**Religion, Health, and Disease: An Online Conference Where Interdisciplinary Lines Intersect**

At the moment when the global coronavirus pandemic prevents us from meeting in person, the nexus of health and disease in religious studies can highlight a common focus for our work as scholars at a time of relative isolation. This conference asks what contribution religious studies can make to public and scholarly discussions about public health, medicine, and/or the messianic, eschatological, reformist, nationalist, or racist rhetorics and movements that often accompany widespread sickness and health disparities. Our current epidemic of racialized police violence, the response to it by the Black Lives Matter Movement, and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on people of color and the poor are cases in point. Online, we seek to cross the lines that divide religious studies from medicine, society, and public health, seeking academic as well as engaged points of intersection.

Healing and affliction are prominent tropes in religious thought and action, so illness and blame for ill health inevitably evoke ritual discourses and practices. From the Bubonic Plague, the epidemics of the Spanish Conquista, and the Great Influenza of 1918 to the AIDS, Ebola, and coronavirus epidemics and beyond, health often signals cosmic and popular favor; and illness indexes divine wrath and social rejection.

Many religious practices aim to enhance and preserve health, whether spiritual, psychological, bodily, or social. And much scripture recounts miraculous healing as evidence of theological claims. Forces that heal — *baraka* in Islam, *mana* in Hawai’i, *num* in the Kalahari, *samai* in the Amazon, *shakti* in India, *qi* in China, grace in Christianity — undermine supposed boundaries between medicine and religion.

Responses to illness are similarly holistic. Distinguishing between healthy and ill, sane and insane, contagious and immune, even without overt religious references, reveals an underlying cosmology, inevitably imparting a broader vision of existence and of the differential place of all beings within it.

We seek paper, panel, and roundtable proposals that explore links between religion, health (or well-being), and disease, whether broadly or narrowly construed. We especially encourage proposals that innovatively exploit our online conference format, creating collaborations that bring us together in fulfilling ways despite the distance.

Should you wish to submit a panel or roundtable proposal on the nexus of race-related issues, religion, and health and fail to find a section call that corresponds to your concerns, please send your proposal directly to the organizers at [fsu.rel.conf@gmail.com](mailto:fsu.rel.conf@gmail.com). Please submit ***all other*** proposals via the online system. Our section chairs have worked very hard to accommodate a wide range of topics and interests.