

# ATS writers reach wide audiences through The Conversation

By BRUCE WILSON

## THE CONVERSATION

*In the last 12 months, 17 scholarly writers from ATS member schools have published 22 articles through The Conversation (TCUS), with a total number of more than 940,000 readers. There have been more than 85 digital media outlets that have republished these articles, including mainstream outlets like Salon, Alternet, Yes!, Popular Science, The National Interest, and Gannett papers as well as religion focused media like Ministry Matters and the Religion News Service. On top of the digital reprints, more than 40 print newspapers across the country have republished these articles.*

In early 2020, The Conversation embarked on a three-year grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. to fund ATS as a member of TCUS. The goal of the grant is to encourage scholars from ATS member schools to write content for TCUS and to help these scholars become public voices. Given that TCUS publishes under a Creative Commons platform (i.e., free for any media outlet to republish), all the articles authored by ATS scholars have reached very broad audiences.

There were many plans made for TCUS staff to attend in-person ATS leadership education and regional events so that ATS members could be informed of the new grant and invited to participate. As everyone knows, right out of the gate, the devastating hurricane in Puerto Rico set the tone for a year we will all never forget. Thankfully, there has still been significant success in finding ATS scholars to write articles and contribute to the partnership.

In December 2020, members of the Global Religion Journalism Initiative held a webinar that included ATS scholar Steven P. Millies, an associate professor of public theology and the director of The Bernardin Center at the Catholic Theological Union, who has published with TCUS. The webinar, “Moving Forward with Faith—Religion and Politics in a Biden Presidency,” was hosted by Peter Smith, former president of Religion News Association and religion reporter at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. Other panelists included Dilshad D. Ali, the former editor-in-chief of Altmuslim; Russell Moore, theologian and president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Barbara Williams-Skinner, CEO and cofounder of Skinner Leadership Institute and co-convener of the National African American Clergy Network.

Several webinars have recently been held to increase participation. In November 2020 and March 2021, TCUS hosted virtual workshops on writing for the public titled “Bringing Your Scholarship to the Public: A Workshop for ATS Scholars.” TCUS ethics and religion editors talked about bringing scholarship to the public sphere and offered time for participants to ask questions and discuss their potential story ideas. At the March gathering, Rodolfo Gavan Estrada III, a New Testament scholar at Fuller Theological Seminary, discussed his experience in working with The Conversation to publish one of his stories that originated from a past TCUS workshop for ATS scholars.

Several communication professionals who work at ATS schools attended The Conversation’s “Pitching for Communicators—A Workshop for Communications and Media

Relations Professionals from Our Partner Institutions” last month. They learned what TCUS editors look for in a pitch and preferred guidelines for pitching articles, were shown some examples of strong pitches, and were given some time for Q & A regarding the pitching process.

TCUS also created a special expert request list just for ATS members in June 2020 that is emailed every week.

ATS also posts this special expert request list weekly on [Engage ATS](#). In addition, TCUS Religion and Faith Editor Matt Williams holds weekly office hours. ATS scholars can meet with Williams to discuss story ideas, the TCUS editing process, and their scholarships with him one-on-one.



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