

Groupe de recherche sur la diversité et l'équité (GRDÉ) The Diversity and Equity Research Group (DERG)

présente / presents

Panel de mars 2014 / March 2014 Panel
Regards croisés sur les enjeux de la diversité et la religion
Perspectives on diversity and religion at a crossroads



In Your Face: Niqab-Wearing Women in Canada and Beyond

Par/By

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Good heavens! Paradoxes of Chinese religiosities and identity

Par/By

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Table ronde en anglais suivie d'une période de questions et réponses bilingue / Panel in English followed by a bilingual Q & A

Lundi le 3 mars de 13h-15h /
Monday March 3rd, from 1:00pm-3:00pm
Pavillon des Sciences sociales, salle 5025 /
Social Sciences Building, Room 5025
120, rue Université / 120 University Private
Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa
Événement public / Public event

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Résumés des présentations / Presentation Abstracts

In Your Face: Niqab-Wearing Women in Canada and Beyond

Natasha Bakht

This paper is an attempt to analyze the growing agitation that has been expressed about Muslim women who cover their faces. The depth of discomfort evoked by these women and their outward markers of religiosity is extraordinary and as I will demonstrate results in a wide range of rationalizations as to why their public displays of religiosity must be banned. I will address explanations as to why some Muslim women cover parts of their bodies, based primarily on the extensive research done about women who wear the hijab and more recently an Ontario-based report about niqab-wearing women. I will then trace four Canadian episodes (citizenship ceremonies, voting, testimony in courtrooms and the right to work/access public services), in addition to some international tangents, in which concerted efforts have been made to exclude niqab-wearing women from public life. I hope to critically unpack arguments that insist on alienating a religious minority such that the central role that niqab-wearing women play in delineating how we define ourselves is revealed.

Good heavens! Paradoxes of Chinese religiosities and identity

Dr. André Laliberté

Laliberté will present some of the fundamental aspects of religious life among Chinese, in terms of world-views, rituals, social practices, and traditions, before moving to the socio-political dimension, and present four seemingly paradoxical situations that can be explained by these aspects of Chinese religiosities. For example, religion is an ethnic identity for Chinese Muslims, but not for Chinese Christians; Chinese say they are not religious but China is probably the country with the largest number of Buddhists on the planet; there is a set of popular beliefs that has more followers than all religions added together but it is officially unrecognized; finally, the atheist Communist Party acts as a religious authority. Laliberté argues that we can start to make sense of these situations by understanding the religious dimension of the Chinese definition of ethnic identity, the meaning of 'belief' in contemporary China, the distinction between religion and superstition made by Chinese intellectuals for a century, and finally, the specifically Chinese definition and social practice of secularism. Viewed from the outside, the religious beliefs and practices of Chinese can easily fall prey to several misunderstandings. These misconceptions include the notions that Chinese are without any religious belief, or if they do, they do not have their own religion, and at worst, that they are religiously intolerant. The goal of my talk is to propose something close to the opposite: Chinese hold a variety of beliefs, they have developed forms of religiosity that are specific to them, and they are generally tolerant of others' views on these matters.