

Professor Martin Stringer BA (Econ), PhD

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Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor

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About

I joined the University of Birmingham in 1993 as a Lecturer in the Sociology and Anthropology of Religion in the Department of Theology. My disciplinary home is Social Anthropology but I have always been excited by the possibilities of interdisciplinary work and have brought this to bear in my work on the study of Christian Worship and in the understanding of the nature of religious discourse within contemporary Britain. Much of my work, and that of my research students, has been based on the anthropological methods of ethnography and it is in this detailed and extended study of real life situations that I believe religion can be most fruitfully understood. More recently I have been working closely with colleagues in the Heritage and Cultural Learning Hub exploring the way in which text, performance and media environments intersect with, and reinterpret the nature of academic and religious discourses.

Since joining the University I have played an active role in the organisation and management of activities. I have been very actively involved on a national level with questions of academic quality and took up the role of Head of Department of Theology and Religion in 2002 and Head of the School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion in 2008. I have also acted as Head of the School of Historical Studies (2008) and Head of the College of Arts and Law (2010). My current role as Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor includes responsibilities as Deputy to the Provost and Vice Principal including planning and human resources, and a leadership responsibility for community relations within the University.

Biography

Martin Stringer was born in Tanzania, educated in South Yorkshire and undertook his first degree in Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester. Following a year in Tanzania he completed his PhD at the University of Manchester focusing on the way in which congregations understand their worship, and spent five years doing church related community work in Manchester's eastern inner-city estates. Martin took up a lectureship in the sociology and anthropology of religion at Birmingham University in 1993 and has maintained a constant interest in Christian worship and the development of congregational studies in the UK. He founded and ran the Worship in Birmingham Project from 1998-2003. In October 2007 he was awarded a chair in Liturgical and Congregational Studies and has undertaken a number of significant managerial roles within the University. He is currently Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor with responsibility for planning, staffing and community relations.

Postgraduate supervision

- Liturgical and congregational studies
- The role of churches in inner-urban areas
- Religion and superdiversity

Research

- **The Sociological History of Christian Worship**. Having written a general text looking at how Christian worship across 2000 years can be understood from a socio-historical perspective, I am now working through specific issues and problems within that history. The first element of this, a study of the origins of the Eucharist was published by SCM in 2011.
- Religion in an Urban Ecology. I am interested in applying ethnographic methods to the understanding of discourses around religion in an inner-urban context. In particular I am currently exploring the role of religion in contexts of superdiversity. I am currently working this up into a book due to be published by Ashgate in 2013.
- The Uses of the Dogon. Starting from the position of an anthropologist and a collector of the art of the Dogon people of Mali, I am interested in the representation of these people in a range of Western discourses and the way in which that representation can be reflected in exhibitions and through virtual environments. I gave two public lectures on this issue at the University in 2011: **The Value(s) of African Art** and **Shifting Sands: Linking Myth and Art from Ancient Egypt to Contemporary Africa**.

Publications

Books

- Rethinking the Origins of the Eucharist (SCM, 2011)
- Contemporary Western Ethnography of the Definition of Religion (Continuum, 2008)
- A Sociological History of the Christian Worship (Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- (With E. Arweck) (eds.) Theorising Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem and the Study of Ritual. (Birmingham University Press, 2001)
- On the Perception of Worship: An Ethnographic Study of Worship in Four Christian Congregations in Manchester (Birmingham University Press, 1999)

Papers: Liturgy

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- 'Rethinking the Origins of the Eucharist, A Socio-Historical Approach' (*Jaarboek voor liturgieonderzoek* 25, 2009, pp19-34)
- 'Harvey Whitehouse, Memory and Liturgical Formation' (*Anaphora, The Journal of the Society for Liturgical Study*, Vol 2, Part 2, 2008, pp45-60)
- 'Gadamer and Hermeneutics' (*Anaphora, The Journal of the Society for Liturgical Study*, Vol 1, Part 1, 2007, pp 1-18)
- 'Social Sciences and the Study of Liturgy' in P. Bradshaw (ed.) *The New SCM Dictionary of Liturgy and Worship* (SCM Press, 2002, pp443-445)
- 'Celebrating the Massacre of Innocence?' in K. A. Read & I. Wollaston (eds.) *Suffer the Little Children: Urban Violence and Sacred Space* (Birmingham University Press, 2001, pp143-156)
- 'Text, Context and Performance: Hermeneutics and the Study of Worship' (*Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol 53, No 3, 2000, pp365-379)
- 'Style against Structure: The Legacy of John Mason Neale for Liturgical Scholarship' (*Studia Liturgica*, Vol 27, No 2, 1997, pp235-245)
- 'Liturgy and Pastoral Care' (*Contact*, Vol 115, 1994, pp10-14)
- 'Antiquities of an English Liturgist: William Palmer's Use of Origins in the Study of the English Liturgy' (*Ephemerides Liturgicae*, Vol 108, 1994, pp146-156)
- 'Situating Meaning in the Liturgical Text' (*Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, Vol 73, No 3, Autumn 1991, pp181-194)
- 'Whose Liturgy is it Anyway?' (*Church Observer*, Spring 1991, pp1-3)
- 'Liturgy and Anthropology, the History of a Relationship' (*Worship*, Vol 63, No 6, November 1989, pp503-521)
- 'Adapting Our Worship' (*Church Observer*, Spring 1989, pp10-11)

Papers: Anthropology

- 'Chatting with Gran at her Grave: Ethnography and the Definition of Religion' in P. Crutchley-Jones (ed.) *God at Ground Level*. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008, pp 23-40)
- 'Managing Religious Diversity through the Discourses of Ordinary Members of Inner-Urban Neighbourhoods in Birmingham UK' in K. P. Kumar (ed.) *Religious Pluralism in the Diaspora*. (Leiden: Brill, 2006, pp221-234)
- 'Introduction, Theorising Faith' in E. Arweck & M. D. Stringer (eds.) *Theorising Faith: The Insider/Outsider Problem and the Study of Ritual*. (Birmingham University Press, 2001)
- 'Discourse and the Ethnographic Study of Sufi Worship: Some Practical Suggestions' in A. Zhelyazkova & J. Nielsen (eds.) *Ethnology of Sufi Orders: Theory and Practice* (CSIC & IMIR, 2001, pp 412-432)
- 'Rethinking Animism: Thoughts From the Infancy of Our Discipline' (*Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, (N.S.) Vol 5, No 4, Dec 1999, pp 541- 556)
- 'Ethnicity, Politics and Transnational Islam: A Study of an International Sufi Order: Discussion Document on Methodology'
- 'Towards a Situational Theory of Belief' (*Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford*, Vol XXVII, No 3, Michaelmas 1996, pp217-234)
- 'On Reading Durkheim' (*Reviews in Religion and Theology*, 1998/4 November, pp6-12)

Papers: Inner-city churches, theology, religious studies

- 'Discourses, Institutions and Populations, Religion in an Urban Ecology.' (*CrossCurrents*, Vol 58, No 3, 2008, pp495-510)
- 'Listening to the Language, Listening to the Words and Listening to the Spaces between the Words: Rhetoric and Pragmatics in the Performance of Christian-Muslim Relations.' (*Islam and Christian Muslim Relations*, Vol 18, No 3, 2007, pp 421-430)
- 'The Worship and Action of the Local Church: Anthropological Strand' in H. Cameron et al (eds.) *Studying Local Churches, A Handbook* (SCM Press, 2005, pp89-98)
- 'Putting Congregational Studies to Work: Ethnography, Consultancy and Change' in M. Guest et al (eds.) *Congregational Studies in the UK: Christianity in a Post-Christian Perspective* (Ashgate, 2004, pp203-214)
- 'Whither TRS' (*Reviews in Religion and Theology*, Vol 8, No 4, 2001 pp384-390)
- 'Theology and the Human City (The Human City Initiative)', (Christians in Public Life Programme, Position Paper B17, Series 2, June 1995, reproduced in D. Clark (ed.) *Changing World, Unchanging Church? An Agenda for Christians in Public Life* (Mowbray 1997) pp94-96)
- 'So What is Religious Studies? Gerald Parsons' The Growth of Religious Diversity', (*Reviews in Religion and Theology*, 1995/1 February, pp9-16)
- 'Manchester - United Amid Disintegration' (*Act Now*, No 23, Spring 1991, pp10-14)

Papers: Sexuality

- 'The Many Faces of Anglicanism' in A. Linzey & R. Kirker (eds.) *Gays and the Future of Anglicanism, Responses to the Windsor Report* (O Books, 2005, pp260-273)
- 'Identity and the Anglican Priesthood: Debates on the Ordination of Women and Homosexuals in Sociological Perspective' in S. Coleman & P. Collins (eds.) *Religion, Identity and Change, Perspectives on Global Transformations* (Ashgate, 2004 pp57-68)
- 'Of Gin and Lace: Sexuality, Liturgy and Identity among Anglo-Catholics in the Mid-Twentieth Century' (*Theology and Sexuality*, No 13, Sept 2000, pp35-54)
- 'In Memoriam Michael Vasey' (*Theology and Sexuality*, No 13, Sept 2000, pp9-14)
- 'Expanding the Boundaries of Sex: An Exploration of Sexual Ethics after the Second Sexual Revolution' (*Theology and Sexuality*, No 7, Sept 1997, pp27-43)
- 'Are We Really Breaking Free' (*Reviews in Religion and Theology*, 1996/3 August, pp8-15)

Expertise

Religion in the UK; religious diversity within Birmingham, within the UK and in relation to equality legislation; religious literacy; religion in urban contexts; religion and super-diversity; church based issues, especially the Catholic and Anglican churches.

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