Call for Papers:
Religion on the Plate: Critical Perspectives on Food & Religion
Conference organized by the Graduate Students of the Department of Religion, Columbia University in the City of New York

Conference Date: April 2025 (date TBD)

Submission Deadline: 20th January, 2025

Across religious traditions, food constantly emerges as an act, agent, practice, process, symbol, object, site, and mechanism through which religious selves, boundaries and communities are made and unmade.

The entanglements of historic and contemporary cosmologies and sacred traditions with food practices call for a framing of food beyond the limiting binary of the secular and the religious. Religion plays significant roles in how we conceive of and engage with questions of sustenance and the environment. From the politics of growth and production, to issues of food sovereignty and land use, as well as ecological relationships and bodily practices, religion mediates our relationships to food in fundamental ways. Examining these interplays allows for a critical site from which to trace broader networks of power and the political economies implicated within them, especially in the midst of settler colonialism, capitalist extraction, and neoliberal technologies.

Questions of the human, and its shifting counterpart, the non-human, sit at the intersections of political, religious, and technological relations, and food becomes meaningful, contested, resignified, and politicized within these complex entanglements. These bodies—their relations and their limits—are located at the confluence of the cosmological and the material in food production and consumption. This invites attention to questions of selfhood, subjectivity, identity, race, caste, and gender.

At the brink of planetary extinction, and in the backdrop of widespread food injustice imbricated in the industrialisation and commodification of food production and practices through the force of capital, can religious imaginations offer reparative ethical possibilities around food production and consumption? How do religious imaginations of food both collide and collude with neoliberal world-making projects?

The graduate students of Columbia University's Department of Religion invite paper proposals which examine the relationships between food and religion for the department's annual graduate student conference to be held in April 2025.

Below is a list of potential topics, themes, and intersections on which we encourage critical investigation, reflection, and analysis across disciplines:

- Politics of religious food production and consumption
- Food ethics in religion and spirituality
- Food and religious identity
- Indigenous food sovereignty, foodways, and ecological movements
- Food and placemaking
- Diet and religion
- Religion and ecology
- Relationships to land and nature
- Agricultural practices and foodways
- Sustainability practices
- Human/Non-human relationships
- Effects of colonialism on relationships between religion, food, and community
- Reading food in literature
- Encountering food in religious texts
- Wellness culture and practices
- Food, healing, and spirituality
- Food and ritual
- Food practices, gender, and embodiment
- Food, caste, race, and religion
- Practices and traditions of animal rearing, slaughter, and/or sacrifice
- Commensality across traditions and communities
- Food and memory
- Reparative and restorative foodways
- Food, health and religion
- Food futures

Submission Guidelines

- Email a 250 word abstract (docx. or pdf. only) by January 20, 2025 to columbiareligion@gmail.com.
- Please include the title of your paper, your institutional affiliation (university/research center, if any) and graduate program (masters/doctoral), contact information, and up to five relevant keywords. Please mention the desired preference for in-person or Zoom participation, which will be taken into consideration.
- We will respond to abstract submissions by February 15, 2025.
- Selected presenters must submit a draft of paper by March 10, 2025 and final draft of paper by March 31, 2025.
- The conference will be held in April 2025 (Date TBD) in-person and virtually at Columbia University in New York City.

- Presenters will be organized onto panels based on shared themes.
- Each panelist will have 20 minutes to present, and 10 minutes to take Q & A.
- Each panel will have a respondent who will present concluding remarks and questions, followed by open questions and conversation.