

**2019 University of Virginia Graduate Conference on Religion
Religion in an Age of Extremism
Spring 2019 – Charlottesville, VA**

Organizers:

Creighton Coleman (Current AAR Member) – PhD Student, University of Virginia

Christopher Choi – PhD Student, University of Virginia

Kyle Nicholas – PhD Student, University of Virginia

Total Requested Funding: \$

Project Description:

The 2019 Virginia Graduate Conference on Religion is an interdisciplinary conference seeking to bring graduate students to the University of Virginia for a larger conversation on this year's topic, "Religion in an Age of Extremism." While the conference itself centers on religion, interdisciplinary papers and papers from outside of the field of religious studies are encouraged. It is our hope to facilitate a broad conversation on the nature of extremism and the place of religion within that categorization. Papers might provide contextual accounts of extremist groups, offer descriptions of how a group or individual becomes extreme, or provide a normative perspective on extremism as it relates to a particular religious tradition. Papers might seek to answer questions such as: What does it mean for a religion to be "extreme?" Is the category of religious extremism a result of religion's place in liberal society? How are "extreme" political movements mobilizing religion?

As organizers, we see an award of funding to the 2019 Virginia Graduate Conference on Religion as contributing to regional development in three ways. First, while there are a great deal of graduate schools in the eastern United States and in relative proximity to Charlottesville, VA, there are few opportunities for students to connect and develop a sense of scholarly community among those working in a similar field in a similar region. Assisting with the task of funding a graduate conference can help to build such a community among graduate students, which can then translate into stronger supportive networks and opportunities for collaboration. The requested funding for a keynote speaker can directly contribute to this end by attracting students to the conference.

Second, a graduate conference at the University of Virginia would give a much needed opportunity for professional development. As a smaller conference, presenters will have the opportunity to not only deliver papers, but also contribute more fully in conversation with questions and comments. Larger conferences typically do not provide the intimacy or opportunity that a smaller conference allows. The requested funding from the AAR Regional Development Grants will go toward bringing a top scholar to the University of Virginia for the sake of delivering a keynote address, but also for the purpose of interacting with those attending the conference. A monetary award would directly facilitate interactions between graduate student attendees and this scholar.

Third, the faculty of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia is comprised of a set of scholars working in diverse fields with diverse methodologies. Past graduate conferences on religion at the University of Virginia have incorporated faculty responders and attracted faculty members to interact throughout the conference. These types of connections provide student presenters with the opportunity to hear from and dialogue with conversation partners they might not have the opportunity to work with otherwise. In addition to connections with presenters, funding travel and an honorarium for a keynote speaker will provide opportunities for connections between faculty at the University of Virginia and the scholar delivering the keynote address.

Statement:

Graduate student conferences are certainly not limited to the Southeastern Religion of the AAR. It is our hope that a conference on Religion in an Age of Extremism will contribute to larger conversations surrounding religious and political extremism across disciplinary and regional lines. By bringing a diverse set of students to the University of Virginia for a dialogue on the nature and manifestations of religion and extremism, individuals can use connections and ideas for the sake of continuing the conversation by organizing future conferences.

Supporting the 2019 Virginia Graduate Conference on Religion will additionally help develop connection and a culture of collegiality among graduate students in the Southeastern Region of the AAR. In this way, the proposal has a regionally specific benefit to the individuals most likely to travel to the conference.

Timeline:

An exact date has not yet been set for the 2019 Graduate Conference on Religion, for the sake of maintaining flexibility while finding a keynote speaker. However, the conference will take place at the University of Virginia, in Charlottesville, VA, during the spring 2019 semester.

Budget:

Organizers of the 2019 Virginia Graduate Conference on Religion are currently pursuing multiple funding sources in and outside of the University of Virginia in order to cover costs of organizing a conference. Currently we are pursuing funds from the Luce Project on Religion and its Publics, the Virginia Center for the Study of Religion, the Page-Barbour Richard Lecture Workshops, the Institute for Practical Ethics, and the University of Virginia. Pursuing multiple sources of funding will help to better attract a speaker and students to the conference. If awarded an AAR Regional Development Grant, funding will go toward travel expenses and an honorarium for a keynote speaker. Below is a rough breakdown of how \$XX might be distributed.

- \$ – Airline Ticket to Charlottesville, VA
- \$ – Two Night Hotel Stay in Charlottesville, VA
- \$ – Meal Expenses

\$ – Honorarium

\$ – Discretionary Expenses

Any additional funds not spent towards travel expenses and an honorarium for a keynote speaker will be allocated toward helping with travel expenses for student presenters.