



British Sociological Association  
Sociology of Religion Study Group

# ECR/PGR Workshop 2022

## Disruption, Crisis and Continuity in Academia

Thursday, 7 July 2022

13:00-16:30 (BST)

Online

### Guest Speakers

Yinxuan Huang, London School of Theology

Saleema Burney, University of Birmingham

Shanon Shah, King's College London

Renasha Khan, King's College London

*...and Panel Discussion Facilitated by Rachael Shillitoe, University of Birmingham*

### About the Event

This half-day online workshop will explore how early career academics experience disruption, crisis, and continuity in their research, as well as in their academic journeys and careers. After our guest speakers present their journeys and respond to the Q&As, there will be an interactive panel discussion reflecting on a variety of post-doctoral careers.

### Schedule

13:00-13:20	Networking Lunch
13:20-13:30	Break
13:30-13:45	Opening Remarks
13:45-15:45	Presentations and Q&A
15:45-15:55	Coffee Break
15:55-16:30	Panel Discussion

### Details and Registration

Please email Gillian Chu at [agc22@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:agc22@st-andrews.ac.uk) with any questions and to book your place for free. Booking is essential.

**Please note: this event is only open to SocRel and BSA Members.**

For further details about SocRel, visit [www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/study-groups/sociology-of-religion-study-group/](http://www.britsoc.co.uk/groups/study-groups/sociology-of-religion-study-group/)

For further details about BSA, visit [www.britsoc.co.uk](http://www.britsoc.co.uk)

# Guest Speakers and Facilitator



**Yinxuan Huang**

**London School of Theology**

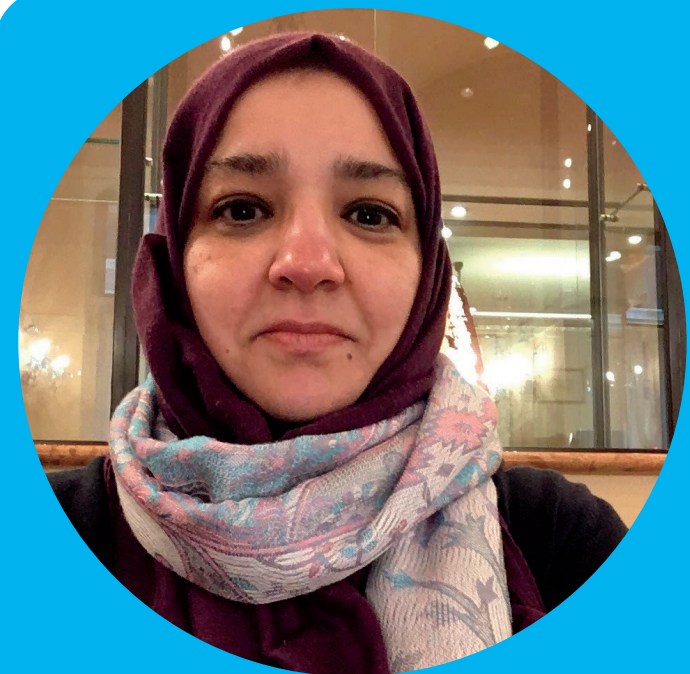
 @HYinxuan

 Yinxuan Huang

Dr Yinxuan Huang (PhD, University of Manchester, 2016) is a Research Fellow at the London School of Theology. He is currently coordinating a project on Christianity and the Ethnic Chinese Community in Britain funded by the British and Foreign Bible Society. His main research interests are in sociology of religion, Chinese Christianity, East Asian diasporic communities, and survey methodology.

## **The Messier the Better: Exploring the Value of Crisis**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was already in a crisis. My academic life was deeply haunted by a mindset of 'publish or perish', which significantly sabotaged my passion and personal development. In this presentation, I will share how the pandemic enabled me to find an expected breakthrough in my career. More specifically, using my own experience in the past two years as an example, I will discuss three ways in which PhD students and early career researchers may benefit from disruptions or crises. First, crises will enable us to think outside the box and explore creative alternatives. Second, crises are almost always associated with new career and research pathways. Third, crises are powerful generators of essential bridging and linking social capital within and outside the academia. Combined, winning beyond a crisis is not unrealistic if we can find transformational opportunity signals in the midst of transitory noise.



**Saleema Burney**

**University of Birmingham**

 @BurneySaleema

Dr Saleema Burney (PhD, SOAS, University of London, 2020) is a Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham. She is part of a multidisciplinary team of researchers that conduct social scientific and humanities-based research on the relationship between science and religion in society. Her research interests include studying and fostering cross-community relations in urban settings.

## **Navigating the Field, Creating Inclusive Spaces: Disruption, Crisis and Continuity Through a BAME Lens**

Religion, both as an academic discipline and as a personal practice, continues to attract much public interest. In addition, both the academic study of Religion, and religion as personal faith, have much to contribute to our fractured societies today. In this session, I will share with you my own experiences of disruption, crisis and continuity as a minority ethnic woman navigating academia for over 10 years. My research interests include 'lived religion' in the West, and how individuals negotiate religious identities in post-secular societies. I believe that robust research on the role of religion in society can inform public policy and perceptions, and that scholars of religion have a significant contribution to make. To this end, I have devoted a much of my PhD to studying the everyday, inter-community interactions between London residents originating from different cultural and religious backgrounds. In my presentation, I'll look back at my doctoral and post-doctoral career journey, and share with PG colleagues some insights that I hope will encourage passion and purpose in their own particular study of religion journeys.

# Guest Speakers and Facilitator



**Shanon Shah**  
**King's College London**

@shanonshah

@shanonshah

Dr Shanon Shah (PhD, King's College London, 2015) teaches religious studies part-time at the University of London's Divinity programme, serves as the Director of Faith for the Climate, and conducts research on minority religions and alternative spiritualities at the Information Network Focus on Religious Movements (Inform). His research interests are ethnographic study of religion, contemporary Islam and Christianity, new religious movements, gender and sexuality, popular culture, and social movements.

## Navigating a Portfolio Career amid Multiple Crises

Back in 2019, when I finished my 12-month fixed-term lectureship at King's College London's Department of Theology and Religious Studies, the world was a very different place. Back then, I was slowly and painfully coming to terms with the realisation that the doors to a permanent academic post were slowly and surely going to shut for me. My post-lectureship job hunt was also disrupted by a family crisis in Malaysia which forced me to return there from December 2019 to February 2020. Barely a month after my return to Britain, the coronavirus pandemic forced the nation and most of the world into lockdown. I felt incredibly fortunate, however, to have landed two part-time, fixed-term posts which allowed me to work remotely in the following months. More than two years on, I now manage a portfolio career which includes two permanent part-time posts and a few smaller, short-term paid projects. Whilst the pandemic and a continuing family crisis in Malaysia have not made this journey easy, I have also arrived at a more fulfilling and rewarding place than I could have ever imagined, personally and professionally. In this workshop, I will share and discuss how my academic training as an ethnographer and a sociologist of religion has helped me to understand, analyse and act upon the unpredictable turning points in this journey. In many ways, my portfolio of current work allows me new and creative ways to integrate my different skills, interests and passions as a scholar-activist in the area of religion and social justice. There is no one-size-fits-all professional pathway, particularly not for post-doctoral scholars of religion, but I hope my sharing can offer comfort, solidarity and practical guidance for early career researchers and doctoral candidates in the social sciences, arts and humanities.



**Renasha Khan**  
**King's College London**

@RenashaKhan

@renasha

Renasha Khan (PhD Candidate, King's College London) is currently leading schemes in decolonising curricula across the Arts and Humanities School at King's College London. Her research focuses on the ways social media is redefining what it means to be a British Muslim woman in the UK today. Renasha was a documentary producer and has produced films for international broadcasters (BBC and National Geographic).

## Being a Disruptor: Professional Transitions

This talk will explore my experiences as a person of colour and a media creative entering the academic world.



**Rachael Shillitoe**  
**University of Birmingham**

@rshillitoe

Dr Rachael Shillitoe (PhD, University of Worcester, 2018) is a Leverhulme Early Career fellow at the University of Birmingham, working on a project exploring everyday morality in childhood. Her research is primarily in the sociology of religion and childhood studies. She is completing a monograph: *Negotiating Religion and Nonreligion in Childhood* (under contract with Palgrave Macmillan).