Religion and IR (REL) Section Annual Report 2014

The Religion and IR (REL) section is a young section, officially founded at the meeting of the ISA Governing Council on April 2, 2013, in San Francisco.

1. Membership and Funds:

As of October 2014, this section now boasts 216 members. This is a 55% growth in membership compared to last year, making REL the fourth fastest growing section of the ISA (and the 23rd section out of 31 in size). Our current balance is $2271.26.

2. Governance:

The business meeting in Toronto saw the formal election into office of our executive committee which, to this point, had been an acting executive committee. The committee consists of: Ron Hassner (chair), Nukhet Sandal (vice chair/program chair), Larry Rubin (secretary), Turan Kayaoglu (communications chair), Sara Silvestri (treasurer), Jocelyne Cesari (awards), and Patrick James (at large).

Per our charter, the chair and vice/program chair will serve for two years whereas all other positions will serve for three years prior to reelection. The members present also agreed to amend the charter so as to merge the position of the vice chair and the program chair.

The members present at the business meeting voted the first four members of our advisory council into office. They are Jonathan Fox (Bar Ilan), Scott Thomas (Bath), Peter Katzenstein (Cornell), and Alfred Stepan (Columbia). We placed the minutes of that business meeting online, on the REL website.

3. The 2014 Convention:

The recent ISA convention in Toronto was our first chance to host panels as a section. We were allotted five panels but through the efforts of our program chair managed to expand this to eight co-sponsored panels, including panels on religious freedom, religion and armed conflict, empirical studies of religion and conflict, religion and democratization, sectarianism, religion and feminist approaches, etc. These panels were extraordinarily well attended. We have high hopes for a far greater number of panels at ISA 2015, commensurate with our growing membership.

Our reception was equally well-attended. It was sponsored by the Religion, Politics and Globalization Program (U.C. Berkeley) and by the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University). Some 100 members joined to eat, drink and celebrate our
achievements as a new section. The catering costs of that reception amounted to $1597.26, all funded by the two sponsors.

4. The 2015 Convention:

In addition to panels, the business meeting, and the reception, we are introducing two new features at the convention in New Orleans. First, we will be handing out our first “Best Graduate Student Paper Award”. The recipient, Jason Klocek, was selected by a committee headed by Jocelyne Cesari, our awards chair. A plaque has been ordered to be delivered to him during our business meeting in New Orleans.

Second, we will be hosting our first “Distinguished Scholar Panel”. The recipient, Dr. Douglas Johnston, was selected by the executive committee by consensus. Dr. Johnston will be honored by a panel with five prominent scholars, all organized by our treasurer, Sara Silvestri.

We have already raised $2,000 for our reception in New Orleans, half from the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University) and half from the journal Review of Faith & International Affair. This sponsorship will enable us to cater the reception without drawing from our funds.

5. Outreach and Goals

Our membership goal was and remains a section membership of 250 scholars by ISA 2015. To achieve this goal, we have been sending out bi-annual newsletters to our members as well as to other scholars who have published or presented work on religion and IR who are not yet members.

With the assistance of ISA staff, our communications officer has expanded our web site to include information about awards, reports and news. We intend to expand the website further to provide information about section members, academic opportunities and academic resources related to religion and IR. We are also setting up a facebook page to facilitate networking among section members.

Starting in 2015, we will accept submissions for a “Best Book Award”. Finally, it is the executive committee’s intention to gradually expand the advisory committee by one or two members a year until it reaches its full complement of 15 members.

Drafted, on behalf of the executive committee, by:

Ron E. Hassner

Chair, Religion and IR Section