Call for Papers

9th International Workshop

RELIGION AND CIVIL SOCIETY: Geopolitical Dimension of the Globalized Cultural Environment

November 9-14, 2009 – Yalta (Crimea, Ukraine)

Organizers: WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY (USA) and TAURIDA NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (Ukraine).

Course Directors

Rudolf J. Siebert, Professor of Religion and Society
Tatjana Senyushkina, Professor of Political Science

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

Tavrida National University
Simferopol, Ukraine

September 2009
Dear Friend:

We are writing this letter to you, in order to invite you wholeheartedly to our ninth international course on “Religion and Civil Society: Geopolitical Dimension of the Globalized Cultural Environment” to take place in Yalta, Ukraine, from November 9-14, 2009. It is a sister course to our international Dubrovnik course on the Future of Religion. Our new theme in Yalta is certainly of highest actuality in the present world-historical transition from Modernity to Post-Modernity: particularly during the global financial catastrophe of 2008./2009.. The following few thoughts and ideas may help us to stimulate and give guidance to our discourse, and may inspire our papers.

Globalization

In the perspective of the critical theory of religion, the contemporary, international development, that goes by the name of globalization, refers to the continued systematic expansion of civil society and of the capitalist productive relations and forces of production of the so-called First World, or of the G20, or of the primary countries, into the Third World or into the peripheral countries of the world. For neo-conservatives and neo-liberals the stated rationale and purpose of this economically driven globalization process is, to integrate all countries into a global economy, through which they and their citizens can improve their quality of life and participate in the development of prosperity, democracy, and peace. This is to be accomplished through such international bodies as the World Trade Organization [WTO], the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund [IMF] and their Structural Adjustment Programs [SAP’s], so-called trans-national corporations, and the policies of trade liberalization, deregulation, privatization, the growth of stable financial institutions, debt relief for poor countries, etc. Neo-liberals equate globalization with the free movement of capital and the increasing domination of national economies by global financial markets and multinational corporations. This development has also been called the globalization from above, the new economy, neo-liberalism or the globalization of corporate capitalism, which is being marketed and also enforced as being inevitable. In view of the dialectical religiology, this inevitability, however, is an ideological, i.e. false consciousness producing, rationale for the extremely ominous, greedy, and cruel consequences of this globalization from above. The driving spirit of this top-down, neo-liberal concept and its world-wide development: has been expressed in the neo-liberal statement The poor complain, they always do, but that’s just idle chatter. Our system brings rewards to all, at least to all who matter. Those who matter in this globalizing system are the same one’s who have mattered throughout the 500 year development of the capitalist system itself: the capitalist ruling class. It is this international corporate class, who, in the universal notion of globalization, strategically utilizes not only the economic but also the political, and military, and even the cultural and religious systems of the nations to achieve their particular business interests.

Corporate Ruling Class

In the perspective of the critical religiology, the neo-liberal globalization of this capitalist class’s corporate pursuit of the maximization of their profit and power is based quite parasitically on the systematic exploitation of the international debt, suffering and need of former colonized, Third World countries, their workers as well as their natural resources. For their very survival, debt-ridden and poverty-stricken Third World countries are forced to go to the World Bank and IMF to request a short-term loan in order for the country to remain solvent. However, to receive such a loan, these countries must submit to the IMF’s Structural Adjustment Programs, which ravage the national economy through
its privatization, the liberalization of its capital/investment market, the cutting of expenditures on non-profitable social welfare programs, and increased prices and taxation. What is, therefore, being globalized systematically is not only the surplus value, profit, and greed driven interests of the international corporate ruling class, but also its exploitive corollary of human and environmental domination, suffering, hopelessness, destruction and death. This globalization from above has also been correctly called the race to the bottom for the so-called peripheral Third World countries as well as for the workers and their families throughout the world. The globalization from above has changed the culture of corporations even in advanced capitalist countries, e.g. France in such a way, that the solidarity among colleagues is broken, and they become competitors and predators for and against each other and drive each other into always higher numbers of suicide. This corporate capitalist globalization from above, however, has also spawned the world-wide protest and resistance to it in terms of a globalization from below, which has taken the form of massive world-wide street protests during the meetings of the WTO, the G-8, and G - 20 First World politicians and financial ministers. The current scare word globalization, seemingly unavoidable in any public statement, points not to an end of politics, but rather to its escape from the categories of the national state and of the United Nations, and even from the schema defining, what is political and non-political action. Economics triumphs over politics including all political philosophy or theology, For whatever the referent of the new globalization rhetoric (economy, markets, job competition, production, goods and services, financial flows information, lifestyles, religion, etc.), the political consequences of the stage-managed economic globalization risk stand out in sharp relief. They have come to a climax in the global capitalist financial crisis, which brought capitalism to the brink of total disaster in 2008 and 2009, and which could be forestalled for the time being only by a world-wide intervention of states and politicians into civil society, the economy, and the market.

**Critical Religion**

In the perspective of the dialectical religiology, the greed-driven globalization affects also necessarily and unavoidably all the living world religions and their personal and social morality. We define critical religion as the longing for the wholly Other than the horror and terror of nature and history: for perfect justice, for unconditional love, and as the hope that the murderer shall not triumph over the innocent victim, at least not ultimately. Non-critical, traditional religion may have an affirmative attitude toward the globalization from above and may try to console the victims and keep them from rebelling. Critical religion, however, which understands itself in terms of such longing and hope for the entirely Other, sides with the poor classes and their protest against global injustice, and not with the rich classes, who produce it through their unlimited greed in the globalization process. Critical religion does not consider with the rich and powerful classes the complaints of the oppressed and exploited classes as just idle chatter. For the critical religion all people matter and deserve just rewards. Critical religion does not allow itself to be utilized strategically by the corporate ruling classes to justify ideologically their particular economic and political interests in the process of the globalization of antagonistic civil society. For the critical religiology, at the beginning of Christianity, there was once a poor man and the rich people tortured and murdered him, and they have never stopped doing so. According to this poor man, who threw the capitalists out of the second temple in Jerusalem, no rich man can enter the kingdom of God; nobody can serve two masters, God and capital; poor Lazarus went to the bosom of Abraham and the rich man ended up in Gehenna – hell. In the view of the critical theory of religion, one can not speak about liberalism, socialism, fascism, or the World Wars, Auschwitz and Treblinka, Dresden and Hamburg, Sevastopol and Stalingrad, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq, Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, without speaking about capitalism as the private appropriation of collective labor. There will be no peace among nations without peace among the
world religions. There will be no peace among the world religions without their discourse with each other. There will be no discourse among the world religions without there knowledge of each other’s interpretation of reality and orientation of action. Finally, there will be no just and peaceful globalization from below, without the world religions transforming themselves into critical religions on the basis of a global ethos promoting the transformation of the commodity exchange society beyond the market - and central-administrative economy toward not only a formal political but also a material economic democracy.

**Our discourse shall include the following topics:**

- Religion, ethnicity and geopolitics: new factors of forming the global world
- Religious fundamentalism and paradoxes of the globalized cultural environment
- Inter-confessional communications and international relations in the conditions of world financial crisis
- Relations of Islam and Christianity in the context of regional, national, and international security
- Mass media as a resource of geopolitical competition
- Religious and ethnic identity as a subjects of manipulative technologies
- Clash of civilizations: myth or reality?
- Tolerance and hate: ethics and psychological aspects
- Religion and social capital: interaction parameters
- Social networks as factor of designing of the civil society
- State-church relationships in the civil society: the concept of serving to the people
- Religion and sustainable development: ethno-environmental dimension of everyday life
- Linguistic aspects of inter-cultural communications
- Religion and education in a search for a dialogue and harmony
- The dialogue of religion and science in the 21st century

The round table of the experts on Islam and Problems of Security in the Black-Sea-Caspian Region will take place at the time of our international course, not in Yalta, but in Sevastopol. Other topics can be included.

**Languages: English, Russian, & Ukrainian**
Course Directors:

Dr. Rudolf Siebert, Professor, Comparative Religion Department, Western Michigan University (USA), Head of “Humanistic Future Center,” Chair of the annual seminar “The Future of Religion” in International University Center, Dubrovnik, Croatia.

630 Piccadilly Rd.
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49006, USA
Tel. + 1 269 381-0864
E-mail: rsieb3@aol.com
http://www.rudolfjsiebert.org

Dr. Tatyana Senyushkina, Professor, Department of Political Science and Sociology, Tavrida National University, Head of Network of Cultural Exchange and Interethnic Trust, Simferopol, Ukraine

4 Prospect Vernadsky
Simferopol 95007, Republic of Crimea, Ukraine
Tel. +380-95-696-6942
E-mail: tsenyushkina@yandex.ru
http://www.crimea.edu/tnu/structure/philosophy/departments/polit/index.htm

Travel Information

The workshop traditionally takes place in the Livadia area of the City of Yalta, which is a picturesque historical place in the Crimea, and which is situated at the Black Sea in the south of the Ukraine, on November 2009. The registration fee is 50 Euros for professors and 25 Euros for the students.

Organizers provide: the workshop materials, coffee-breaks, a banquet with concert of orthodox singers. Guided tours of the Palaces-Park Area of the South Crimean Coast (Livadia Palace of the last Russian Tzar Nicolay II in Yalta, Voroncov Palace in Alupka, Russian Tzar Alexander the Third Palace in Massandra), and also to the famous Nikitskiy Botanic Garden and to the world-wide famous for its perfect vines Massandra Vine Production will be offered to the Workshop participants.

Traveling and accommodation on the cost for participants. The organizers would be happy to offer any informational help to the participants from abroad concerning the logistics and management of their trip. Please, contact us by e-mail to: tsenyushkina@yandex.ru

The participants from USA and from EU don’t need a Ukrainian visa.

Following the workshop, the accepted papers will be published. Cost 20 hrn/page ($5 / page). Times New Roman, 14, interval 1.5. All fields 1”. Volume of papers: thesis up to 5 pages, articles up to 12 pages.

Accommodations: Hotel “Bristol.” Costs: From 72 USD to 276 USD per room per night, which includes breakfast. Contact information is as follows: 10 Roosevelt St., Yalta, Crimea 98600, Ukraine. Reservation numbers: +38-0654 271606, FAX +38 0654 271609

E-mail: reserve@hotel-bristol.com.ua
http://www.hotel-bristol.com.ua

If you wish to receive information about other possibilities for accommodations in hotels of Yalta, please contact with Dr. Tatiana Senyushkina.
http://nce.ua.iatp.net
The Application Form
for the participation in the 8th international seminar on
Religion and Civil Society

Application Deadline: October 20, 2008.
Deadline for the papers for publication: November 20, 2008.

Please send, by way of regular mail and/or email, your application and/or presentation papers to

Dr. Tatiana Senyushkina,
Mail Box 65,
City of Sevastopol, Crimea, Ukraine, 99043

E-mail: nce@mail.ru and tsenyushkina@yandex.ru

|Participant Name: | |
|Title of the Paper: | |
|Education: | |
|Place of Work or Study: | |
|Affiliation: | |
|Position: | |
|Regular Mailing Address| (for printed workshop materials) |
|Work Telephone: | |
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