



From the Director:

The Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue has been established to advance the social scientific study of religion in Chinese societies and among the Chinese in diasporas. Both of the words “Chinese” and “religion” are inclusive here. We are interested in all religions and spiritualities practiced by the Chinese anywhere in the world, and being Chinese in the global era means being cosmopolitan and going beyond existing boundaries. I hope that our research projects and scholarly exchanges will help to deepen scholarly understanding of Chinese religions, and will enhance mutual understanding of Chinese and American peoples.

I would like the CRCS to become a bridge – a bridge between scholars at Purdue and scholars in other parts of the United States, a bridge between Chinese and American scholars across the Pacific, and a bridge between scholars and the public through media, symposia, lectures, and publications. I hope CRCS will serve the scholarly community of Chinese religions in the global village.

China is a complex society with one-fifth of the world’s population and has been undergoing rapid social changes. Amid dramatic changes, social bonds and norms have broken down, conflicting moral values are chaotically entangled, and corruption has become rampant. At the same time, many forms of old or new religions and spiritualities have revived or emerged, and are thriving. Contemporary China has large numbers of monotheists, polytheists, agnostics and atheists but no one religion or spirituality is numerically dominant. This unique religious composition is a remarkable situation for the comparative study of religion to discern and examine social and spiritual laws.

(Dr. Fenggang Yang)

Selected Congratulatory Notes from China:

ZHUO Xiping (Director of the Institute for the Study of World Religions, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing):

Congratulations on the establishment of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University! I hope that through the work and projects of the Center, people in the United States and other western countries will gain a more objective, positive understanding of religion in China. I also hope the Center will facilitate more academic exchange and collaboration with scholars in China and America.

HE Guanghu (Professor at Renmin University of China, Beijing) and GAO Shining (Research Fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences):

The establishment of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society at Purdue University is a milestone in the development of the social scientific study of Chinese religions. Although the center is far from us geologically, the internet era brings us together closely. It will be a wonderful platform for all of us in this field of research.

WEI Dedong (Professor at Renmin University of China):

You have promoted the social scientific study of religion in China for many years and made significant impacts. The establishment of the Center is both a symbol of your accomplishments and a platform for future advancements. I believe the center will make historic contribution to the study of the Chinese society and religion.

LU Yunfeng (Professor at Peking University):

The establishment of CRCS marks the beginning of institutionalization of the sociology of Chinese religion.

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Beijing Summit on Chinese Spirituality and Society



October 9-11, 2008, Peking University

Supported with a generous grant from the John Templeton Foundation to Purdue University, in collaboration with Peking University, we are organizing the Beijing Summit to be held in October at Peking University. The Summit will gather leading scholars who have made significant contributions to the study of spirituality, religion and society pertinent to Chinese society, and chart future directions for the scientific study of religion and spirituality in greater

China and beyond.

During the reform era since 1979, there has been significant development in religious studies in China, with many research centers and departments emerged in the 1990s. However, until recently, Chinese researchers have limited access to contemporary Western scholarship, and Western scholars often face significant barriers (language, politics, culture, etc.) to conducting empirical research on religion in China. To build up the momentum for the advancement of the social scientific study of religion, the Beijing Summit will serve to bridge Chinese and Western scholars on Chinese religion and society, and shape a program of action to bring the research on Chinese religion and spirituality to a new level. This will be a summit for both introducing the current social scientific theories of religion to China and introducing China to the social scientific studies of religion. The forty invited presenters are the most renowned Chinese and Western scholars working on cutting-edge projects, and Western scholars in the forefront of theoretical development in the social scientific study of religion. We ask Western scholars to think about the China case in their own theorizing and offer suggestions of research questions on religion and spirituality in China. We ask Chinese scholars to envision or conceptualize research projects that pose relevant questions for the development of current theories. To facilitate the exchange of ideas, we will arrange simultaneous interpretation between English and Chinese at the Beijing Summit.

Beijing Summit Keynote Speaker Rodney Stark

Dr. Rodney Stark is an University Professor of the Social Sciences and Co-Director of Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University. He has published 28 books and more than 144 scholarly articles on subjects as diverse as prejudice, crime, suicide, and city life in ancient Rome. However, the greater part of his work has been on religion. He is the former president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and of the Association for the Sociology of Religion. He has won a number of national and international awards for distinguished scholarship. Many of his books and articles have been translated and published in other languages, including Chinese, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Spanish, Slovene, and Turkish. His latest book is *Discovering God: The Origins of the Great Religions and the Evolution of Belief* (HarperSanFrancisco 2007).



Keynote Title: The Complexities of Comparative Research

ABSTRACT If social science is to achieve valid universal theories, it is necessary to test them in as many different times and places as possible—hence the urgent need for more comparative research. To demonstrate this need, I review three recent instances wherein comparative research has revealed that 1) the claims that religion functions to sustain the moral order is *not* universal, that 2) most new religious movement are *not* the product of the discontents of the deprived, but typically reflect the dissatisfactions of the privileged, and 3) that the greater religiousness of women is not due to changes within Christianity, but *is* a universal phenomenon. The essay then examines a set of pitfalls that often afflict quantitative comparative research using ecological or collective units of analysis such as nations or cities. Chief among these are the *ecological fallacy*, *cherry-picking* as to cases and variables, and the *lack of comparability* among cases. All three pitfalls are illustrated with recent examples.

Beijing Summit Keynote Speaker Weiming Tu

Dr. Weiming Tu is the Director of the Harvard Yenching Institute. He has been the Professor of Chinese History and Philosophy and of Confucian Studies in the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University since 1981. He is the first professor of Confucian studies at any English-language university, a position awarded to him in 1999. A member of the Committee on the Study of Religion at Harvard, the chair of the Academic Sinica's advisory committee on the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy, and fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Professor Tu is currently interpreting Confucian ethics as a spiritual resource for the emerging global community. He is the author of major publications in Chinese and English, including: *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action: Wang Yang-Ming's Youth, Centrality and Commonality, An Essay on Confucian Religiosity; Humanity and Self-Cultivation; Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation; Way, Learning, and Politics: Essays on the Confucian Intellectual*. He has contributed a section on Confucian spirituality to a forthcoming encyclopedia on the history of the religious quest, and an essay for a report of the U.S. President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.



Keynote Title: Confucian Humanism as a Spiritual Resource for the 21st Century

ABSTRACT Four dimensions of the human experience are constitutive parts of Confucian humanism. They are (1) holistic integration of the body, heart, mind and soul, (2) fruitful interaction between self and society involving the family, community, nation, world, and the cosmos, (3) sustainable and harmonious relationship between the human species and nature, and (4) mutual responsiveness between the human heart-and-mind and the Way of Heaven. Humanism so conceived is diametrically opposed to secular humanism emerged in the modern West and rooted in the Enlightenment mentality. Liberty, rationality, human rights, due process of law, and dignity of the individual are Enlightenment values. Science, technology, market economy, democratic polity, and civil society are institutions facilitated by the Enlightenment initiate cultural transformations. The forces that are threatening the survival of the human community are the unintended negative consequences of the Enlightenment mentality as well. They include aggressiveness, scientism, progressivism, materialism, and the Faustian drive to know and conquer nature. Confucian humanism is well positioned to offer sympathetic understanding and critical reflection on the Enlightenment mentality. I propose to investigate the implications of the revival of Confucian humanism in shaping the new cultural identity of China and East Asia for dialogue among civilizations and comparative study of religions. I would like to argue that Confucianism can play an effective and meaningful role in bridging the seemingly insurmountable gaps in intercivilizational communication and that it can serve as a reference to the challenges of globalization confronting religious leaders in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Daoism, other historical religions, and indigenous traditions.

Other Scholars at the Beijing Summit

Eileen Barker – Sociology of Religion

Daniel Bays – History of Christianity in China

John Berthrong – Confucianism

Kenneth Dean – Anthropology of Religion

Dru Gladney – Islam in China

Philip Jenkins – History of Christianity

Richard Madsen – Sociology of Religion

Gordon Melton – History of Religion

Robert Neville – Confucianism

Robert Weller – Anthropology of Religion

Jiyu Ren – Founder of the CASS Institute of Religion

Xinping Zhuo - Director of the CASS Institute of Religion

Litian Fang – Buddhism

Zhongjian Mou – Daoism and Ethnic Religions

Guanghu He – Christianity

Zhigang Zhang – Philosophy of Religion

Xiaofeng Liu – Christianity

And many more . . .

Symposium Celebrated the Establishment of CRCS

On April 23, more than 60 people attended the symposium to celebrate the establishment of the Center on Religion and Chinese Society (CRCS). In addition to professors, students and staff of different departments at Purdue University, a few scholars came from Boston, Chicago, Indianapolis and Los Angeles. The Dean of College of Liberal Arts John Contreni and the Head of Sociology-Anthropology Department Viktor Gecas gave opening remarks. Anthropologist Robert Weller of Boston University, the keynote speaker, presented preliminary findings about religious institutions meeting broad social needs in mainland China, Taiwan and among the Chinese in Malaysia. Three visiting scholars from China, Drs. Qingxiang GUO, Xiaoqun WU and Liping LIANG, also presented their research findings regarding various religions in the Chinese society.



Keynote Speaker:
Robert Weller of
Boston University

Website:

<http://www.purdue.edu/crcs>

This website is currently under construction. Soon it will be developed into a center of information and resources of Chinese religion, spirituality and society. The website will also serve as a portal for an online Chinese journal for the scientific study of religion, a forum for interactive discussions, and an archive of government documents, scholarly articles, short essays and commentaries on Chinese spirituality, religion and society.



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Above: Audience.
Above right: John Contreni, student, Viktor Gecas and Amy Neubert of Purdue News Service.
Right: Liping Liang, Qingxiang Guo, Fenggang Yang, Robert Weller, Alice Wang and Xiaoqun Wu.



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The Project for the Advancement of the Social Scientific Study of Religion in China

Thanks to the support of the Henry Luce Foundation, Professor Fenggang Yang, along with colleagues in China, has organized the annual Summer Institutes and Symposia for the Social Scientific Study of Religion since 2004. Each Summer Institute was attended by 70-100 young faculty members and graduate students from universities throughout China, and each symposium had 40-70 presenters and discussants. Several renowned scholars in the United States and the United Kingdom have lectured at the two-week summer institute and given keynote presentations at the three-day symposium, introducing the most up-to-date theoretical and methodological developments. A number of well-known Chinese and American scholars also gave one or two lectures at the Summer Institutes, and many more scholars gave presentations at the symposia. This project also provides small research grants to scholars and graduate students in China to conduct empirical research on religion, sponsors Chinese visiting scholars at Purdue University, and sponsors a lecture series on Chinese Religion and Society at Purdue University. More details of this project will appear in future issues of this newsletter.

