

## Faith & Globalisation Initiative Newsletter - November/December 2011

As the semester wraps up at several of our lead Faith & Globalisation universities, we've got an enormous amount of updates to share on the exciting work being done inside and outside the classrooms.

- **McGill's shared topic streams/recordings**
- **Italian seminars**
- **Yale lectures**
- **Fourah Bay launch & book update**

### McGill University Distributes In-class Insights Around the World

This semester saw McGill host renowned scholars José Casanova and Charles Taylor for two in-depth conversations on religion, secularism and human rights. Organised by Dean Ellen Aitken and Dr. Daniel Cere, the two sessions covered topics including the role of intra-civilisational clashes, the availability of overlapping sources for agreement on human rights within different religions, and the sacralisation of territory and its implications for peace. McGill live-streamed both events on the web to ensure that anyone interested in these topics could access the insights of these important scholars.

**[But if you missed the live-stream, don't worry - McGill has the recordings of both events up on their website, which you can access here.](#)**

### Faith & Globalisation Initiative Italian Seminars on "The Challenge of Education"

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation, in partnership with the Fondazione Sussidiarietà, has just concluded a series of public seminars in universities around Italy. Looking at topics ranging from "Religion & Development" to "Human Rights, Diversity and Inter-religious Dialogue," these seminars brought together leading Italian scholars, religious leaders and NGO heads for lively discussions on issues of immediate relevance to Italy and countries across the world.

Tony Blair spoke in Milan on "Religion in the Public Square," where he emphasised the importance of protecting religious freedom for all democracies and the importance of faith leaders' influence in establishing religiously tolerant societies:

*"Religious, secular, and political people need to start talking with each other. For, as globalisation pushes the world together online, and in person through migration, the necessity of finding ways for people of different faiths to co-exist peacefully becomes urgent."*

[You can read Tony Blair's speech in full here.](#)

### **Tony Blair and John Kerry visit Yale to Discuss Religion and Liberal Democracies**

We were honoured that the final class session of Yale's "Faith & Globalization" class saw Senator John Kerry and Tony Blair serving as guest-lecturers on the topic of religion's role in liberal democracies alongside Professor Miroslav Volf. Touching on both historical and contemporary issues within the USA, UK, Egypt and beyond, the current, and former, politicians each shared their perspectives and experiences on this timely topic.

In his opening lecture, Tony Blair said:

*"The correct and welcome push towards greater democracy round the globe increases the urgency. We need religion-friendly democracy and democracy-friendly religion. Those of us inspired by our faith must have the right to speak out on issues that concern us and in the name of beliefs derived from our faith. At the same time our voice cannot predominate over the basic democratic system that functions equally for all.*

*"In turn, this should lead to a vital debate about the nature of democracy, a debate all the more critical as we witness the revolutions of Arabia and North Africa. The essence of democracy is that it is pluralistic. It is inherently secular, even if rooted in cultures that are profoundly religious."*

[The session was live-streamed on the web. You can watch a recording here.](#)

### **Book Drive Continues as Semester Begins at Fourah Bay College**

The book drive for Fourah Bay College, the most recent addition to the FGI lead university programme, continues as the academic year begins this month. The programme at Fourah Bay - which includes five modules on topics such as "Gender, Faith & Globalisation" and "African Traditional Religions and Globalisation" - will be formally launched this Friday. Assistance comes from the newly-formed student group, the "Tony Blair Faith Family," who will also be launching their research project analysing degrees of religious tolerance in Sierra Leone.

Over 50 books have been ordered for Fourah Bay's FGI programme, but they are still in need of more.

[Please buy a book for Fourah Bay through our Amazon bookstore by clicking here.](#)

### **Find Out More**

To find out more about what is going on in the Faith & Globalisation Network, including information on our recent sessions at the American Academy of Religion's annual meeting, [please visit our pages for new blogs, multi-media resources and interesting debate.](#)

With best wishes,

Drew Collins  
University Programme Manager