

J. BARTON SCOTT

Departments of Historical Studies and the Study of Religion
University of Toronto
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EDUCATION

- 2010 Ph.D., Religion, Duke University
 Dissertation: “Divine Exposures: Religion and Imposture in Colonial India”
- 2001 B. A., Religion and English Literature, Swarthmore College, High Honors

ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

- 2025– **Professor, University of Toronto**
 [Department of Historical Studies](#), UTM (Primary Appointment)
 [Department for the Study of Religion](#), UTSG (Graduate Appointment)
- 2021–2025 **Associate Professor, University of Toronto**
- 2015–2021 **Assistant Professor, University of Toronto**
- 2010–2015 **Assistant Professor, Montana State University** (Bozeman, MT)
 Department of History, Philosophy, and Religious Studies

RESEARCH & TEACHING INTERESTS

Global South Asia | Modern Hinduism | Secularism | History of the Study of Religion | Critical Theory |
Anticolonial Thought | British Empire | Media & Material Religion | Print Culture | Religion & Law

PUBLICATIONS

Books

- 2023 [*Slandering the Sacred: Blasphemy Law and Religious Affect in Colonial India*](#). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, in the “Class 200: New Studies in Religion” series. Delhi: [Permanent Black](#), in the “Hedgehog and Fox: History and Politics” series, co-published with Ashoka University. Lahore: [Folio Books](#), 2024.
- 2016 [*Spiritual Despots: Modern Hinduism and the Genealogies of Self-Rule*](#). Chicago: University of Chicago Press), in the “South Asia Across the Disciplines” series co-published with Columbia University and University of California Presses. Delhi: [Primus Books](#), 2017.
 Sole Honorable Mention for the American Comparative Literature Association’s Harry Levin Prize for an Outstanding First Book, 2018
- 2016 [*Imagining the Public in Modern South Asia*](#). Edited by Brannon Ingram, J. Barton Scott, and SherAli Tareen. London: Routledge. From a 2015 special issue of *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*.

Articles and Chapters [* peer-reviewed]

- *2024 [“Heterodoxies of the Body: Death, Secularism, and the Corpse of Raja Rammohun Roy,”](#) *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 66 (4): 729-59.
- *2024 [“Is Anglicanism a Religion?: Empire, Establishmentarianism, and Macaulay’s Critique of Gladstone,”](#) Special issue on “Transimperial Religion,” eds. Sebastian Lecourt and Winter Jade Werner. *Victorian Studies* 66 (2): 255-70.
- *2023 [“Insulting Religion: Penal Secularism and the Government of Feeling,”](#) *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 91 (1): 35–50.
- *2019 [“Translated Liberties: Karsandas Mulji’s *Travels in England* and the Anthropology of the Victorian Self,”](#) *Modern Intellectual History* 16 (3): 803-33.
- *2019 [“A Commonwealth of Affection: Modern Hinduism and the Cultural History of the Study of Religion.”](#) In *Constructing Nineteenth-Century Religion: Literary, Historical, and Religious Studies in Dialogue*, eds., Joshua King and Winter Jade Werner, pp. 46-64. “Literature, Religion, and Postsecular Studies.” Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- 2019 [“Only Connect: Three Reflections on the Sociality of Secularism.”](#) *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry* 6 (1): 48-69.
- 2016 [“The Supernatural and Colonialism.”](#) In *Super Religion*, ed. Jeffrey J. Kripal, *Religion: Sources, Perspectives, Methodologies*, Vol. 9, pp.277-91. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- *2015 [“How to Defame a God: Public Selfhood in the Maharaj Libel Case.”](#) *South Asia: The Journal of South Asian Studies* 38 (3): 387-402.
- 2015 [“What is a Public? Notes from South Asia.”](#) Co-authored with Brannon Ingram. *South Asia: The Journal of South Asian Studies* 38 (3): 357-70.
- *2015 [“Aryas Unbound: Print Hinduism and the Cultural Regulation of Religious Offense.”](#) *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 35, no. 2 (2015): 294-309.
- *2015 [“Luther in the Tropics: Karsandas Mulji and the Colonial ‘Reformation’ of Hinduism.”](#) *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 83 (1): 181-209.
- *2014 [“Unsaintly Virtue: Swami Dayananda Saraswati and Modern Hindu Hagiography.”](#) *Journal of Hindu Studies* 7 (3): 371-91.
- *2010 [“Comic Book Karma: Visual Mythologies of the Hindu Modern.”](#) In “Inscriptions,” ed. Jeremy Stolow and Lisa Gitelman, special issue of *Postscripts: The Journal of Sacred Texts and Contemporary Worlds* 4 (2): 177-97.
- *2009 [“Miracle Publics: Theosophy, Christianity, and the Coulomb Affair.”](#) *History of Religions* 49 (2): 172-96.

Culture Criticism, Book Reviews, and Public Writing

- 2025 [Review of Vinayak Chaturvedi’s *Hindutva and Violence: V. D. Savarkar and the Politics of History*](#) (Permanent Black/ SUNY Press, 2022). *Journal of Religion* 105 (1): 103-105.
- 2025 [“Marginalia Book Forum on SherAli Tareen’s *Perilous Intimacies: An Introduction*.”](#) Edited [forum on *Perilous Intimacies*](#), with Supriya Gandhi, Ilyse Morgenstein-Fuerst, Elaine Fisher, Noah Salomon, and SherAli Tareen. [Marginalia Review of Books](#).

- 2024 [“The Secular History of Religious Feelings: A Response.”](#) [Forum on J. Barton Scott’s *Slandering the Sacred*](#), with Arvind-Pal Mandair, Tisa Wenger, Deonnie Moodie, Marko Geslani, and Anand Vivek Taneja. [Marginalia Review of Books](#).
- 2024 [“Heretic](#), (dir. Scott Black and Brian Woods.” *Journal of Religion & Film* 28 (2), Article 19.
- 2024 [“The Surprising History of Global Blasphemy Law.”](#) *The Immanent Frame*. 15 April.
- 2023 [“Lost Ladies](#), (dir. Kiran Rao, 2023).” *Journal of Religion & Film* 27 (2), Article 12.
- 2023 [“Kill](#) (dir. Nikhil Nagesh Bhat, 2023).” *Journal of Religion & Film* 27 (2), Article 13
- 2023 [“The Convert](#) (dir. Lee Tamahori),” *Journal of Religion & Film* 27 (2), Article 14.
- 2023 [Podcast Interview](#) on *Slandering the Sacred*. New Books Network: Indian Religions.
- 2023 “Book Excerpt: [A New Book Explores the Cultural, Intellectual, and Legal Pre-History of India’s Blasphemy Law](#).” *Scroll.in*, 24 April 2023.
- 2022 [“Venus](#) (dir. Jaume Balagueró), *Journal of Religion & Film* 26 (2), Article 21.
- 2022 [“Werkmeister Harmonies](#) (dir. Béla Tarr and Ágnes Hranitzky, 2000), *Journal of Religion & Film* 26 (2), Article 20.
- 2022 [“223 Wick](#) (dir. Sergio Myers, 2022), *Journal of Religion & Film* 26 (2), Article 17.
- 2021 [“Religion in Lovecraft Country](#),” *The Revealer: A Review of Religion and Media*, February.
- 2020 [“Mucho Mucho Amor, Much Mucho Religion](#),” *The Revealer: A Review of Religion and Media*, October.
- 2020 [Review of Richard S. Weiss, *The Emergence of Modern Hinduism: Religion on the Margins of Colonialism*](#) (University of California Press, 2019). *Journal of Asian Studies* 79 (2): 529–31.
- 2018 [“Reason \(Vivek\)](#) (dir. Anand Patwardhan, 2018). *Journal of Religion & Film* 22 (2), Article 13.
- 2018 [“Ad Vitam](#) (dir. Thomas Calley, 2018) *Journal of Religion & Film* 22 (2), Article 12.
- 2017 [“Les Affamés](#) (dir. Robin Aubert, 2017). *Journal of Religion & Film* 21(2), Article 11.
- 2017 [Review of Timothy Dobe, *Hindu Christian Faqir: Modern Monks, Global Christianity, and Indian Sainthood*](#) (Oxford University Press, 2015). *History of Religions* 57 (2): 225-227.
- 2016 [Comment on Benjamin Berger, *Law’s Religion: Religious Difference and the Claims of Constitutionalism*](#) (University of Toronto Press, 2015). *The Immanent Frame*. 20 July.

HONORS, AWARDS, GRANTS, & FELLOWSHIPS

- 2025 Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Fellow, The Huntington Library (Pasadena, CA)
- 2024-2027 Social Science and Humanities Research Council, Insight Grant (“Gurutopias: Global Hinduism in Occult Los Angeles”)
- 2023-2024 Chancellor Jackman Research Fellow in the Humanities, University of Toronto Jackman Humanities Institute (12-month)
- 2021-2024 Social Science and Humanities Research Council, Insight Grant (“The Global Blasphemer”)
- 2019-2020 Visiting Scholar, Center for Religion and Media, New York University

2018	University of Toronto-Mississauga Annual Research Prize in the Humanities (one of three research awards, per three divisions of the faculty, awarded annually)
2018	Harry Levin Prize, Honorable Mention: Sole Runner Up for the Best First Book Award from the American Comparative Literature Association
2016-2018	Connaught New Researcher Award
2016-2017	University of Toronto-Mississauga Research and Scholarly Activity Fund Grant
2013-2014	Mellon-Humboldt SIAS Summer Institute, National Humanities Center and Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin
2012-2013	Scholarship and Creativity Grant, Montana State University
2007-2008	American Institute of Indian Studies, Junior Fellowship
2007-2008	American Institute of Pakistan Studies, Research Fellowship
2003-2007	James B. Duke Fellowship, Duke University
2003-2004	Andrew W. Mellon Fellowship for Humanistic Studies

RECENT LECTURES AND PRESENTATIONS

Invited Lectures

2025	"The Secular Construction of 295-C: Keynote Panel." All Pakistan Conference on Blasphemy Politics. Lahore/Zoom. 26 Jan.
2025	"'The Negro Our Aryan Brother': Race, Caste, and Hindu Cosmopolitanism in the Transcolonial 1920s." South Asia Seminar, University of Chicago. 16 Jan.
2024	"Blasphemy, Censorship, and the Indian Public: J. Barton Scott in Conversation with Arvind Rajagopal." NYU Center for Religion and Media. New York, NY. 1 April.
2024	"Wounded Sentiments: Religious Hate Speech and the Making of South Asian Secularism." Lahore University of Management Sciences. Lahore, PB. 24 Jan.
2024	"Wounded Sentiments: Religious Hate Speech and the Making of South Asian Secularism." Institute of Business Administration—Karachi. Karachi, SD. 22 Jan.
2024	"Slandering the Sacred: Free Speech and Religious Feelings in Colonial India." Ibn Khaldun Society, Department of History and Pakistan Studies, University of Punjab. Lahore, PB. 15 Jan.
2024	"Slandering the Sacred: Religious Affect in Colonial India." Lahore ThinkFest. Lahore, PB. 14 Jan.
2023	"Secularism, Emotion, and the Law in South Asia: A Roundtable with Neeti Nair and Barton Scott." Northwestern University. Evanston, IL. 7 November.
2023	"How the Indian Penal Code Came to Canada: Law, Religion, and the Global Lives of Empire." Weatherhead Center for International Affairs, Harvard University. Cambridge, MA. March 27
2022	"A Postal Slapping: Jains, Arya Samajists, and the Documentary Practice Culture of Religious Controversy in Nineteenth Century India." Beyond Boundaries: A Celebration of the Work of John E. Cort. University of California-Davis. Davis, CA. 13 August.
2022	"Penal Secularism and the Governance of Religion in Colonial India." Symposium on "Global Religion: Invention, Translation, Critique." Northwestern University. Evanston, IL. 3 June.

- 2022 "What We Talk about When We Talk about Modern Hinduism." Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. Oxford, Oxon. 4 February.
- 2022 "Ozymandias in the Time of the Picknicker: A Response to Kajri Jain's *Gods in the Time of Democracy*." University of Toronto. Toronto, ON. 15 January.
- 2021 "Codifying Blasphemy: Religious Feelings between Colony and Metropole." Stokes Seminar, Dalhousie University. Halifax, NS. 15 October.
- 2021 "Secularizing Blasphemy, or, The Hidden Global History of the Indian Penal Code." Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS. 14 October.
- 2021 "Insulting Religion, from Blasphemy to Hate Speech: The Forgotten History of Section 295A." National Academy of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR). Hyderabad, TG. 27 September.

Conference Presentations

- Forthcoming "The Golden Bridge of Sympathy: The Anthropology of World Religions and Sarojini Naidu's Aesthetics of Secularism." Session on "Literature and Anthropology Now!: New Histories of Aesthetics." Modern Language Association. Toronto, ON. January 2026.
- Forthcoming "Author-Meets-Critics Roundtable on Leela Prasad's *Audacious Raconteur: Sovereignty and Storytelling in Colonial India*." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (South Asian Religions Unit). Boston, MA. November 2025.
- 2024 "Author-Meets-Critics Roundtable on Rajbir Singh Judge's *Prophetic Maharaja: Loss, Sovereignty, and the Sikh Tradition in Colonial South Asia*." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (South Asian Religions Unit and Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit). San Diego, CA. 25 November.
- 2024 "New Books in South Asian Legal Studies." Annual Meeting of Law and Society Association. Denver, CO. 8 June.
- 2024 "Roundtable on 'Global Religions,'" with J. Barton Scott, Peter Coviello, Mishka Sinha, Zhange Ni, Seth Koven, Winter Werner, and Sebastian Lecourt. Virtual Joint Meeting of the North American Victorian Studies Association, British Association for Victorian Studies, and Australasian Victorian Studies Association. Online. 1 June.
- 2023 Respondent, "Transnational Politics and Global Pop Cultures." Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Religion and Popular Culture Unit). San Antonio, TX. 21 November.
- 2023 "Author-Meets-Critics Roundtable on Barton Scott's *Slandering the Sacred*," with Marko Geslani, Arvind-Pal Mandair, Deonnie Moodie, and Tisa Wenger. Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Law, Religion, and Culture Unit and South Asian Religions Unit). San Antonio, TX. 20 November.
- 2023 "Author-Meets-Critics Roundtable on SherAli Tareen's *Perilous Intimacies* (Columbia, 2023). Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Religion in South Asia Unit). San Antonio, TX. 19 November.
- 2023 "Author-Meets-Critics Roundtable on Leila Vevaina's *Trust Matters: Endowments in Mumbai and the Horoscope of a City* (Duke, 2023)." American Anthropological Association. Toronto, ON. 15 November.
- 2023 "Author-Meets-Critics Roundtable on J. Barton Scott's *Slandering the Sacred*," with Cassie Adcock, Mitra Sharafi, Julia Stephens, and Anand Taneja. Annual Conference on South Asia. Madison, WI. 19 October.

- 2023 “Lived Religion and the Politics of the Quotidian Turn.” Pre-Conference Symposium on “Quotidian Sacreds: Religion, History, and Performance in South Asia.” Annual Conference on South Asia. Madison, WI. 18 October.
- 2023 “Author-Meets-Critics Roundtable on Barton Scott’s *Slandering the Sacred*,” with Kamari Maxine Clarke, Inder Marwah, Benjamin Berger, and Catherine Evans. Law, Culture, & Humanities Conference. Toronto, ON. June 22.
- 2021 Respondent to Panel on “Race, Empire, and Inequality in the Study of Religion.” Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Religion (Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit). Online. 19 November.

SELECT ADMINISTRATIVE AND EDITORIAL POSITIONS

- 2021-2026 Director of Graduate Studies, Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto. (On leave, 2023-24).
- 2023– Steering Committee, Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Unit, American Academy of Religion (AAR)
- 2025-28 Member, AAR Analytic-Descriptive Book Award Jury
- 2015– Associate Editor, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*
- 2019-2022 Section Editor, “South Asian Religions,” *Religion Compass*
- 2015-2021 Co-Chair, Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit, American Academy of Religion (Steering Committee Member, 2011-15)

LANGUAGES

Advanced spoken and written: Modern standard Hindi
 Reading: French, German, Gujarati, Urdu
 Advanced beginner: Sanskrit