
**Special Issue Introduction:
Religion, Science and the Future**

Some scholars who work at the nexus of religion and nature have argued for decades that, although we understand the scientific foundations of global environmental problems such as climate disruption and possess the technological capacity to turn such wicked problems into opportunities, what is really needed is some (typically vaguely defined) change of heart to save our species. We have the science, so the narrative goes, but we need a shift in values to make the science work positively for us. Ironically, though, we live in an era when even the basic science is contradicted by political agents who direct the federal agencies responsible for adapting to climatic shifts and mitigating environmental harm. It is an era in which U.S. governors of some of the states most vulnerable to climate change have dictated that state employees may not use the phrase climate change in public, electronic, or other communications or policy formulations.¹ Behind the contested storylines where science is deployed as a legitimating strategy are material interests related to development, innovation, profitability, and conservation and restoration. Moreover, there are at stake in these conflicts different visions of the future and ideas about with whom or what humans may (or may not) share such a future. Wrapped up in most narratives about sustainable well-being are religious or spiritual justifications. In some cases, these religious-like elements may be implicit rather than explicit. This special issue of the *JSRNC* wrestles with these complications and conundrums in various ways.

The articles contained herein were drawn from keynotes and presentations from the 2016 conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture (ISSRNC) in Gainesville, Florida,

1. For an article from 2015 specifically about climate change policy in Florida, see <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/state/florida/article12983720.html>. Or for an article which discusses the Florida alongside North Carolina, where similar rules were enforced, see <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/florida-has-seen-bad-effects-from-trump-like-climate-gag-orders/>.

where the inaugural conference took place in 2006. From its inception, the ISSRNC has been affiliated with the *JSRNC*, and we have typically published either keynotes from conferences (as in issues 1.1 and 1.3), or a selection of high quality panels or papers. Most of the articles in this issue were keynote addresses from that 2016 conference. That means they may be different in tone and style than the typical journal research article. This makes for a lively issue where diverse conceptions of the intersections of science, religion, and imagined futures emerge. Articles from Lisa Sideris (Indiana University), Timothy LeCain (Montana State University), Richard Samuel Deese (Boston University), Emma Tomalin (University of Leeds), Graham Harvey (The Open University), Jace Weaver (University of Georgia), and Fabrizio Frascaroli (University of Zurich) and Thora Fjeldsted (Erasmus University of Rotterdam) explore themes ranging from historical critiques of the Anthropocene, to concerns about whether science and technology abet or undermine an environmental agenda, to the role of gender in 'green' Buddhism, to philosophical explorations of human exceptionalism and policy implementation.

It is a wide-ranging and provocative set of articles, and we invite you to join in these ongoing conversations by joining the ISSRNC's 'Public Sphere' at the society's website, where you can chat about the articles and their implications. Or, alternatively, explore the ISSRNC's working groups, where you can collaborate with like-minded scholars for projects or upcoming conferences.² Finally, we hope our readers will begin planning for the next ISSRNC conference, to be held at University College, Cork, Ireland, June 13–16, 2019.

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Co-Editors

2. See both the 'Public Sphere' and the list of current working groups on the ISSRNC website: www.issrnc.org.