

Institute for Religion, Culture and Societal Futures



SOME THESES ON THE SECULAR SACRED

with **Mervyn Horgan** from
the University of Guelph

While somewhat out of favour with sociologists of religion, over the last quarter century or so, the sacred has become a core conceptual resource in cultural sociological analysis. This presentation weaves a thread from Emile Durkheim's late work on the constitution of the sacred in the interplay between ritual and belief, through Erving Goffman's invocation of the sacred to analyze the individual in interaction, to contemporary uses of the concept in cultural sociology, focusing in particular on the place of discourses of the sacred in civil sphere theory as developed by Jeffrey Alexander. Along the way, informed by this movement between ritual, interaction and discourse, I offer a series of theses on the enduring power of the sacred as a core resource of the lifeworld, a cultural resource in collective life and collective mobilization, and a vital conceptual resource in sociological analysis.

SEP • 24 • 2025

2:30PM EDT

**HYBRID IN-PERSON (ST. JEROME'S
UNIVERSITY IN WATERLOO, ON)
AND VIRTUAL EVENT (ZOOM)**

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