

Spectrums Project FAQ

What is the Spectrums Project?

The Spectrums Project (SP) is a scientific research effort into the nature of religious ideology, especially along the left-right religious-ideology spectrum. This research includes the existential, psychological, spiritual, and social functions and consequences of religious ideology. Find out more at www.SpectrumsProject.org.

Who runs the Spectrums Project?

SP is conducted by the Institute for the Bio-Cultural Study of Religion (IBCSR; see www.ibcsr.org), a non-profit independent research institute with strong connections to Boston University. SP is run by Dr. Wesley J. Wildman (Philosophy, Theology, and Ethics, Boston University) and Dr. Catherine Caldwell Harris (Psychology, Boston University), with two post-docs and two PhD students. Advisors to the project are Profs. Dino Christenson (Political Science, Boston University), Shiela Greeve Davaney (Ford Foundation), John T. Jost (Psychology, NYU), Valerie Lewis (Sociology, Harvard University Kennedy School), and F. LeRon Shults (Philosophy and Theology, Agder University, Norway).

Who funds the Spectrums Project?

SP was funded by IBCSR, initially, with funds ultimately coming from private foundations with an interest in scientific research into religion and spirituality. From 2011-2013, SP is funded by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, through a grant won by Mary Elizabeth Moore, STH Dean.

What does the Spectrums Project have to do with the School of Theology?

Mary Elizabeth Moore commissioned the SP team to advise STH faculty and staff on (1) improving the training of religious professionals in the area of religious ideology and awareness, and (2) the effective formation of authentic community within an ideologically diverse school.

What does this mean for me?

The interaction between SP and STH could potentially be very meaningful for you, depending on your role in the school. Here what you can expect if you participate in the varied events that are coming.

- You can expect to learn about religious ideology research, which is fascinating and of great practical importance in churches and the wider culture, in seminaries and universities, all over the world.
- You can expect to gain a nuanced appreciation of your own ideological outlook using the Multidimensional Religious Ideology (MRI) scale developed during this project.
- You can expect to think differently about what it means to prepare students for religious leadership.
- You can expect to incorporate elements of SP research and SP resources into the programs and courses for which you have special responsibility within STH.

What events are planned?

The first event, a lecture-discussion introducing SP to the STH community, was held late last year. The next event is a public lecture-discussion in B19 on Thursday Sep 27, 2012, 5:00-6:30pm. The following day, Friday Sep 28, there is a 90-minute morning workshop for STH professors and staff to make plans for incorporating elements of SP research and SP resources into STH programming and courses. Expect SP events to pop up in a variety of venues going forward.

I am really busy and don't have time for this. What do you say to that?

We're busier than you are! Seriously, SP promises a **low-energy, high-impact improvement** in seminary education and community building right where you work, among the students you care about. Find out what that impact can be before you make a final decision about getting involved. Come to the September 27 Thursday evening lecture and discussion, and the September 28 Friday morning workshop to learn more.