



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



**Rubina Ramji**

Co-investigator (Strand 3)

[ruby\\_ramji@cbu.ca](mailto:ruby_ramji@cbu.ca)

**Associate Professor**

Philosophy and Religious Studies

Program Director, Gender and  
Women's Studies  
Cape Breton University

**Biography**

Rubina (Ruby) Ramji is Associate Professor of Religious Studies in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Cape Breton University. She received her B.A. in Psychology and M.A. in Religion and Culture at Wilfrid Laurier University. She received her PhD in Religious Studies at the University of Ottawa in December 2003. She followed the PhD with a postdoctoral fellowship. She also held the *John W. Altman Humanities Scholar-in-Residence* position in the Department of Comparative Religion and the Faculty of the Middle East and Islamic Studies at Miami University of Ohio. She is currently the Director of the Gender and Women's Studies Program at Cape Breton University.

Ramji is the Film Editor of the [Journal of Religion and Film](#) and after serving a four year term as Senior Editor of [Golem: Journal of Religion and Monsters](#), she now serves as a peer-review editor. She served as Chair of the Religion, Film and Visual Culture Group in the American Academy of Religion for six years and is currently the President of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (2012-16) and a Religious Studies Representative on the Awards to Scholarly Publications Program Committee for the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences. She has also worked as a policy analyst for Citizenship and Immigration Canada, with specific work on the Gender Based Analysis.

Ramji is co-editor, with Peter Beyer, of the book *Growing Up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists* (McGill-Queen's University Press 2013) and is the author of a variety of articles and chapters in books including "Maintaining and Nurturing an Islamic Identity in Canada – Online and Offline" in *Religion in the Public Sphere: Canadian Case Studies* (Eds., S. Lefebvre, & L. Beaman, University of Toronto Press 2014), "Muslims in the Movies" in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Religion and Film* (Ed., W. Blizek, Bloomsbury 2013); "Being Muslim and Being Canadian: How Second Generation Muslim Women Create Religious Identities in Two Worlds", in *Women and Religion: Challenging Secularization* (Eds., K. Aune, S. Sharma & G. Vincett, Ashgate 2008); "Creating A Genuine Islam: Second Generation Muslims Growing Up In Canada" in *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne* (6:2, 2008); "The Global Migration of Sufi Islam to South Asia and Beyond", in *Globalization, Religion and Culture* (Eds., P. Beyer & L. Beaman, Brill 2007); and, "Representations of Islam in American News and Film: Becoming the 'Other'" in *Mediating Religion: Conversations in Media, Religion and Culture* (Eds., J. Mitchell & S. Marriage, T&T Clark 2003).

### **Research Statement**

My research activities focus on the areas of religion, media and identity, religion in Canada, and religion and immigration. Beginning with a postdoctoral fellowship in 2004, my research focused on religious diversity in Canada. Working with a team comprised of Peter Beyer, Lori Beaman and Nancy Nason-Clark, we worked on a project that explored religious expression and identity of second generation young adults from Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist backgrounds growing up in Canada. This project extended into a new project that is currently exploring attitudes of religious diversity and multiculturalism in Canada amongst young adults from diverse religious/cultural backgrounds across the country.

Carrying forward from this research, I have begun focusing on the impact of global events on identity construction. Through this exploration, I am exploring how media images impact immigrant youth living in Canada. In the process of this exploration, I am currently examining how Canadian Muslim youth, living in a post 9/11 world, are constructing their identities in relation to often hostile and demeaning media representations of Islam and its followers. The role of media, in the maintenance and negotiation of religious identities amongst immigrants in new host societies, is an untapped field and yet its importance in shaping identities is immense. Scholarship in the field clearly illustrates that media is used not only to maintain and strengthen identity boundaries, but also creates new, shared spaces in which syncretic cultural forms, such as new ethnic identities, can be formed.

Another complementary area of research examines how and why gender and sexuality act as flashpoints in debates on religious freedom. A recent topic that has created a clash between freedom of religion and human rights specifically based on sex and gender is the wearing of the niqab by Muslim women. To better understand how



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gender relates to human rights and religious values, I am examining how Muslim communities in European countries and North America are now dealing with state sanctions based on the niqab. The banning of the niqab is an important issue for examination as it raises questions about the rights of Muslims as citizens and issues of freedom of expression, as well as questions about security, accommodation and obligations of citizenship.