

**ASR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
FIRST COUNCIL MEETING**

**Thursday, August 20, 2015**

**4:00-8:15 p.m.**

**Renaissance Blackstone Chicago Hotel, Chicago, Illinois**

Present: Melissa Wilde (President), Lori Beaman (as President-Elect), James Cavendish (as Executive Officer), Grace Yukich (as Program Chair), Ryan Cragun (as Incoming Program Chair), Gerardo Marti (as editor), and Voting Council members Kevin Dougherty (2015), Rebecca Kim (2015), Prema Kurien (2015), Christopher Bader (2016), Evelyn Bush (2016), Michael Emerson (2016; also Incoming President-Elect), and Milagros Pena. Also in attendance were representatives of the following Standing Committees: Alex Bierman (Distinguished Article Award Committee) and Rhys Williams (Lifetime Achievement Award Committee). Patricia Thomas, Executive Editor of the Humanities Journals of Oxford University Press, was also in attendance.

Absent: Christopher Ellison (Past President), and Council members Richard Flory (2017) and Guiseppe Giordan (2017).

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by President Melissa Wilde, who asked those present to review the minutes of the ASR Council Meetings that took place in 2014. All voted in favor of approving the minutes.

Jim Cavendish then presented Christopher Ellison's report of the Nominations Committee, which announced the winners of the ASR elections in 2015. (Readers of these minutes may refer to the 2015 Council Packet on the ASR website for a complete listing of the winners.) Chris had mentioned that it is sometimes difficult to recruit people to stand in nomination to Council because all nominees must be willing, if they are elected, to attend all Council Meetings during their 3-year term as a member of Council. Council considered whether attendance should be made more flexible in order to broaden the pool of people who would be willing to serve, but ultimately agreed that attendance at all Council meetings should continue to be an expectation for serving on Council. When future chairs of the Nominations Committee solicit nominees to Council, they should continue to emphasize that attendance at Council meetings for the 3-year term is an expectation of office, and that if they foresee that they cannot fulfill this commitment, they should not stand in the elections.

Melissa Wilde then presented her President's Report, which announced the new members of ASR Standing Committees. (Readers of these minutes may refer to the 2015 Council Packet on the ASR website for a complete listing of the winners of the elections and the appointments by the President.) As a follow up to Melissa's presentation, Jim Cavendish proposed a way of simplifying the appointment of committee members and committee chairs. Currently, By-Law I, Section 2 states that "At each annual meeting, new members (of Standing Committees) shall be appointed by the outgoing President, the chair shall be designated by the incoming President."

Jim explained that the Executive Officers of ASR believe that this method of appointment is not as simple or as logical as it can be. On one hand, having the incoming President appoint the chairs of these committees makes sense because he/she will be working with the chairs during his/her term as president. On the other hand, it doesn't make sense because the person the incoming President might like to serve as chair may not be a person who is currently sitting on

the Standing Committee, and therefore may not have experience working on the committee or with its members.

To solve this issue, and thus ensure that ASR's standing committees have chairs who are both appointees of the president and have experience working on the committee, Jim Cavendish proposed that the By-Law be amended to grant the incoming president-elect of ASR the authority to appoint a new member of each standing committee who will serve as a regular member of the committee during the first year of his/her 3-year term, as the chair of the standing committee during the second year (i.e., the year when the President-Elect who appointed him/her is President), and as the "past chair" during the third year. According to Jim, this would simplify the process of appointments because it would, in effect, give the incoming president-elect the power to both appoint a new member of each committee and decide who he/she would like to serve as that committee's chair during the year of his/her presidency. It would also make the three-year terms of these standing committee members much clearer because their terms will run parallel to the terms of the presidents who appointed them. Council discussed this, agreed that this would be a good change to the By-Laws, and authorized Jim to include the proposed amendment in the next election cycle.

Following Melissa Wilde's Presidential Report, President-Elect Lori Beaman announced the theme for next year's conference, and Ryan Cragun, next year's Program Chair, distributed the Call for Papers. Ryan described how the theme of "Varieties of Religion and Nonreligion" was very appropriate given the location of next year's meeting in Seattle, WA. Lori announced that Linda Woodhead would be the Furfey Lecturer next year.

Jim Cavendish then summarized his Executive Officer's Report, which can be read in the 2015 Council Packet available on the ASR website. He described the accomplishments of the Executive Office over the preceding year, including his work with the Development Committee in thinking about ways in which the Annual Meetings might be able to pay for themselves in the future. Melissa Wilde suggested that one way to increase revenue would be to have a fee structure that was based on members' annual income, much like ASA.

Council member Milagros Pena then raised the possibility that ASR Annual Meetings overlap even more with ASA, but not with the Religion Section Day itself, as a way of increasing attendance at our Annual Meetings. Melissa agreed that having the two meetings overlap would be beneficial for those attending both meetings so people with children or with limited travel budgets wouldn't have to be away from home for a long period of time. Jim said that really it is only when the ASA Religion Section is on the first day or second day of the ASA meetings that this becomes problematic. It was a problem in 2014 when the ASA Religion Section Day fell on the first day of ASA, and it was agreed at that time that perhaps ASR should meet during the two days after the ASA Religion Section day rather than keeping to the policy of always meeting two days before the ASA Religion Section day. The next time this will be an issue is in 2018 when ASA and ASR will be meeting in Philadelphia. ASR had tentatively planned, following previous practice, on having its meeting during the two days before the ASA Religion Section day, but because the ASA Religion Section Day will fall on the first day of ASA in 2018 and on the second day of ASA in 2019, members of Council agreed that it might be best to move the dates of ASR's Annual Meeting to the two days after the ASA Religion Section Day in those years. It was agreed, however, that in no circumstance should ASR hold its Annual Meeting after the ASA meetings have concluded. In other words, it would be okay to hold the ASR meeting after the ASA Religion Section day when the ASA Religion Section day falls on the first or second

day of the ASA meetings, but the ASR meetings should not be scheduled for after the ASA Religion Section day when the Religion Section day falls on the third or fourth day of ASA. Such a view is supported by the attitudes of the membership as expressed in the 2014 ASR Membership Survey.

Grace Yukich, the 2015 Program Chair, then presented her Program Chair report. Melissa thanked Grace for serving as Program Chair, and Grace thanked members of Council for being so supportive as she was putting the Program together. Grace said that she tried to organize as many panels herself beforehand. Grace suggested that one way to organize Author-Meets-Critics sessions in the future would be for the Program Chair to contact the publishers and ask the publishers which books they think would be fitting to feature in the Program. Melissa suggested that perhaps we should consider asking someone besides the Program Chair (e.g., an assistant to the Program Chair or the book review editor) to organize the Author-Meets-Critics sessions. Grace also brought up the fact that it was difficult to get people to serve as conveners and suggested that perhaps it should be an expectation that members of Council will convene at least one session during the conference since they are expected to be at the meeting already. A couple members of Council suggested that we encourage those who propose sessions for the conference to consider inviting graduate students as well as more seasoned scholars to be on their panels so that they are not composed simply of those who have become well-known for their focus in a particular topic area. Melissa suggested that maybe panel organizers should be mandated to include a graduate student on their panels or among the presenters.

The Program Chair's Report was followed by Editor Gerardo Marti's report on the journal. He started off by thanking Penny Edgell and Kevin Dougherty for serving as Associate Editors. He then summarized his report (which can be found in the 2014 Council Packet), and stated that he's been somewhat disappointed with the quality of the reviews he receives from manuscript reviewers. He stated that reviewers have tended to not be very critical, which then makes his job difficult because he would like to accept only those manuscripts that are of the highest quality. Gerardo reported that he's taking a number of steps to increase the number of citations of SOR articles and improve the overall impact factor of the journal. He said that he's asked OUP to offer more free articles on the journal webpage, with more frequent rotations of those articles. He also asked ASR to consider taking a number of additional actions to improve exposure to the journal, such as distributing a Table of Contents to ASR members by email, notifying ASR members of Advance Access articles by email, and encouraging authors to distribute their research to colleagues more widely. Trish Thomas stated that, for its part, OUP does offer electronic Table of Contents alerts for ASR members who sign up for it, but OUP cannot automatically enroll people to receive these alerts.

Melissa and Milagros proposed that during the next cycle for membership renewal we offer people the option of opting out of receiving the printed paper copy of the journal. Milagros motioned that this take place as soon as possible, the motion was seconded, and all voted in favor. Jim said that he would implement this recommendation before the next membership renewal cycle.

Melissa and Jim then asked Trish Thomas to leave the room while Rebecca Kim and the Council discussed the Publication Committee's report which summarized the proposals ASR received from various prospective publishers of the journal. Because December 2016 marks the end of ASR's current contract period with Oxford University Press, it was important for the Publications Committee to solicit proposals from a variety of prospective publishers so the

Publications Committee and Council could make an informed decision about whether to remain with Oxford University Press by re-entering a new contract, or move to a different publisher. Jim stated that OUP would very much like to renew the contract with ASR, and that OUP would be willing to compose a competitive proposal if it could learn in better details what the other publishers' proposals contain. Rebecca Kim then summarized the Publication Committee's report.

Trish Thomas, representing Oxford University Press, then presented the Publisher's Report and informed us that OUP is very interested in retaining *Sociology of Religion* as one of its journals. A full description of the contents of these reports is available in the 2015 Council Packet.

In the absence of Brian Stark (chair of the Membership Committee), Damon Mayrl (chair of the International Liaison Committee), Orit Avishai (chair of the Fichter Award Committee), and Kevin McElmurry (chair of the McNamara Student Paper Award Committee), Jim Cavendish then summarized these committee reports. These reports were then followed by Alex Bierman's Distinguished Article Award Committee report, and Rhys Williams' Lifetime Achievement Award Committee report.

Melissa Wilde thanked everyone for their service to ASR and their contributions to a successful meeting and adjourned the meeting at 8:15 p.m.

**ASR GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**  
**Saturday, August 22, 2015**  
**11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.**

Present: James Cavendish (as Executive Officer), Lori Beaman (as President-Elect), and several other members of Council, of the Standing Committees, and approximately 40 members.

The meeting was called to order at 11:50 a.m. by Jim Cavendish, who welcomed everyone, and summarized briefly the highlights of the reports that were presented at the First Council Meeting. (Readers of these minutes can refer to the 2015 Council Packet available on the ASR website to see the highlights.) Jim stated that one of the goals of the Development Committee is to increase the investment accounts of the Association to the \$1 million mark because once we attain this goal, the Association will no longer have to pay any fees for the management of the investment accounts. Furthermore, a \$1 million endowment would produce sufficient interest to increase the funding given through the Fichter Research grants.

Grace Yukich spoke briefly about her experience as Program Chair and expressed her appreciation to all of those who contributed to the program. A couple people in the audience stated that they appreciated the fact that there was an overlap in the days that ASA and ASR were meeting. Jim then thanked Grace for the work she did as Program Chair.

Gerardo stated that the number of submissions to the journal has gone up substantially, which is good because it allows the editorial team to be more selective in the articles it accepts. Gerardo said that he doesn't believe that the journal will become an online journal, but the journal has explored the option of open-access articles.

Brian Starks, chair of the Membership Committee, said that the Mentoring Lunch at this year's meeting was very popular among our graduate student members. He also announced the Women of ASR event that was scheduled for that evening.

One member asked why ASR doesn't approach the McNamara Student Paper Award the same way that SSSR approaches its graduate student paper award as a way of increasing graduate student involvement in our Annual meeting. He stated that the review committee in SSSR selects the best paper from among papers that had been submitted for presentation at the Annual Meeting. If someone hadn't submitted the paper for presentation, then the paper wouldn't be considered for the award. Jim Cavendish said that this was an interesting idea and perhaps something that Council should consider during one of its upcoming meetings.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

**ASR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**SECOND COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Sunday, August 23, 2015**  
**7:00 – 8:15 a.m.**  
**Renaissance Blackstone Chicago Hotel, Chicago, Illinois**

Present: Lori Beaman (as incoming President), Melissa Wilde (as outgoing or Past President), , James Cavendish (as Executive Officer), Grace Yukich (as Program Chair), Gerardo Marti (as editor), voting Council members Christopher Bader (2016), Evelyn Bush (2016), Milagros Pena (2017), Mary Ellen Konieczny (2018), Lisa Pearce (2018), Jeremy Uecker (2018), and non-voting (outgoing) Council member Kevin Dougherty (2015).

Absent: Michael Emerson (incoming President-Elect), and voting Council members Richard Flory (2017) and Guiseppe Giordan (2017).

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 a.m. by incoming President Lori Beaman, who asked everyone to go around and introduce themselves. She congratulated Michael Emerson on his election as President and welcomed the new members of the Council.

Lori Beaman then asked Grace Yukich to discuss how she thought the Annual Meeting went. Grace said that she thought the meeting overall went very well, but noted that many of the sessions were not well attended. Jim Cavendish stated that, aside from one session in which only the presenters were in attendance, attendance at sessions ranged from sessions with as few as 5 audience members (not including the presenters) to sessions with as many as 42 audience members (i.e., the ASR/ASA Joint Session on Religion and Race in American). Five sessions had only 5 audience members, nine sessions had only 6-7 audience members, five sessions had 8-10 audience members, eight sessions had 11-15 audience members, and the remainder had over 15 audience members. Milagros Pena stated that she doesn't think that the low attendance is due to overlap with ASA.

Melissa Wilde stated that although the mentoring lunch seemed to be a great success, the ASA Religion Section has begun a practice of matching mentors and mentees. Kevin Dougherty stated that this matching practice of the ASA Religion Section didn't go as well as they

originally hoped because they didn't properly screen the people invited to serve as mentors. Some mentees, for instance, had more publications than the mentors they had been assigned to. Kevin said that, if ASR ever considers matching mentees with mentors, it would be important to screen the mentors.

Milagros (Milly) Pena stated that she thinks it is better to have "mentoring events" such as our mentoring lunch rather than one-on-one mentors because there are inherent risks of a graduate student having a mentor outside the circle of his/her advisors at their home university.

Lori then described the theme of next year's Annual Meeting, and stated that it will be important to announce this theme and the Call for Papers in the Seattle area so that many scholars and students residing in the Seattle area will want to participate.

Lori presented her goals for the following year, which include:

1. Attracting more graduate students and international scholars to join ASR and attend our Annual Meeting. She said that it is particularly important to try to attract international scholars from Latin America.
2. The unfinished business carrying over from the previous Council meeting. These items included:
  - a) a proposal that the Gallagher Travel Grants be separated into funds set aside for international scholars and funds set aside for graduate students. Jim suggested that this issue might be resolved simply by clarifying how the website presents these awards and possibly also be sending out email communications that reiterate the fact that these travel funds are available to graduate students as well as international scholars.
  - b) a proposal from Kevin Dougherty that an ad hoc committee be created that would be concerned with issues related specifically to student members. Kevin said that this could start out as an ad hoc committee, and then if it seems like if it is something that should be made permanent, we could revise the By-Laws to make it a Standing Committee. Jim stated that if the proposed committee is to be composed of graduate students, before it could become a Standing Committee we would have to revise the Constitution which states that the Standing Committees are to be composed of regular members, not graduate student members. Kevin stated that a graduate student committee could be charged with: 1) brainstorming about ways to recruit more graduate students to the Association; 2) planning mentorship events; and 3) recommending to the Program Committee which of the graduate students who applied for the Gallagher Travel Grants should be considered for funding. Lori said that she would move forward in forming a graduate student committee to serve on an ad hoc, experimental basis, and that she knew a graduate student would be very media savvy and would be probably be willing to chair such a committee. Melissa Wilde motioned for the creation of such an ad hoc committee, the motion was seconded, and all voted in favor.
  - c) whether to award the Distinguished Article Award to the best article in the field of sociology of religion or to the best article that was published in *Sociology of Religion*. Milly stated that if the award was given to an article published in the journal it would highlight the journal and encourage people to publish in it. Kevin Dougherty said that he would really like to see the award given to an ASR member, and Chris Bader said that he thought it made the most sense to give the award to an

article published in our journal. Melissa Wilde stated that she likes the idea of giving it to an article published in our journal because the ASA Religion Section and SSSR are already giving Chris Bader motioned that the Distinguished Article Award go to an article that has appeared in the *Sociology of Religion* journal. Milly seconded, and all members of Council, except Mary Ellen, voted in favor of this motion.

- d) the need to review our contract with Brill and the future of the *Religion and the Social Order* book series. Lori said that Brill is keen on continuing to publish the series, and because Bill Swatos has announced that he is discontinuing his editorship of the series, she will solicit applications for a new series editor. It was agreed that Lori Beaman would compose a call for a new editor of the book series, and that she would summons the support of an ad hoc committee to select this editor. Melissa, Mary Ellen, Kevin, and Milly then discussed the pros and cons of having a monograph series, but Melissa said that based on the Publications Committee's conversations with Rich Wood (who is the co-editor of a monograph series in religion and politics), having a monograph series is an awful lot of work. Melissa made a motion that Council authorize Lori Beaman to begin a search for a new editor of the *Religion and Social Order* book series. The motion was seconded, and all voted in favor.

There being no other business, Lori Beaman adjourned the meeting at 8:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James Cavendish  
Executive Officer