

Post-Secular Britain?
Religion, Secularity and Cultural Agency

Annual Conference of the *German Society for the Study of British Cultures*,
November 20 - 22, 2008, Carl von Ossietzky Universität Oldenburg.

Since the end of the Cold War, and even more so since '9/11', geopolitical constellations appear to offer renewed incentives for casting social and political conflicts and affiliations in religious terms, and there are those who see in this the symptoms of a new, post-secular phase in European societies.

In British culture, the religious encoding of cultural conflict has a long tradition, from the Reformation and the Civil War to the Glorious Revolution and Protestant Succession, from the Penal Laws and the worlds of dissent to Catholic emancipation and the long debates about Disestablishment, and from the many variants of regional sectarian conflict right down to the London bombings of July 7, 2005.

What do we make of this religious encoding of the cultural? How do we have to read it? Can we simply translate religious terms and lines of conflict into secular ones and vice versa? What difference does (or did) it make, whether one's position and actions are cast in religious or in secular terms? What constraints does it put on one's scope of action, what options does it open up? Beyond the personal choices of individuals, one way of accounting for the attractions of such religious encoding is to assume that it may open up spheres of agency which a secular encoding cannot offer.

This conference aims to shed light on such questions, and it invites contributions that would test this hypothesis and engage with the cultural impact of the specific relations and tensions between the religious and the secular, across a broad range of contemporary and historical examples.

Potential areas of inquiry include

- Cultural codes and concepts of religion
- Religion, regions, and the production of cultural difference
- Religion, tolerance and the state
- Religious coding of political debates
- History of secularity and of religious pluralism in Britain
- Religion, gender and the public sphere

If you wish to present a paper, please send a brief abstract (not longer than 350 words, ready to be published), which includes the title of your suggested presentation, your name and your institutional affiliation, to the conference organizers:

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Deadline for abstracts is May 1, 2008.

General registration for **all participants** will be possible online once our conference website is up and running by **mid-February 2008**.