

## Watch Unification Theological Seminary Faculty to Speak at ACUNS Tomorrow

Thomas G. Walsh  
June 21, 2023



**Unification Theological Seminary**  
Building Effectiveness in Ministry and Public Leadership

### UTS FACULTY TO DISCUSS RELIGION, PEACEBUILDING, AND CONFLICT

Annual Conference of the Advisory Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS)



**June 22**

1:15 pm – 2:30 pm ET

Dr. Thomas Walsh to co-chair the session with Dr. Colette Mazzucelli of New York University  
Dr. Thomas Ward and Prof. William Lay to join as panelists

[JOIN HERE \(ZOOM LINK\)](#)

We invite you to join the virtual audience for a session at the 36th Annual Meeting of the Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) featuring members of our UTS faculty.

The session will take place on **Thursday, June 22 from 1:15 - 2:30 pm ET**. Please use the Zoom link above to join at the appropriate time. Additional session details can be found below:

#### “RELIGION IN PEACEBUILDING AND IN CONFLICT”

##### SESSION CO-CHAIRS

**Thomas Walsh**, Universal Peace Federation

**Colette Mazzucelli** Founder and Principal, LEAD IMPACT Inc.

##### SESSION PANELISTS/DISCUSSANTS

**William Lay**, University of Bridgeport

**Thomas Ward**, Unification Theological Seminary

**Jamal Al Aref**, International Advisor, LEAD IMPACT Inc.

**Sakeena Yacoobi**, Afghan Institute of Learning

**Jan Figel**, Former European Commissioner and Special Envoy for the Promotion of Religious Freedom

## INFORMATION ON PANELISTS



**Thomas J. Ward, Professor of Peace and Development Studies, Unification Theological Seminary, New York, NY**

**Media Agenda Setting versus the Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion**

**Abstract:** Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, articulated in 1940, informed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. FDR's four freedoms can empower each other; however, proponents of one freedom, may lose perspective

and fail to respect one or all of the three remaining pillars. In their coverage of minority religions, major journalists have embraced inchoate theories claiming to measure the legitimacy of any faith. The "authorities" whom these journalists validate, are not trained religious scholars but have been exposed apologists for hate groups with minimal religious training in most cases. "Agenda setting," as it is referred to in Communication Theory<sup>1</sup>, contributes to media consumers assuming that an issue and, how it is framed, has legitimacy. This presentation invites reflection on how this practice, when based on faulty premises, demeans religion.

<sup>1</sup> S.W. Littlejohn and K.A. Foff, eds. Encyclopedia of Communication Theory (London, Sage Publications, 2009), p. 31.

**Bio:** Thomas J. Ward serves as Provost and Professor of Peace and Development Studies at Unification Theological Seminary. Immediately prior to his current role, he served for three years as the President of UTS, and previously served for eighteen years as Dean of the University of Bridgeport's College of Public and International Affairs where he taught graduate courses on

Economic Integration. Dr. Ward has lived and worked in the United States, Europe, Latin America and East Asia. Ward's writings and research have been published in the Washington Times, World and I Magazine, the International Journal of World Peace, East Asia Quarterly, and The Asia-Pacific Journal:: Japan Focus,. Paragon House, and E-International Relations. He has been a Fulbright Scholar, a Taiwan Foreign Ministry Research Fellow, and a guest lecturer at the University of Delhi's Miranda House, the Academy of Social Science in Beijing and at Academia Sinica's Institute of Modern History in Taipei. He also served as a Board Member of the Committee on Teaching about the United Nations (CTAUN) and as a member of the Human Rights Commission of Dutchess County, New York.



**Dr. Sakena Yacoobi, Founder and Chair, Afghan Institute of Learning**

**Why Religious Freedom Should Be An Essential Part of the Curriculum in Schools for Girls and Boys: Reflections on My Experience in Afghanistan**

**Abstract:** This presentation will speak about education in Afghanistan and will recommend the inclusion of religious freedom in the curriculum. Having worked for the past 25 years in developing schools for girls in Afghanistan, Dr. Yacoobi has vast first hand experience with education in the conflict-torn region, and

advocates the teaching of principles of good citizenship to young students, along with respect for other religions, in a way that is of course also respectful of Islam as the official majority religion of the country.



**William D. Lay, J.D., Adjunct Professor, University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, Connecticut**

**The Importance of Free Exercise and Non-Establishment in Peacebuilding Efforts**

**Abstract:** The twin principles of Free Exercise and Non-Establishment are enshrined in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. The principle of Free Exercise is also set forth in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Although Free Exercise and Non-Establishment

generally functioned well in U.S. history to avoid major religious conflicts and allow for problem-solving and decision-making in the public space. Arguably, that fortunate state of affairs may be changing, as religious and anti-religious groups seek to use constitutional rights to their best advantage. The presentation will consider some of the inherent tensions in First Amendment religion law, and how those tensions pose considerable challenges to the peacebuilding process today.

**Bio:** Prof. William D. Lay is an Attorney, New York; Former Director, School of Public and International Affairs, University of Bridgeport; Former Associate Professor and Chair of Criminal Justice and Human Security, University of Bridgeport; Harlan Fiske Stone Scholar Columbia Law School; Senior Editor Columbia Law Review; served as Senior Law Clerk to Hon. Joseph W. Bellacosa, Associate Justice of the New York Court of Appeals; Prof. Lay has recently co-authored published articles on International Law and the South China Sea Disputes (in the Harvard Asia Quarterly) and the Comfort Women Controversy (in East Asia); he also recently co-authored a book on Comfort Women Memorials in the U.S. (E-International Relations Publishing).

