



Religion and Astrobiology in Culture and Society (RACS) Network

CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

LAUNCH EVENT: Tuesday, 21st September 2021 (Zoom)

We are excited to announce a new multidisciplinary scholarly network, bringing together those interested in the academic study of the social and cultural dimensions of the intersection between religion and astrobiology. We are currently seeking new members of the Network, to join our founding group of leading scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences (see below).

Of all the topics in the purview of science/religion, this is arguably the one with the greatest cultural traction. While the (non)religious implications of extraterrestrial life, intelligent or otherwise, have been debated by philosophers and theologians for centuries, recent developments in astrobiology, exoplanet discovery, SETI, and a dawning new age of space exploration are prompting renewed, wider interest. Such subjects have, however, been deeply explored within popular culture, for example in science fiction (e.g., Arthur C. Clarke, Ray Bradbury, C. S. Lewis, Frank Herbert, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*), computer games (e.g., Sid Meier's *Alpha Centauri*), bestselling books and hit documentary series (e.g., Erich von Däniken, *Ancient Aliens*).

Albeit with some notable exceptions (e.g., re. new religious movements), there has been surprisingly little, sustained study of these subjects among scholars in the social sciences and humanities. Furthermore, there has also been little opportunity for those interested in pursuing these and allied areas of research to meet, speak, exchange ideas, and/or collaborate with others in different disciplines – and importantly, with astronomers, astrobiologists, and planetary scientists who are interested in the (non)religious and other socio-cultural ‘receptions’ of this work.

APPLYING TO JOIN

We therefore invited any interested scholars to join the RACS network, and to participate in our (mostly online) seminars, symposia, book clubs, and discussion groups over the next two years. We are also planning a conference in Houston, Texas, in 2023, and a number of publication and collaborative grant application opportunities to further advance work in this area. We are especially keen to hear from Early Career Researchers. Those wishing to join should please email the project team at theracsnetwork@gmail.com, briefly introducing themselves and their particular research interests within the ‘social and cultural aspects of the intersection between religion and astrobiology’.

LAUNCH EVENT

We will formally launch the RACS Network **online** on Tuesday, 21st September, at 4pm (London) /10am (Houston). This is intended to be an informal event, introducing the project team, explaining more about the vision of the Network, and outlining future events. It will also be an opportunity for Network members to start getting to know each other and their work, and to share ideas for future events and initiatives to be held under the auspices of RACS. Successful applicants to join the Network (see above) will be emailed the Zoom link a few days prior to the launch event itself.

Stephen Bullivant (PI) Professor of Theology and the Sociology of Religion, St Mary’s University, UK; Professorial Research Fellow in Theology and Sociology, University of Notre Dame, Australia	Richard Playford (co-I) Lecturer in Religious Studies, St Mary’s University, UK	Janet Siefert (co-I) Assoc. Research Professor, Department of Statistics, Rice University, USA Past President of <i>ISSOL: The International Society for Astrobiology</i>
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Benedict XVI
Centre for Religion
and Society



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