



Call for Papers

The 45th annual meeting of the Christian Sociological Association, together with the Christian Anthropological Association, will be held at

Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, GA
June 27 - 30, 2024

Abstracts of papers and presentations should be submitted by **May 15** to
 Timothy Epp, Program Chair
 at tepp@redeemer.ca

Conference Theme:
“Taking Sociology and Anthropology to the Public Square”

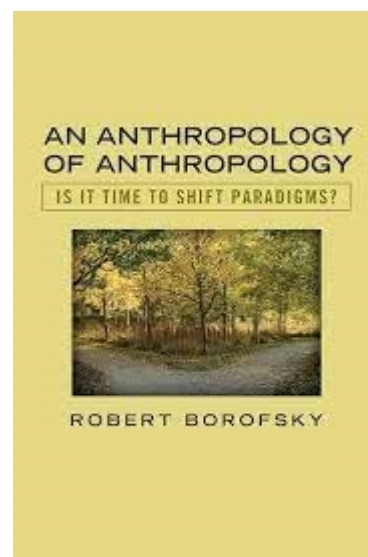
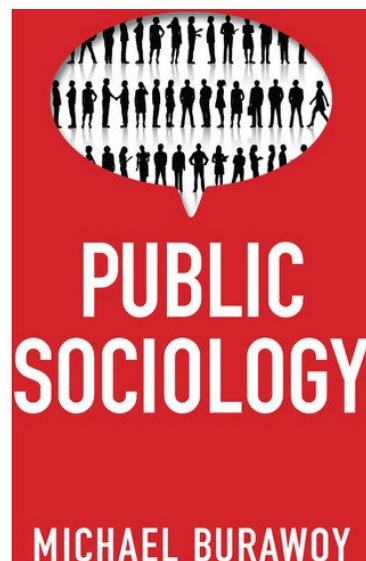
In his recent book *Public Sociology*, Michael Burawoy (2021:36) explicates four modes of sociology.

		Knowledge for Whom?	
		<i>Academic Audience</i>	<i>Extra-Academic Audience</i>
Knowledge for What?	<i>Instrumental Knowledge</i>	Professional Sociology	Policy Sociology
	<i>Reflexive Knowledge</i>	Critical Sociology	Public Sociology

Burawoy notes that, while the four modes should be mutually supportive, they can become pathological. *Professional sociology* can become self-referential; *policy sociology* can be captured by clients; *critical sociology* can become dogmatic; and *public sociology* can devolve into populism or faddishness. “In each case the particular type of sociology cuts itself off from the others to the detriment of the discipline as a whole” (39). Arguing for greater integration between them, he writes:

Now is the time for sociology to wake up and take a grip on itself, recover its original mission to defend society against an overweening state and out-of-control market, battle the forces of extinction by elaborating visions growing in the interstices of capitalism. It cannot forsake its utopian and anti-utopian commitments; exposing possibilities within limits and thereby expanding the limits of the possible. (214)

Expressing a similar concern, Robert Borofsky (2019), who coined the term “public anthropology” in the late 1990s, expresses his unease with sharply delineating this new “field” from other fields in anthropology such as applied anthropology. At the same time, he cautions that public anthropology must not “get drawn back into the university-based hegemonic-like structures it is resisting—it must reflect on how to shift the discipline’s paradigmatic focus. It needs to reframe the underlying hegemonic-like structures that repeatedly limit public engagement” (133). To this end, “The public anthropology paradigm seeks to move beyond ‘doing no harm’—demonstrating how anthropology actually benefits other people in ways that they recognize and appreciate” (133).



Christian sociologists and anthropologists will recognize the tensions noted by Burawoy, and especially Borofsky. We acutely feel the institutional hegemony that both enables and restricts our work, we struggle to integrate our priestly and prophetic voices, and we recognize the complicity of our institutions and ourselves in compounding the social problems we work to bring to public expression and hope to resolve. Purposeful engagement with the publics outside academy walls can invigorate our work, challenge institutional hegemony, offer the church insight into a complex late modern world that resists “old” approaches to new multifaceted problems, and provide an avenue to serve God through renewed attempts to take seriously the upside-down kingdom of Jesus where the weak are strong, the last are first, to lead is to serve, and there are no strangers or scapegoats.

With these tensions, goals, and utopian visions in mind, we invite presentations at the intersection of sociology and Christianity as well as anthropology and Christianity that focus on public social engagement. Laura Nichols (2017:313) offers several examples of public sociology, including:

- Showing how the dynamics between nurses and doctors in hospitals impact patient care.
- Advising government organizations such as the National aeronautics and Space Administration on how organizational culture in an era of technological prowess can lead to bad decision-making at NASA.
- Conducting interviews and making observations to design and implement a new technology driven by user needs and interests.
- Blogging about how programs that provide safe facilities to inject illegal drugs save lives and public dollars.
- Providing research that informs court cases about issues such as affirmative action.

To these we might add topics such as writing newspaper editorials that offer sociological and anthropological insight into various issues of importance, conducting participatory action research that offers academic expertise to marginalized people groups, sociologically or anthropologically informed advocacy, engagement with protest movements or collective behavior, documentary filmmaking, giving public lectures on a variety of topics, counterhegemonic action in institutions, bringing an informed prophetic voice to churches and other religious bodies, sociological/anthropological engagement with the political sphere, and many others.

Note: While “Taking Sociology and Anthropology to the Public Square” is the theme of this conference, we also warmly invite and welcome without reservation papers exploring other issues of interest to Christian sociologists and anthropologists.

Borofsky, Robert. 2019. *An Anthropology of Anthropology: Is It Time to Shift Paradigms?* Kailua, HI: Center for a Public Anthropology.

Burawoy, Michael. 2021. *Public Sociology: Between Utopia and Anti-Utopia*. Cambridge, UK; Medford, MA: Polity Press.

Nichols, Laura. 2017. "Public Sociology." *The Cambridge Handbook of Sociology: Volume 2 Specialty and Interdisciplinary Studies*. Pp. 313-321 K. O. Korgen (Ed.). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.