Schedule of Events

Thursday, December 15th
9:00am Conference Welcome
9:30am Healing Plants
~12:30pm Lunch~
1:30pm Movements and Destinations
3:30pm Plants, Cosmology and Art
4:30pm Keynote Address
~6:30pm~ Presenters Reception

Friday, December 16th
10:00am Environmentalism and Ethnobotany
11:30am Intermission
12:00pm The Religious Nature of Plants: Plants in Agriculture, Medicine and Astrology
~2:00pm Lunch~
3:00pm Political and Legal Intersections of Plants and Religion
5:00pm A Presentation of Films on Plants and Religion

Saturday, December 17th
10:00am Open Discussion
Conference Commencement
~Thank You~
Principal Presenters and Participants

Beatriz Caiuby Labate

(https://bialabate.net) is a PhD in Social Anthropology from the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), Campinas, Brazil. Her main areas of interest are the study of psychoactive substances, drug policies, shamanism, ritual, and religion. Currently she is a Research Associate at the Institute of Medical Psychology, Heidelberg University and a member of the Collaborative Research Center (SFB 619) “Ritual Dynamics - Socio-Cultural Processes from a Historical and Culturally Comparative Perspective.” She is also researcher with the Nucleus for Interdisciplinary Studies of Psychoactives (NEIP) and editor of its site (https://www.neip.info). She is author, co-author and co-editor of seven books, two with English translations, and one journal special edition. Her book A Reinvenção do Uso da Ayahuasca nos Centros Urbanos (Mercado de Letras, 2004) received the prize for Best Master’s Thesis in Social Sciences from the National Association for Graduate Studies in Social Science (ANPOCS) in 2000.

Edward MacRae

Federal University of Bahia, Brazil

Edward MacRae lectures in anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia. Since 1986, he has researched the topic of drugs, initially working for the Institute of Social Medicine and Criminology of the state of Sao Paulo – IMESC and in the Program for Orientation and Attendance of drug-dependencies. He was a member of the sao Paulo State Narcotics Council. He is currently living in Salvador where he teaches anthropology at the Federal University of Bahia, and is a researcher associated to the Center for Drug Abuse Studies and Therapy (CETAD). There, he teaches post-graduate courses on topics related to the social an anthropology of drugs. He is currently a representative of the Ministry of culture and on the National Anti-Drugs Council – CONAD and member of the Scientific-Technical Advisory Council of the CONAD. He has written about sexuality, social movements, the ritual use of ayahuasca in the Santo Daime religion, socially integrated use of psychoactive substances, and the reduction of harm associated with drug use.

Benjamin Hebblethwaite

Assistant Professor in Haitian Creole, Haitian & Francophone Studies, University of Florida, Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures. He will be speaking on “The Uses of Plants, Drugs and Alcohol in Haitian Vodou”.

Bron Taylor


Whitney Sanford, Associate Professor, Department of Religion, University of Florida. Dr. Sanford obtained her M.A., and Ph.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. She teaches and researches two main areas: Religion and Nature, and Religions of Asia. She focuses on environmental movements of the global South and religious attitudes towards agricultural sustainability. She will discuss her recent book Growing Stories from India: Religion and the Fate of Agriculture.

Robin M. Wright

Associate Professor of Religion, Ph.D. Stanford University Indigenous Religions, Amerindian Religions of South America, Anthropology of Religion. Has worked with South American shamans since the 1970s and written recently an entire book about their practice and knowledge. Has been a long-time supporter of research into psychoactive substances in plants and, like his brother Christopher, suffers from a genetically inherited bone disease.

Christopher A. Wright

Scholar of Religions, and Professional Photographer. He obtained his M.A. in Religion at Hartford Seminary; and did his doctoral thesis research on Mesoamerican Art of the sacred, at University of Montreal. The bearer of a rare, genetic disease that affects all weight-bearing joints, Dr. Wright has been a long-time advocate of the use of cannabis sativa for medicinal purposes.

Todd Swanson

Professor of Religious Studies at Arizona State University; Grew up in a Kichwa Indian community in the highlands of Ecuador. Director of Summer Fieldschool in Ecuadorean Amazon. Has realized many years of studies of ethnobotany and native relations to plants, not exclusively to ayahuasca.

Ellison Banks Findly

Professor, Department of Religion and Asian Studies, Trinity College, Hartford, CT. Dr. Findly obtained her M.A. from Columbia University, M.Phil., and Ph.D., from Yale University. Her areas of research include the religious history of Hinduism and Buddhism (texts and art) and contemporary Gandhian thought in India. She is currently working on Southeast Asian religious textiles (Lao-Tai). A prolific scholar, she will discuss one of her books, Plant Lives: Boderline Beings in Indian Tradition.
Presenters and Participants

Special Guests

**William Vickers**  retired Professor of Anthropology & Ecology, Ecuadorian Amazon.

**Bob Linde**, herbalist, Acupuncture Physician and Registered Herbalist (AHG), president and founder of Acupuncture & Herbal Therapies.

**Andrew Tarter**, Ph.D. student, assistant to Dr. Hebblethwaite; Haitian Vodu

**Jaya Reddy**, Ph. D. student, Department of Religion, University of Florida. Jaya’s research focuses on the use of plants in religion, medicine, and astrology in India.

**Lucas Moreira**, M.A. student in Religion at UF. Studies in Public policy and legislation on psychoactives.

**Marissa Molinar**, M.A. in Comparative Art & Archaeology, Institute of Archaeology, University College London. Her research interests include rock art, prehistoric art and evolutionary approaches in archaeology.

**James Taylor**, M.A. student at Center for Latin American Studies, UF, trajectories and destinations of plants; field-school course on the Napo river, Ecuadorean Amazon;

Our Generous Collaborators

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**Dr. Beatriz Labate**, Founder & Coordinator of the NEIP (Center for Studies and Research on Psychoactives) Brazil

**Dr. Edward MacRae**, Professor of Anthropology, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil