

Sixth Form Conference 2010 Workshop Descriptions

What does it mean to be a Muslim? (Monday A8 and B8 and Tuesday A5 and B5)

Rashad Azami (Imam of the Bath Islamic Society)

In this session we will explore where we are in our understanding of Islam. Can Islam work without rules and discipline? What is the appeal of Islam and how does it work in this modern age? What is the role of culture and tradition in Islam? How are religion and politics affected by each other? Is our knowledge of Islam based on misconceptions and propaganda. What are your concerns and questions?

What do we seem to know about Muslims? (Wednesday A8 and B8)

Professor Iftikhar Malik (Bath Spa University)

This session will focus on Islam as a religion, the UK-Muslim relations and why political events in the Middle East or other regions such as Afghanistan, Pakistan or Bosnia have such a close bearing on our history and foreign policies. We may include the relationship among all the three major Abrahamic religions, the Crusades, Muslim Spain, the Ottomans, the British Empire, Muslim Diaspora in the UK and political issues including the media, oil politics, the military and civil society. We will discuss British Muslims in reference to gender, youth and multiple roles as vibrant communities faced with all kinds of internal and external challenges.

How can different faiths live together? (Monday A5 and B5, and Wednesday B2)

Kevin Tingay (Church of England)

Religious differences have been the cause of conflict, and still are today. This workshop explores examples of constructive encounters between people of different faiths, which lead not only to better knowledge of the 'other' faith, but also to deeper understanding of one's own.

Are 'near death experiences' hallucinations? (Tuesday A4 and B4)

Joel Mellor (Ralph Allen)

We will be comparing aspects of reported Near Death Experiences to examples found in holy texts, such as the Bible and the Bardo Thodol, as well as evidence from people who claim to have experienced them. Are 'near death experiences' culturally conditioned hallucinations or something more?

Creative evil? An exploration of the imagery of rage and despair

(Monday A1 and B1, Tuesday A1 and B1)

Lat Blaylock (RE Today)

This workshop will use spiritual art work to enable students to be creative and artistic on the topics of evil, despair and hope. We will produce an art gallery, including your work, during the conference. It will be deep.

Why should I lead a good life when The Good

Life is on offer? Adverts, authority and happiness. (Wednesday A1 and B1)

Stephen Pett (RE Today)

Do we have a moral responsibility towards the planet? (Wednesday A5 and B5)

Tracy Johnson (Culverhay)

This session will investigate the Gaia hypothesis, Richard Dawkins, creation stories and some environmental issues that are in the news, such as the recent oil leak in the USA.

Can religion and science ever be in harmony? a Bahá'í View

Dr. Jane O'Hara (Bath Bahá'í community) (Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday B6)

Can Religion ever be in harmony with Science? Does scientific knowledge lead to absolute proof? Are humans super-evolved animals or spiritual beings? The Bahá'í Faith teaches that an independent search for truth is essential for each one of us. Concepts of religion and science will be introduced from the Bahá'í perspective, followed by small-group discussions of key questions and ideas.

The Tranquillity Zone - Meditation, Music and Readings from the Bahá'í Faith (Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday A6)

Dr. Jane O'Hara (Bath Bahá'í community)

An invitation to experience a period of calm and tranquillity. In the Tranquillity Zone you are given the chance to sit and reflect on words and music, as a kind of meditation. The words you will hear are taken from the Sacred Writings of the Bahá'í Faith, and there will be an opportunity to learn more about the teachings from this modern world religion.

Does religion bring about more peace or more conflict?

Gary Webber (Bath Jewish community) (Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday A7 and B7)

"A time for war and a time for peace" Does religion bring about more peace or more conflict? What does Judaism say about war and peace? How can wars ever be justified?

Is it ethical to create life? (Monday A3)

Louise Pope (Chew Valley)

A discussion of the ethical implications of the claims to be able to create life

So why are you a Buddhist? (Monday B3)

Louise Pope (Chew Valley)

Your chance to quiz a Buddhist on their beliefs, practices and values

What is Beauty ? (Wednesday A3 and B3)

Mary Read and Tanya Laurenson (Hayesfield)

An introduction to philosophical debate. While exploring of the philosophy of aesthetics, you will be examining attitudes towards beauty as well as examining your own values. This session will allow you to develop your own thinking through discussion.

Auschwitz: to be or not to be, that is the question

Ros Fielder (Somervale) (Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday A9 and B9)

A brief look at the ethics behind the holocaust and whether our culture today is guilty of perpetuating the Nazi ideology

Why do people have the need to belong? A study of the nature of cults

Iain Murdoch/Katherine Hawkins (Norton Hill) (Tuesday A10 and B10)

This workshop examines the nature of "what a cult is" and explores why many people are drawn to join them. It contrasts cults with mainstream religions and examines what role a cult might fulfil in somebody's life. Whether cults are purely a negative force will also be explored. Students will have the opportunity to design their own cult, based on the criteria explored during the workshop, and convince other participants to "join their cult".

Is there a God gene?

Dr. Paul Reid-Bowen (Bath Spa University) (Tuesday A8 and B8)

What role does evolution play in the development of religious belief and practice? Is there a genetic explanation for religion and spirituality?

So what do you think?

Linda Hall (Wellsway) (Monday A4 and B4)

An opportunity for you to generate and discuss your own questions based on a clip from the media on a current moral issue.

Is human enhancement our natural destiny? (Wednesday A10 and B10)

Rachel Sayles (Oldfield)

During our life times will Superman or Wonder Woman really exist? This session will be looking at to what extent science should be embraced in order to modify humans and make them physically more effective and the ethics involved.

So why would Muslims wish to dance? (Monday A10 and B10)

Jo Backus (Bath Spa University)

This session explores an alternative form of Islam-Sufi Mysticism. Those who belong to Sufi groups use music and dance to inspire them in their search for understanding the nature of God and themselves.

Mind Beyond Death? A Tibetan Buddhist View (Monday B2)

Graham Lever (Tibetan Buddhist)

Where do we go when we die? Is the mind merely what the brain does? If so, how can we survive death? A presentation on the way Tibetan Buddhism addresses these questions, supported by DVD material. There will follow a discussion of the issue, from the religious and philosophical points of view of the students. There will be an optional opportunity to meditate. Those choosing not to meditate, may silently reflect on the issues discussed, from the point of view of their own faith or philosophical perspective. There may be time for discussion of the wider aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. The workshop leader is a member of the Karma Kagyu School of Tibetan Buddhism and his Master is Lama Yeshe Losal.

The Doctor and the Divine (Wednesday A4 and B4)

Ian Millstead (Beechencliff)

A look at religious themes in Doctor Who.

Why do Tibetan monks dance?

Tashilhunpo monks discuss their performance (Monday A2)

Meditation with a difference in the Tibetan monastic tradition as the monks use the colourful costumes and intricate steps of their monastic dance to summon the deities and destroy evil forces as part of the preparation for Tibetan New Year. In a more conventional use of meditation, learn some of the graceful hand gestures or mudras used by the monks in one of their Tantric prayers to describe the qualities of the holy beings who join them at prayer.

Rim Bim and reggae drummers discuss their performance (Tuesday A2 and Wednesday A2)

The content of the workshop explains the different beliefs and values of Rastafarians.

It will cover the 3 main sects of Nyahbinghi, Bobo Shanti and The twelve Tribes of Israel. Nyabingi music is used during reasoning sessions and consists of chanting and drumming to reach states of heightened spirituality. Nyabingi music consists of a blend of 19th century gospel music and African drumming. We will share music and ideology with the groups in a light fun musical way, which we hope they will enjoy and benefit from the knowledge we will share. Rimbim is a very well known reggae drummer who has worked with many artists over the years and will bring his drumming talents to share with you in Bath.

Why do teenagers become witches? (Tuesday A3 and B3)

Denise Cush (Bath Spa University)

Why do some young people identify themselves as witches and pagans? What can be learned from research interviews with teenage witches? Contribute your own ideas to the ongoing research.