

Call for abstracts:

Science, Religion and Big Questions: What are Big Questions – and how can we help school students and young adults to explore them?

The Learning about Science and Religion (LASAR) Research Centre at Canterbury Christ Church University and the Oxford Argumentation in Religion and Science (OARS) project at the Department of Education at the University of Oxford invite abstracts for papers and seminars that explore Big Questions in the context of education and the science-religion dialogue.

Monday 22 June 2020 a Symposium day for shared discussion

Tuesday 23 June 2020, Conference day with presentations of papers

Location: University of Oxford, Department of Education

Deadline for abstracts: 20th March 2020 (extended)

BACKGROUND

One way we characterise Big Questions is as questions about personhood and the nature of reality. These are questions on which both science and religion seem to have something to say. They are also questions that often have application to real-world problems – such as artificial intelligence, mental and physical health, the environment, and space travel.

A good education recognises that students and young adults are scholars in the making. Unfortunately, in education systems today, the importance of Big Questions for individuals, societies and global communities is often overlooked when planning and charting students' scholarly development. We invite your help and welcome your support with addressing this gap.

We are inviting papers and seminars which will:

- a) Help to characterise, expand and progress the science-religion dialogue in relation to Big Questions. This could be by
 - I. discussing ways to relate science and religion in general or in the context of a selected Big Question, for example, how science and religion can help us understand what it means to be a person;
 - II. mapping issues explored in the science-religion dialogue onto contemporary contexts such as the question of personhood in the context of artificial intelligence; or by

- III. identifying 'wicked problems' in contemporary life that can be examined through a framework of Big Questions, such as by examining questions about biodiversity and evolution, the intersection of mental health and the science-religion dialogue.
- b) Analyse and discuss these Big Questions in relation to education – introducing language and terms that will help educators to understand the terrain. Terms could include epistemic insight, argumentation, theory of knowledge, knowledge domains, sufficient truth, conundrum, apparent contradiction, conflict, ways of relating, interdisciplinary relationships, cross-disciplinary questions, multidisciplinary arenas.
- c) Propose and/or showcase ways to help school students and young adults to ask, explore, analyse and address Big Questions. This could include strategies to foster and develop their curiosity, workshops within and across curriculum subjects, professional development with relevant areas of learning that are widely seen as sensitive or contentious such as learning about evolution, examples of best practice for issues around multiculturalism, religious and non-religious worldviews, inclusion, differentiation, home-school links, informal learning, etc.

Papers will be organised into topical themes. Themes are envisaged to be:

- Artificial intelligence and humanlike machines
- strategies to care for the planet,
- communication in a multicultural world,
- physics and the nature of reality,
- biology, health and wellbeing.

These themes have already been identified as important in the science-religion dialogue and at this conference will each be given an Education angle. We hope that the conference will provide:

- A compendium of Big Questions that can engage students' and young adults' interest, with explanations for teachers and tutors about their educative value and the importance of giving students access to a range of views about how science and religion relate.
- Advice for curriculum planners and practitioners about how to provide the resources and intellectual challenge that students need to develop their curiosity about Big Questions and build their understanding of the relationships between science and religion, the natures of scholarship and knowledge and the power and limitations of different types of enquiry.

EDITED BOOK

We intend to publish select papers from the conference in an edited volume. Conference presenters may be invited to submit a chapter or chapter section for an academic audience including researchers, teacher educators, curriculum planners and policy makers.

SUBMISSION DETAILS

Abstract submissions are invited for either individual short papers (300-500 words) or seminar proposals (600-1000 words).

For short papers, speaker(s) will have a maximum of 20 minutes presentation time, followed by up to 10 minutes for questions and discussion.

For seminars, authors are asked to propose three or four presentations that link together with a shared time for questions and discussion.

Acceptance of papers and seminar presentations will be based on quality, originality, and relevance to the conference themes.

Please email abstracts as a Word document to Professor Berry Billingsley, lasar@canterbury.ac.uk. Abstracts will be considered on receipt.

On 22nd June we are also holding a one-day symposium for participants to develop ideas and discussion around the themes of the conference.

Please visit <http://www.epistemicinsight.com/> for more information about the Epistemic Insight Initiative.