

SPIRITUALITY, RELIGION AND THE SACRED

Annual Conference of the Colloquium on Violence & Religion (COV&R)

June 4-7, 2025

Rome Campus, Australian Catholic University

Conference Theme:

This conference will problematize any too-simple disjunction between “religion” and “spirituality”. This apparent modern contradiction – between religion and spirituality, accompanied by increasing individualisation, polarisation and dangerous collective behaviour – can be helpfully understood in the light of René Girard’s analysis of modernity and the foundational and regulative function of religion, along with his critique of a newly emerging post-secular sacred. The conference’s theme re-considers who we are – and might become – as *homo mimeticus/religiosus*, seeking a new reading of our unique historical moment, and how we have emerged into it.

The conference is open to academics, professionals, practitioners in the field, and anyone interested in the conference topic or René Girard’s mimetic theory.

Call for Papers:

Paper proposals and panels from any field of study are welcome, particularly as they relate to the conference theme. As the aim of the Colloquium is to explore, criticize, and develop the mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture and as the Colloquium is concerned with questions of both research and application, we welcome papers related to all aspects of mimetic theory.

Proposals should contain your name, affiliation, the title of the paper, and an abstract of the planned paper of about 200 words. All submissions should include a statement at the end of the proposal listing technology needs. If needs are not stated at the time of submission, the host institution may be unable to accommodate them.

Papers are to be of a length for a 20-minute presentation, with 10 minutes for questions and discussion. Panels (of 90 minutes with 3 papers) on a particular theme are also welcome.

If you are a graduate student and your proposal has been accepted, there is the possibility of applying for the Raymund Schwager, SJ Memorial Essay Contest.

There will be two rounds of proposals (to assist those with planning and funding requirements). Responses will be given shortly after each due date. For more information or to send a proposal (including a title, 200-word abstract and contact details), please email the conference organisers at joel.hodge@acu.edu.au and info@australiangirardseminar.org by 15th December 2024 (for the first round). For the second round, please send your proposal by 15th April, 2025.

Workshop Proposals:

The organising committee also welcomes proposal for practitioner-focused, interactive workshops that relate to the work of Girard or the conference theme. Such sessions could take different forms (e.g., workshop-style, forum, discussion group, panel) and may cover areas such as spirituality, peace-building, inter-faith dialogue, Girard and preaching, or Girard and psychotherapy (not an exhaustive list). Please provide a description and rationale for an interactive workshop on a particular topic to be facilitated for approx. 45 or 90 minutes by appropriately qualified persons.

Raymund Schwager Memorial Essay Contest:

To honour the memory of Raymund SCHWAGER, SJ, the Colloquium on Violence and Religion is offering an award of \$1,500 shared by up to three persons for the three best papers given by graduate students at the COV&R 2025 meeting at the Australian Catholic University. Receiving the award also entails the refund of the conference registration fee – this should be factored in the calculation of the conference fee. Starting in 2019, the winners also receive a certificate.

Students presenting papers at the conference are invited to apply for the Raymund Schwager Memorial Award by sending a letter to that effect and the full text of their paper in an e-mail attachment to Prof. Scott Cowdell at scowdell@csu.edu.au, chair of the three-person COV&R Awards Committee. The paper should be in English. The paper should be 2500 words, double-spaced-12-point font excluding notes. That should work out to a 10-page text excluding notes that can be read in 20 minutes. Because of blind review, the author name should not be stated in the essay or in the title of the WORD file. Due date for submission is 1 May 2025. Winners will be announced in the conference program. Prize-winning essays should reflect an engagement with mimetic theory; they will be presented in a plenary session and be considered for publication in Contagion.

Travel Grants:

COV&R offers a limited number of travel grants for grad students or practitioners of mimetic theory (e.g., NGO/non-profit staff; journalists, government employees). Preference is given to graduate students but practitioners of mimetic theory are also encouraged to apply.

In order to be eligible you need:

- to have an accepted paper proposal and offer a presentation at the conference
- to have not received the travel grant previously
- to belong to the groups mentioned above.

To apply for a travel grant: send your confirmation of acceptance at the conference and your situation to the COV&R Executive Secretary.

COV&R travel grants are for cost of transportation only and are at a maximum of \$US1,000 per person. If your travel costs are less, you will receive the actual cost of travel. If your travel costs exceed that amount, you will have to finance the excess yourself. The travel grant money will be awarded after the conference. Recipients' conference registration fee will also be refunded.

For more information: <https://violenceandreligion.com/annual-meeting-2025-rome-italy/>