

# ON (NOT) LOSING MY RELIGION:

## Unsettling Gendered Forms of White Virtue to Engage Intersectional Research and Activism in Pre-Possessed Countries

a lecture by **Dr. Fiona Nicoll**

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**Friday, November 18, 3:00 – 4:30**

**Senate Chamber  
(Arts and Convocation Hall 3-26)**

### **Abstract:**

Drawing on critical scholars of whiteness, including Aileen Moreton-Robinson, Sara Ahmed and George Yancy, this paper adopts the lens of 'virtue' to reflect on lessons available from the recent US election result and debates about free speech currently raging in Australia. Specifically, it considers how white women in settler-colonial nations are oriented towards liberal values such as 'tolerance', 'recognition', 'inclusion', 'diversity' and 'reconciliation' as virtuous individuals. I argue that this orientation not only desensitizes us to our implication in broader sovereignty struggles in countries pre-possessed by Indigenous people; it perpetuates politically active forms of white ignorance (Mills 2007) at a moment when intersectional (Crenshaw 1993) research and activism are urgently needed. I conclude by proposing epistemological strategies to counter the individualising force of virtue as a racial value within the neoliberal university.

### **Biography:**

Fiona Nicoll is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Alberta and Canada Research Chair in Gambling Policy with the Alberta Gambling Research Institute. A founding member of the Australian Critical Race and Whiteness Studies Association and co-editor of *Transnational Whiteness Matters* (Lexington Press, 2008) and *Courting Blackness: Recalibrating Knowledge in the Sandstone University* (University of Queensland Press, 2015), she has published numerous chapters and articles on reconciliation, Indigenous sovereignty activism and whiteness in the Australian context. She has also worked with contemporary Indigenous artists and community leaders on public education and art projects. These include *Aunty Nance*, a social history exhibition on the life of a survivor of the stolen generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who gave a speech to the New South Wales parliament on the occasion of its formal apology (2001-2) and an installation of art by Karla Dickens, Archie Moore, Christian Thompson, Michael Cook, Ryan Presley, r e a, Megan Cope and Natalie Harkin in the Great Court of the University of Queensland which was curated by Fiona Foley (2015).

