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Spiritual Fandom: Pentecostalism, Cosmopolitan Imaginaries and Hillsong

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This paper draws on my new book *Cool Christianity: Hillsong and the Fashioning of Cosmopolitan Identities* (OUP 2024). It argues that, as Hillsong became a global megachurch on the back of its bands that toured the world and its services that resemble rock concerts, international youth developed a relationship of 'spiritual fandom' with the megachurch's celebrity musicians and pastors. Before the issues of sexual abuse and financial impropriety rocked the megachurch between 2020-2023, thousands of youth from around the world enrolled at Hillsong College in Sydney every year. Although their numbers have declined, for those from the Global South, Hillsong's appeal has not diminished. Here I will focus on young Brazilians, a cohort that comprises a large number of international students in Australia (25k in 2023). Pentecostals see God as a kind and caring father who guides them throughout their lives. For young Brazilians, fandom for the megachurch is due to a spiritual calling and a desire to live in Australia, as part of the Global North. They wanted to learn a 'modern' way to be Christian so that they could transform their own churches and country on their return. Here I show how celebrity culture and spirituality can be enmeshed in late modernity.

This seminar will take place at **3pm** in **Seminar Room B, Coombs Building**.

Contact

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