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# Dr Chris Shannahan BA, PGCE, BD, PhD

Honorary Research Fellow

**Department of Theology and Religion (/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/index.aspx)**

## Contact details

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## About

Chris Shannahan was a post-doctoral research fellow in Urban Theology on the three year **Excluded Urban Youth and Religious Discourse in the Trans-local City (http://www.ptr.bham.ac.uk/research/excluded.shtml)** project from 2009-2012, building on his PhD which developed a critique of British Urban Theology since 1970 and sought to map a new direction for the development of cross-cultural Urban Theologies in the 21st century. Chris's current action-research project, which is rooted in ethnographic fieldwork on a large housing estate in Birmingham, focuses on the impact that the experience of social exclusion has on the spiritualities of 16-24 year old urban youth and their use of implicit/explicit religious discourse.

In particular he is interested in the ways in which graffiti art and rap music are used by socially excluded young men to explore and express identity and meaning. This is something he has recently been working on in the **'Bromford Dreams - Graffiti Spiritualities' (/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/research/projects/social-exclusion.aspx)** project which will form the basis for his next book. In May 2012 Chris completed his research fellowship and took on the role of Teaching Fellow in Urban Theology and in February 2013 was given the title of Honorary Research Fellow in Religion and Society. From September 2013 - June 2014 he will be a Visiting Lecturer in Political Theology at Canterbury Christchurch University in Kent.

## Qualifications

- BA (London)
- PGCE (London)
- B.D, PhD (Birmingham)

## Biography

Chris worked as a Religious Education and Sociology teacher in a large comprehensive school in the East End of London during the 1980s. Before joining the Theology and Religion Department in 2009 he served as an inner-city Methodist Minister for sixteen years in Kingston (Jamaica), where he helped to develop work with teenagers on the fringe of gang culture in the downtown area of Trenchtown and in London and Birmingham where he was involved in work with asylum seekers and refugees, building broad-based community organisations and community centred Christian-Muslim dialogue.

## Teaching

In 2012 Chris received the Head of the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion's 'Award for Excellence in Teaching' (an annual award based on nominations from students and staff)

### Current teaching

- Believing in the City
- Political Theology
- Coordinator of Birmingham Urban Theology Forum

### Previous Teaching

- Practical Theology
- Contextual Theology
- Liberation Theology
- Inter-faith Studies
- Religion and Popular Culture
- Social Ethics

## Postgraduate supervision

- Deputy Director of the Doctor in Practical Theology programme.
- Supervisor of Doctoral Research Students analysing aspects of the relationship between religious faith, urban life and cultural diversity.

## Research

- **Social Exclusion and Urban Youth Spiritualities' – Graffiti Art Project 2012 (/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/research/projects/social-exclusion.aspx)**
- **Urban Theology (http://www.ptr.bham.ac.uk/research/urbantheology.shtml)**
- **Urban Theology Forum - Connecting Communities (/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/research/projects/urban-theology.aspx)**
- Religion in an Urban Context
- **Social Exclusion and Faith amongst Urban Youth (http://www.ptr.bham.ac.uk/research/excluded.shtml)**
- Religion and Urban Popular Cultures
- Graffiti Art, Rap Music and Urban Youth Spiritualities
- Faith and Politics in the 'Big Society'
- Liberation Theology
- **Excluded Urban Youth and Religious Discourse in the Trans-local City (http://www.ptr.bham.ac.uk/research/excluded.shtml)**

- **Video transcript (/accessibility/transcripts/artsandlaw/ptr/chris-shanahan-research.aspx)**

## Other activities

- **Political Theology blog (#contensis)** - a monthly column for the journal Political Theology (from 2012)
- **Urban Theology blog (#contensis)** (from 2011)
- **Ideas Lab podcast - Social Exclusion and Urban Youth Spirituality (#contensis)** (March 2012)
- Coordinator **Birmingham Urban Theology Forum (#contensis)** (since 2009)
- Urban Theology/Mission Adviser to the Birmingham District of the Methodist Church (since 2009)
- '**Faith & Urban Life' (#contensis)** (November 2010) – Interviewed by Mohammed 'aerosol' Ali on the Soul City Radio Show, Unity FM , Birmingham [podcast available]
- Editorial Assistant on the journal **Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (#contensis)** (since 2007)
- Vice-Chair of the Board of Trustees of the community organising network Birmingham Citizens (since 2007)
- Member of the **British Sociological Association (#contensis)**
- Member of the **American Academy of Religion (#contensis)**
- Development of 'Faith and Urban Life' Community Education programme
- **'Birmingham Brief' (#contensis)** commentary piece on UK government 'Troubled Families' programme (June 2012)

### Workshops/Seminars

- 'Finding Faith in the 21st century City' (Victoria Methodist Church, Bristol, April 2013)
- 'Bromford Dreamers and Urban Youth Spiritualities' (Solihull Methodist Church, March 2013)
- 'Believing in the City - What is Urban Theology?' (Widening Participation Academic Enrichment Programme for 6th form students, University of Birmingham, August 2012).
- Social Exclusion and Hip-Hop Spirituality (Camp Hill School for Girls 6th form, Birmingham, June 2012).
- Looking for a NEET Spirituality - Social Exclusion, Spirituality and Urban Youth (Birmingham Jewish-Christian Study Day, Singers Hill Synagogue, Birmingham, June 2012).
- Bromford Dreams - Social Exclusion and Graffiti Art (Community Day, University of Birmingham, June 2012).
- Graffiti Spiritualities (Student Methodist Society, University of Birmingham, May 2012).
- British-Muslim Youth Identities in the Third Space (Islamic Studies Seminar, University of Birmingham, January 2012)
- Believing in Bromford (The Hub youth centre, Bromford Birmungham, June 2011)
- Picturing Faith in the City (Birmingham Urban Theology Forum, November 2010)

## Publications

- ## Research Reports
- **Excluded urban youth and religious discourse in the trans-local city (/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/theology/research/excluded-urban-youth/excluded-urban-youth.pdf)**

### Books

- ***(http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415890939/%20) A Theology of Community Organizing (http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415890939/%20)***, (Routledge, 2013).
- ***Voices from the Borderland: Re-imagining Urban Theology in the Twenty-First Century (http://www.equinoxpub.com/books/showbook.asp?bkid=432&keyword%20)*** (Equinox Publishing, 2010).

### Articles/Book chapters

- ‘When the edge becomes the centre - How can a hermeneutics of 'insignificance' resource faith-based activism in a plural public sphere?, in *Political Theology,* forthcoming 2013.
- ‘Aerosol Icons – Graffiti Art and Urban Spiritualities in a ‘Post-religious’ Century’, forthcoming in *The International Journal of Public Theology,* forthcoming 2013.
- 'Urban Liberation Theology and the Canaanite Woman' in *The Expository Times*, May 2013.
- 'Blurred Worlds - Spirituality and Diversity in the 21st century City' in *Crucible*, April 2013.
- **'God on the Margins' (http://www.methodist.org.uk/media/691752/mission-in-britain-additional-advent-prayers-201112.pdf)** - Advent Resources for the Methodist Church of Britain and Ireland, November 2012.
- '"NEET" Believers? An analysis of "belief" on an urban housing estate', in the journal Culture and Religion, 13.3, August 2012, pp315-335.
- ‘Negotiating faith on the Coventry Road: British-Muslim youth identities in the ‘third space’’ in the journal Culture and Religion, 12/3, September 2011, pp. 237-259.
- ‘‘Babel or Pentecost? Faith, Difference and Freedom in the Twenty-First Century: The Challenge for Public Theology’ in The International Journal of Public Theology, volume 1.3/4, 2007, pp364-381.
- ‘Singing Songs of Freedom: Methodism as liberative praxis’ in Jane Craske and Clive Marsh, Ed. *Methodism and the Future: Facing the Challenge* (Cassell, 1999)

### Conference papers/reports

- ‘N.E.E.T or Not? Graffiti Art, Social Exclusion and Spirituality’, Conference of Liberal/Progressive Jewish Rabbis, Woodbrooke College Birmingham, November 2012
- **'Bromford Dreams' Graffiti Spiritualities Project Report (http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/theology/research/bromford-arts-council.pdf)** - Arts Council England, March 2012
- **'I believe in God but He doesn't live round here' (/Documents/college-artslaw/ptr/philosophy/shanahan-i-believe-in-god.doc)**, American Academy of Religion, San Francisco, November 2011.
- ‘Looking for N.E.ET Spirituality’, British Sociological Association Conference, Sociology of Religion stream, London School of Economics, April 2011.
- **Negotiating Faith on the Coventry Road: British-Muslim Youth Identities in the Third Space (http://www.ptr.bham.ac.uk/staff/docs/shannahan_paper.doc)**, Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting, Washington D.C, April 2010.
- **‘Families and Neighbourliness: A Postcard from the Community’ (http://www.faithsforthecity.org.uk/Other/FFTC8.pdf)** paper for the ‘Faiths for the City: Making a Difference’ conference, November 2009, University of Birmingham.
- ‘To Serve the Present Age’, (2008) A Consultation Report written for the Birmingham (Sutton Park) Circuit of the Methodist Church, plotting new directions for inner-city work
- 'Urban Theology - A Critique', Institute for Urban Theology, Sheffield, July 2008.
- 'Assessing the Impact of Urban Poverty', Iona Community annual conference, March 2005.

### Reviews

- Review of Andrew Kirk, 'Civilisations in Conflict? Islam, the West and Christian Faith' in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, volume 23, issue 2, March 2012, pp229-230.
- Review of Laurie Green and Christopher R. Baker, 'Building Utopia? Seeking the Authentic Church for New Communities' in the International Journal of Public Theology, volume 5, issue 4, 2011, pp502-503.
- Review of Ronald E Peters, 'Urban Ministry - An Introduction' in the International Journal of Public Theology', volume 5, issue 2, 2011, pp256-257.
- Review of Richard Phillips, Ed. ‘Muslim Spaces of Hope – geographies of possibility in Britain and the West’ in Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, volume 21 issue 4, October 2010, pp436-437.
- Review of Elaine Graham, Heather Walton, Frances Ward, ‘Theological Reflection: Sources’ in the International Journal of Public Theology, volume 2, issue 3, 2008, pp385-386.
- Review of Richard Sudworth, ‘Distinctly Welcoming’ in the journal Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, volume 19 issue 2, April 2008, pp263-264.

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