

2011 Regional Grant Application

Southeast Region
Virginia Graduate Colloquium on Theology, Ethics, and Culture
April 13-14, 2012

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Dear Committee Members:

We write to request consideration for the Regional Development Grant for the second annual Virginia Graduate Colloquium in Theology, Ethics and Culture in April 2012. This colloquium seeks to nurture dialogue, to promote the sharing of new research initiatives, and to expose an up-and-coming generation of religious studies scholars to senior practitioners in their respective areas of interest. Toward this end the colloquium is soliciting papers from graduate students throughout the Southeast Region, Mid-Atlantic Region, and beyond to fill four panel-style sessions, each moderated by a senior faculty member from UVA's Department of Religious Studies.

The inaugural Virginia Graduate Colloquium in Theology, Ethics and Culture was held April 15-16, 2011, and focused upon the theme of "Confessional Commitments in Pluralistic Publics." Doctoral students from multiple graduate programs presented original

research on six panels moderated by a senior faculty member from the Religious Studies Department at UVA who, having read each paper in advance, was able to direct students towards further areas of study and interest. Additionally, Willis Jenkins, Margaret A. Farley Assistant Professor of Social Ethics at Yale Divinity School, presented a keynote address on the nature of religious ethics in an era of social problems that transcend conventional categories and call for expanded moral imaginations. In all respects, the first annual colloquium was a success.

The 2012 colloquium, to be held in April of 2012, will build upon the strengths of the 2011 gathering and focus further upon the question of religion's place and function in our post-secular age. Four panels will address topics from a range of perspectives related to the conference's theme: "Democratic Piety? Theology and Ethics in a Post-Secular Age." This particular theme gestures towards one of the insights of the 2011 gathering - namely that the conversation (scholarly and otherwise) concerning the place of religion in public life has developed beyond the question of *access* and into the question of *formation* (Asad, 2003; Stout 2005; Mahmood 2005; Taylor 2007; Clairmont 2011). How are religious persons, we want to ask, *shaped* by the living of their faiths in this post-secular age? Is faithfulness enervated by participation in civil society or are the virtues cultivated through religious belief and practice fortified in public life? And, to approach the question from the angle of democratic theory, what dispositions and virtues are required to foster the flourishing of our common civil society? Are they uniquely religious and, if so, does civil society have a vested interest in the health of religious institutions?

Our foremost objective is to provide graduate students with the opportunity to discuss their research with peers as well as senior scholars. In this, we intend to bring graduate students with similar scholarly interests together in order to encourage careful reflection that will, in all hope, give further shape to the question of religion and public life in the academy as a whole. We find these questions to be both prescient and relevant to the particular strength of the University of Virginia's faculty and, as such, invite papers in fields related to the faculty moderators' primary areas of research, including Comparative Religious Ethics, Political Theory, Bio-Ethics, Religion and Public Life, Sociology of Religion, Political Theology, and others.

There are two further components to the colloquium that are worth drawing to your attention. First, our plan for this event includes its duplication at other institutions in other AAR regions. Last year we found that the type of community and shared scholarly interest created by an event such as this generated interest in holding similar events on other campuses in the future. Students sharing overlapping research projects, literatures, and methodologies often don't have opportunities for the intensive level of interaction at national or even regional meetings that this colloquium provides and models. Given our location and the strengths of our department, we believe that the University of Virginia is well poised to be not only a dynamic place of study but also a gathering place for young scholars throughout the southeast AAR region. As departments of Religious Studies experience contraction and doctoral programs admit fewer and fewer students, it is precisely this type of gathering that will provide graduate students with the opportunity to present their research and develop their skills as teachers and colleagues.

Second, as with last year's colloquium, the planned agenda includes a pedagogy session intended to encourage graduate students to reflect upon their own teaching methods. Past attendants consistently reported that a similar session led by a member of UVA's Teaching Resource Center was among the most valuable aspects of the 2011 gathering. This year we plan to have three renowned scholars from three institutions lead this pedagogical reflection, in addition to their plenary presentations on the conference theme. We are currently in discussion with John Bowlin (Rimmer and Ruth de Vries Professor of Reformed Theology and Public Life at Princeton Theological Seminary), Stanley Hauerwas (Gilbert T. Rowe Professor of Theological Ethics at Duke Divinity School) and Charles Mathewes (Professor of Religious Ethics, University of Virginia) and hope that all will accept our invitation to join us as plenary speakers. Questions of pedagogy lie at the heart of the colloquium's theme, and we expect that having such experienced scholars lead this focused session will offer graduate students a unique opportunity to reflect upon and develop in their teaching vocation.

Even at this early stage of planning, faculty have already committed to moderating panels, and numerous doctoral candidates from institutions beyond UVA, both internal and external to the SER-AAR, have committed to submitting proposals and participating

in what will certainly be an interactive and engaging conference. Given the success of last year's meeting we anticipate that this event will elicit significantly more paper proposals than it will be possible to accept. We anticipate that the opportunity to interact with faculty working in their specific research interests will draw many students not selected to present papers.

A Regional Development Grant from the AAR will enable us to subsidize significant travel and lodging costs for out-of-town presenters whose schools have cut these expenditures, travel and lodging costs for our plenary speakers, and administrative costs including facilities, food, and publicity.

Detailed Budget

- Publicity (printing and postage)
- Travel, lodging and expenses
 - Plenary Speakers
 - Non-UVa grad subsidies (6 x \$250)
- Honorarium for Plenary Speakers
- Facilities rental fees
- Printing conference materials
- Saturday breakfast and lunch
- Saturday banquet

CALL FOR PAPERS

Virginia Graduate Colloquium on Theology, Ethics and Culture
University of Virginia
April 13-14, 2012

The 2012 Virginia Graduate Colloquium welcomes submissions of original research on the conference theme from graduate students interested in interacting with colleagues and faculty members from the University of Virginia. The conference title – “Democratic Piety? Theology and Ethics in a Post-Secular Age” – can be approached from a number of angles. How are religious persons shaped by their participation in public life? Is their faith and practice enervated or deepened? Are there points of overlap between traditional religious piety and the particular virtues and dispositions required for a healthy civil society? What philosophical and religious commitments does Democracy as a form of life and tradition depend upon or reject?

Following recent scholarly work (Asad 2003; Stout 2005; Mahmood 2005; Taylor 2007; Hauerwas and Coles 2008; Clairmont 2011) the colloquium organizers are particularly keen to foster discussion on the state of theology and religious ethics in light of the fact that the issue of “religion and the public sphere” has moved beyond the Rawlsian question of *access* towards the question of *virtue* and *formation*. Successful applicants will approach this question not only with insight and clarity but also a willingness to engage in an interdisciplinary discussion that draws from various theological traditions, the history of political economy, recent developments in social theory, and ongoing discussions within religious ethics. We welcome relevant submissions addressing the following areas of study:

- Economic Ethics
- Religion & Democratic Theory
- Bio-ethics
- Political Theology
- Catholic Social Thought
- Virtue Theory
- Secularization Studies
- Technology and Society
- Feminist Theology
- Radical Democracy
- Sexual Ethics
- Religion & Public Life
- Liberation Theology
- Political Economy

- **Proposals in the form of a 250-word abstract are due January 13, 2012.** Notifications of acceptance will be made by February 1, 2012. Final copies of papers, not to exceed 2000 words must be received by March 2, 2012.
- Papers will be presented on **April 14, 2012** on panels moderated by UVA faculty members.
- Additionally, attendees will participate in plenary panel discussions with senior scholars on both the theme of the colloquium and pedagogical development.

For more information, or to submit a proposal, email: vgc-tec@virginia.edu

Timeline of Events:

November 10: Call for Papers Distributed

January 13: Proposals Due

February 1: Notifications of Acceptance

March 31: Papers Due and Circulated to Faculty

April 13-14: Conference