



THE RELIGION AND DIVERSITY PROJECT/RELIGION ET DIVERSITÉ



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Biography and Research Statement

Christine L. Cusack is the Student Caucus Leader for the Religion and Diversity Project at the University of Ottawa, Canada. She received her B.A. in Communications from Brigham Young University (1989), her M.A. in Communication from the University of Ottawa (2013) and is currently working on a Ph.D. in Religious Studies. As a former elementary school teacher, she has a keen interest in religion and education. Her other research interests include women and religion and the intersection of religion, media and social change.

Research Project

Title: Deconfessionalization and the Ethics and Religious Culture Program in Québec: Shaping Citizenship in a Religiously Diverse Society

Prior to 2008, parents of children attending Québec public elementary schools faced the annual dilemma of choosing a religious education stream. The disconcerting process for students and educators was akin to choosing sides for a pick-up basketball game: Catholics over here, Protestants over there, and as for the rest, off to the moral ethics class. The practice was an exercise in cultural segregation and marginalization. As immigration numbers increased, more children found themselves outside the rubric and in the corner of social exclusion. When the Québec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sport replaced confessional religious instruction with a new program entitled

Ethics and Religious Culture, it constituted a major step in the “deconfessionalization” of the school system and acknowledged “the importance of religious and ethical questions in the life and evolution of Québec society” (MELS 2008: 292). This research proposes a qualitative study of religious education in Québec elementary schools and will explore how education policy shapes students’ understanding of their role as citizens in a religiously diverse society.