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Call for Papers

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CALL FOR PAPERS

46th Annual Conference of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations

June 29-July 2, 2016

Monmouth University, West Long Branch, New Jersey, USA

“The West” and its Discontents: Contemporary Challenges to Western Dominance

Since 1500, the West has moved from the edge of Eurasia, from insignificance to dominate the world politically, culturally, and economically. Since the end of World War II, its values have established the de facto “global system” of trade, economics, and preferred governance. The last challenges to these particularly Anglo-Saxon values survived bitterly-fought wars against Fascist Nazi Germany and Fascist Japan in World War II and prolonged surrogate wars against the Soviet Union ending in the collapse of their empire in 1991. The Western Global System seemed to be without challenge.

But now challenges come from all sides.

- **Islam**, a religion whose dominance had begun a decline in 1250, is having a renewal of militant zeal. To what degree is the West at war with Islam, contrary to the repeated assurances of our leaders? How can this be thought of as a “clash of civilizations”? Can the revival of the model of the ancient Caliphate: a single religious dictatorship, replace the western Global System?
- **Environmental Crisis**. Pope Francis has issued an Encyclical urging his believers and the world to heed the danger of global warming. He warns that rampant industrialization has created luxury for the rich nations but undue suffering in the way of pollution and misery for the poor. To what degree has capitalism, with its ethos of materialism, contributed to the environmental crisis? Can technologies address the adverse effects of environmental damage? Can a global system of mandatory environmentalism replace capitalism without increasing global poverty?
- **The Crisis of Capitalism**. Is capitalism really working? For whom? The gulf between rich and poor seems to be growing ever wider. Is the “American Dream” even relevant anymore? How are the cost-saving mechanisms of outsourcing and technological innovation contributing to the unemployment crisis in the US? Yet many of the world’s poor have been lifted out of poverty by science, technology, and democracy in this past century. Capitalism has worked in ways that no other ideologies have managed to do. Or was much of that prosperity built on “borrowed”

money and deferred payments? Perhaps the Great Recession” of 2008 has made it painfully clear that it is now time to pay the overdue bill.

- **China and Russia: Challenges to the Western System.** China is a newly awakened ancient culture that has its own amalgam of the old and the new. To some degree China rejects the hegemony of the Western Global System, though it also appears to have lately appropriated elements of it to its own benefit. Russia also indicates unwillingness to accept Western hegemony. What institutions do they offer that provide better societal solutions?
- **Multiculturalism.** Many European countries have attempted the model of multiculturalism, admitting large numbers of immigrants and abolishing internal borders in an attempt to create a united Europe. Has this model succeeded? Can it really succeed when immigrants are not willing or able to integrate into their host country’s culture? Is this model now under fire? Also interesting to consider are the challenges to Western culture in the realm of art and music. As globalization progresses in the cultural realm we are seeing unprecedented cultural exchange in these areas. While non-Western music and art do not represent challenges to the West, they are an important part of the encounter of the West with the other. Of particular interest will be modes of cultural appropriation and synthesis.
- **The Energy Revolution.** As the United States become energy independent and an energy exporter, how does that affect the Global System? Do we still need the Middle East? Israel has become a water exporter in the Middle East, the only country with technologies dealing with water. How does this affect the relationships in that region and the Global System?
- **Decadence and Moral Decay: The Challenge from Within.** Why are so many people in the US more interested in the latest cell-phone app, online video game, or “reality TV” distraction than they are about the urgent issues facing civilization today? Was Spengler right about the "Decline of the West," not only in terms of the political or economic spheres, but in a spiritual sense as well? What are the implications of this for civilizational study?

The world is changing at a rapid pace. How are we to understand these challenges to Western hegemony? What are the positives and what are the negatives?

Papers are invited on the above topics, **and any other topics of civilizational relevance.**

Please send abstracts by May 1 to Program Chair, Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman

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The International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations

In October 1961, in Salzburg, Austria, an extraordinary group of scholars gathered to create the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations. Among the 26 founding members from Austria, Germany, France, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Spain, Italy, England, Russia, the United States, China and Japan were such luminaries as Pitirim Sorokin and Arnold Toynbee.

For six days, the participants debated such topics as the definition of “civilization,” problems in the analysis of complex cultures, civilizational encounters in the past, the Orient versus the Occident, problems of universal history, theories of historiography, and the role of the “human sciences” in “globalization.” The meeting was funded by the Austrian government, in cooperation with UNESCO, and received considerable press coverage. Sorokin was elected the Society’s first president.

After several meetings in Europe, the advancing age of its founding members and the declining health of then president, Othmar F. Anderle, were important factors in the decision to transfer the Society to the United States.

Between 1968 and 1970 Roger Williams Wescott of Drew University facilitated that transition. In 1971, the first annual meeting of the ISCSC (US) was held in Philadelphia. Important participants in that meeting and in the Society’s activities during the next years included Benjamin Nelson (the Society’s first American president), Roger Wescott, Vytautas Kavolis, Matthew Melko, David Wilkinson, Rushton Coulborn and C.P. Wolf. In 1974, the Salzburg branch was formally dissolved, and from that year to the present there has been only one International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations (ISCSC).

The presidents of the ISCSC are, in order: In Europe, Pitirim Sorokin and Othmar Anderle; in the United States, Benjamin Nelson, Vytautas Kavolis, Matthew Melko, Michael Palencia-Roth, Roger Wescott, Shuntaro Ito (from Japan), Wayne Bledsoe, Lee Daniel Snyder, Andrew Targowski, and the current president David Rosner. To date, the Society has held 45 meetings, most of them in the United States but also in Salzburg, Austria; Santo Domingo, The Dominican Republic; Dublin, Ireland; Chiba, Japan; Frenchman’s Cove, Jamaica; St. Petersburg, Russia; Paris, France; New Brunswick, Canada; and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

More than 30 countries are represented in the Society’s membership. Its intellectual dynamism and vibrancy over the years have been maintained and enhanced through its annual meetings, its publications, and the participation of such scholars as Talcott Parsons, Hayden White, Immanuel Wallerstein, Gordon Hewes, André Gunder Frank, Marshall Sahlins, Lynn White Jr., and Jeremy Sabloff.

The Society is committed to the idea that complex civilizational problems can best be approached through multidisciplinary analyses and debate by scholars from a variety of fields. *The Comparative Civilizations Review*, which welcomes submissions from the Society’s members as well as other scholars, has been published continually since its inaugural issue in 1979.

Prof. Michael Palencia-Roth

Membership Information

If you are not a member of the ISCSC please consider joining. For a \$60 USD yearly membership fee members receive a one-year subscription to this journal, are invited to attend the annual conference, receive the ISCSC newsletter, and may participate in ongoing dialogues. Membership is open to all interested in civilizations. Visit www.wmich.edu/ISCSC for further information.

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We thank the Brigham Young University for providing this service for free to all who are interested in the topics our journal covers.

Upcoming 2016 ISCSC Conference June/July

The 46th Annual Meeting of the International Society for the Comparative Study of Civilizations will take place at Monmouth University in Monmouth, New Jersey, U.S.A, June 29 to July 2, 2016.

Look for conference information on the ISCSC website:

www.wmich.edu/ISCSC