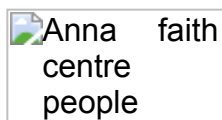


## Researching Religion

*On Tuesday 7 May 2014 LSE Research Festival will be holding a panel discussion, in collaboration with LSE Faith Centre, looking at the role of religion within academic research. Here, LSE Faith Centre's Anna Gavurin tells us a bit more about the event, and why she sees it as so important.*



Growing up in a household with two faiths means I have been always been interested in the role of religion in people's lives and in our society, an interest that working as an intern for the last few months in the LSE Faith Centre has only served to increase. Faith on campus is a fascinating area, reflecting the complexities of religion in our society on a smaller scale. The same wonderful examples of strong communities and the positive effects of faith in people's lives appear alongside more controversial topics and the intertwining of religion and politics in often contentious ways. Being involved in faith on campus has shown me that rather than shying away from these complexities, an institution like LSE must engage with these issues and study them, to better understand religion and its place in our society.

At LSE we have been given a great opportunity to explore these issues in the form of our new state of the art multi-faith facility. The Faith Centre is unlike anything else in UK higher education and exists to provide the facilities needed for prayer and religious worship on campus, as a space for interfaith dialogue and discussion, and as a place for quiet reflection on a hectic campus. By investing so much in this facility LSE has shown that it understands the importance of religion in the lives of so many at LSE.

LSE Director Professor Craig Calhoun has said 'Religion is prominent in the public sphere and important in private life, not least on our university campuses. [LSE's Faith Centre] respects the importance of religious identity to many of our staff and students while also promoting the kind of engagement and dialogue that must always characterise the university.' And this is exactly what the Faith Centre aims to do: provide for staff and students, but also be involved in the work of the university it is a part of; take advantage of the space it has been given to discuss the place of religion in academia. Religion is controversial not only on campus but also off it, in the research done by many of LSE's staff and students.

And this is where LSE Research Festival comes in. LSE Research Festival exists to draw attention to some of the important and fascinating research going on at LSE and, with the Faith Centre, some of that attention this year will be on the subject of religion. Together we will be hosting a panel discussion which will consider the particular fieldwork challenges faced by those conducting research on religion and faith. This will include questions such as the extent to which personal religious beliefs or background matter in relation to research, whether a background of religion or faith compromises the researcher's intellectual or academic abilities, and how far research on religion should be allowed to shape or be shaped by the beliefs of researchers.

Confirmed speakers include Mark Vernon (ex-Church of England priest who now works as a writer, journalist and philosopher), LSE's Dr Matthew Engelke (Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology), and a number of LSE PhD students working in related fields. The panel will be chaired by Madeleine Bunting, Guardian columnist and associate editor who has a special focus on religious journalism.



We look forward to seeing you there!

*‘Researching Religion’ will be held in the new LSE Faith Centre on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Saw Swee Hock Student Centre at 6.30pm on Tuesday 7 May 2014. This event is free and open to all but a ticket is required and can be booked now through [Eventbrite](#).*

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