studies** “engages in the scholarly and religiously neutral description, multidisciplinary analysis, and theoretical framing of the interactions of religiously different people and groups, including the intersections of religion and secularity. It examines these interactions in historical and contemporary contexts, and in relation to other social systems and forces. Like other disciplines with applied dimensions, it serves the public good by bringing its analysis to bear on practical approaches to issues in religiously diverse societies” (Kate McCarthy in *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies* [Patel, Peace, & Silverman 2018], 12).
This special issue seeks to engage various religious and interreligious perspectives on the United States electoral politics, social movements for political change, and domestic and international policy that have taken centerstage over the past few years. There are various factors—domestic and international—contributing to this unique moment at the intersection of US politics and (inter)religious studies:

- The response to, and impact of, the COVID-19 pandemic and its politization in the public sphere (and the attendant opening/closing of mosques, churches, synagogues, temples, and other houses of worship)
- The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on BIPOC communities resulting from specific political and economic decisions
- The response to various movements in response to the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, among others: Black Lives Matter, Defund the Police, and various abolition movements pertaining to the police and the prison system (i.e., the critique of the carceral imagination and retributive justice from theological and other (inter)religious perspectives)
- Recent and shocking uptick in violence at houses of worship—churches, synagogues, and mosques—not just in the USA, but also worldwide
- Increase in overt antisemitism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, Sinophobia, anti-Black racism, and White supremacy in the USA and Europe
- The recent publication of books around the topics of White Christian supremacy and privilege (e.g., Joshi’s *White Christian Privilege*, Jones’ *White Too Long*, and Compton’s *The End of Empathy*)
- Anti-immigrant rhetoric in American electoral politics, impacting the predominantly Christian population of the Global South, but also concerning the “Muslim Bans”
- Increase in left-leaning religious voices in the political sphere intended to counter the historically (of recent) louder voices of the Religious Right
- The shifting religious and racial demographics of both the Republican and Democratic parties
- Augmented political polarization generally
- The rise of right-wing nationalism worldwide, from Europe to the Americas, including religious nationalism such as Hindu Nationalism (the BJP in India) and Buddhist Nationalism (in Myanmar)
- The National Security apparatus of the United States vis-à-vis global terrorism threats from self-described Islamic organizations, in addition to the anti-Muslim policies of the Chinese Communist Party vis-à-vis the Uighurs
Contributors may address the subject broadly. Some guiding questions:

- How have religious communities responded to the increase political polarization, both interreligiously and intrareligiously?
- How are religious communities confronting the increasing awareness of the United States’ White/Christian supremacist past, including but not limited to the movements for dismantling monuments and rememorializing them more honestly and critically?
- It was previously assumed that religious discourse shaped one’s politics. However, as Michele Margolis argues (*From Politics to the Pews*, 2018), it seems that politics is more strongly shaping religious beliefs. How has this challenged interreligious work?
- How has your classroom teaching been challenged or transformed over the last few years?
- What values and issues most concern religious communities and why?
- How have Native American communities responded?
- How has foreign policy impacted political discourse in religious communities?
- What are some theological, philosophical, and/or ethical responses to current electoral politics, policies, and polarization?
- How have interreligious partnerships or tensions shaped political discourse?
- How have religious identities intersected with race, class, gender, sexuality, dis/ability, and immigration status?

If you wish to contribute, please submit your article via the online submissions platform at [www.irstudies.org](http://www.irstudies.org), and make a note in the comments that it is for this CFP. Contact Axel Takacs (Editor-in-Chief) at axel.takacs@hebrewcollege.edu with any inquiries. Submissions are due by **8 January 2021**.