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Professor and Executive Director  
International Beliefs and Values Institute

# **Sustainable Visions and Values: Calling the Global Academy to Action**

**The International Beliefs and Values Institute at James Madison University will host an international conference May 14 – 17, 2009. Attendees will also have the opportunity to participate in two interrelated IBAVI initiatives: a video series and new journal.**

The International Beliefs and Values Institute (<http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi>) is pleased to announce an international conference—*Sustainable Visions and Values: Calling the Global Academy to Action*—to be held at James Madison University in Virginia (U.S.A.), May 14 – 17, 2009. Working in partnership with the Global Leadership Network (<http://www.globalleader-shipnetwork.net/index.html>), International Network of Universities (<http://www.inunis.net/index.htm>), MacNeil Lehrer Productions (<http://www.macneil-lehrer.com/about.html>), and Springer Publishing (<http://www.springerpub.com/>), this conference will bring together international participants from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences in order to 1) discuss the linkage between “beliefs and values” and actions, policies, and practices around the world, 2) identify exemplary scholarly, teaching, and service activities across six thematic areas of focus, and 3) develop recommendations for future action that are relevant to the academy, policy makers, leaders from a wide range of relevant areas (e.g., non-governmental organizations, education, religion, business, media), and the public at large.

Selected aspects of the conference will also be filmed for *Making Sense of Beliefs and Values: A World of Views*, a video series produced by MacNeil Lehrer Productions, regarding the nature, origins, and implications of beliefs and values—both historically and currently. In advance of the SVV conference, participants will also receive the inaugural copy of *Beliefs and Values: Understanding the Global Implications of Human Nature*, a new journal from Springer Publishing, which will feature articles, interviews, and commentary by a wide range of distinguished contributors from around the world.

Because these three IBAVI initiatives—the SVV conference, video series, and new journal—are all interrelated, attendees will have the opportunity to participate in various aspects of each (additional information is below; see also <http://www.jmu.edu/jmuweb/general/news/general9816.shtml>).

## **SVV Conference Presenters**

Through audience exchange, roundtable discussions, and workgroup deliberations, participants will have the opportunity to dialogue and interact directly with the following distinguished presenters.



**Akwasi Aidoo, Ph.D.**

Executive Director, Trust Africa, Senegal

[http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/akwasi\\_aidoo.html](http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/akwasi_aidoo.html)



**Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne**

Founder and President, Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, Sri Lanka

[http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/Ariyaratne\\_Litt.html](http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/Ariyaratne_Litt.html)



**Jo Beall, Ph.D.**

Professor and Director (fmr.), Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics

[http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/jo\\_beall.html](http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/jo_beall.html)



**Thais Corral, M.A.**

Co-Chair, Global Leadership Network and Executive Director and Founder, The Network for Human Development, Brazil

[http://www.globalleadershipnetwork.net/gln\\_author\\_bios/Thais.pdf](http://www.globalleadershipnetwork.net/gln_author_bios/Thais.pdf)



**Sergey Erofeev, Ph.D.**

Professor and Director, Centre for the Sociology of Culture, Kazan State University, Russia

[http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/Sergey\\_Erofeev.html](http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/Sergey_Erofeev.html)



**Walter Link, M.A., M.B.A.**

Co-founder and Co-chair, Global Leadership Network and Co-founder and Chair, The Global Academy

[http://www.globalleadershipnetwork.net/gln\\_author\\_bios/Walter.pdf](http://www.globalleadershipnetwork.net/gln_author_bios/Walter.pdf)



**Christine Loh, OBE**

Founder and Executive Director, Civic Exchange, Hong Kong

[http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/christine\\_loh.html](http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/christine_loh.html)



**Usha Nayar, Ph.D.**

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**Dr. Riane Eisler**

Author and President, Center for Partnership Studies, USA

<http://www.partnershipway.org/>



**Mary Evelyn Tucker, Ph.D and John Grim, Ph.D.**

Co-Directors, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University, USA

<http://www.religionandecology.org/About/founders.php>



**Karan Singh, Ph.D.**

Member of Parliament India and President, The People's Commission on Environment and Development, India

<http://www.karansingh.com/>

## **SVV Conference Rationale**

Analysis of recent events and available evidence suggests that it is neither unreasonable nor alarmist to conclude that we are placing ourselves at increasing risk of causing negative and potentially irreversible consequences for humanity and our planet. As such, a critical mass of the world's population must come to understand that the actions, policies, and practices of individuals, groups, organizations, governments, and societies are mediated by beliefs and values that may be highly subjective, non-conscious, and self-serving rather than just, equitable, rational, and sustainable. Such understanding must be sufficiently achieved in the near future by a substantial proportion of the world's population—as well as those who are in positions of relative power and influence—and subsequently translated into relevant actions, policies, and practices.

## **SVV Conference Goals and Objectives**

Toward these ends, and more specifically, the International Beliefs and Values Institute at James Madison University in Virginia (U.S.A.) maintains that we must establish a more just, equitable, rational, and sustainable world order in which the following goals are emphasized:

1. Conflict Resolution: conflicts can be resolved through dialogue, reason, mutual understanding, and reconciliation.
2. Human and Minority Rights: human and minority rights are demonstrably respected and protected.
3. Sustainability: the ecosystem and natural resources upon which life depends are secured and preserved.
4. Equal Treatment and Access: individuals and groups are neither persecuted nor denied equal access to education or social, legal, political, and economic resources for arbitrary and capricious reasons (e.g., of ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, political views, religious faith or lack thereof, social and economic status, or family lineage).
5. Global Education: educational systems deliberately expose students of all ages to the perspectives and experiences of individuals, groups, and cultures around the world.
6. Religious and Cultural Understanding: tolerance and understanding supplant hatred and violence in matters of cultural difference and religious faith.

To accomplish these goals, the international academic community—in concert with allied individuals and organizations in the public and private sectors—must become much more proactive and deliberate, by organizing and directing our vast analytic capacity toward two overarching objectives.

Objective 1. Across all of the above goals, we must examine, describe, and explain the linkages between the implicit or explicit beliefs and values of individuals, groups, organizations, governments, and societies around the world and those actions, policies, or practices that are demonstrably grounded in or legitimized by these specific beliefs and values.

Objective 2. We must subsequently translate what we discover regarding these belief/value linkages into sustainable, international, and interdisciplinary programs of action (e.g., scholarship, education, outreach), that can be readily apprehended by the academy, policy makers, leaders from a wide range of relevant areas (e.g., non-governmental organizations, education, religion, business, media), and the public at large.

### **Related Initiatives: Journal and Video Series**<sup>1</sup>

Recently, the IBAVI approached MacNeil Lehrer Productions, a highly regarded Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) production company (<http://www.macneil-lehrer.com/>) in the United States, to ascertain its interest in partnering on a video series project entitled *Making Sense of Beliefs and Values: A World of Views*, which examines beliefs and values around the world through the contemporary and historic lens of religion, politics, ethnicity, gender, art, war, the environment, and belief/value transformation. “We are delighted to be working on this project with IBAVI,” says Les Crystal, President of MacNeil Lehrer Productions. “The topic of faith and values often comes loaded with preconceptions and

<sup>1</sup> This section is excerpted from a March 28, 2008 press release from James Madison University. Please see <http://www.jmu.edu/jmuweb/general/news/general9816.shtml> for additional information and the complete press release.

passionate views. For more than 30 years, in producing the NewsHour on PBS, we have made it our mission to address complex and intricate subjects with depth, nuance, balance and intelligence. We are particularly sensitive to the importance of incorporating multiple view points with civility and respect.”

The results of this conference will be published in another forum, a new academic journal from Springer Publishing Company, based in New York (<http://www.springerpub.com/>). The inaugural issue of this new journal—*Beliefs and Values: Understanding the Global Implications of Human Nature*—will feature keynote addresses and commentary by a wide range of distinguished contributors from around the world. Building upon the conference, subsequent issues of *Beliefs and Values* will examine the link between beliefs and values and actions, policies, and practices across a number of thematic areas (e.g., conflict resolution, human and minority rights, sustainability, equal access, global education, religious and cultural understanding).

“Springer has a tradition of producing socially conscious publications,” says James Costello, Director of Journal Publishing at Springer. “We are pleased to launch this academically founded and intellectually stimulating new journal in conjunction with the video series and international conference. The wide distribution of ideas brings the concepts supported by research to policymakers and to the public, precisely those in the best position to implement change. In order to sustain the planet and guarantee a future, it is crucial that we engage in respectful discourse founded upon an understanding of the reasons behind the beliefs and values that we and others hold.” All of these belief/value projects—the video series, new journal, and international conference—are interrelated in that individuals or programs to be featured in the video series, such as Dr. A. T. Ariyaratne, Founder and President of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka and member of the IBAVI’s Advisory Board ([http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/Ariyaratne\\_Litt.html](http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/Ariyaratne_Litt.html)), will also participate in the conference and new journal.

The overarching goal of all of these initiatives is to “understand beliefs and values and their impact on the decisions people make because they underpin how we see the world and each other,” says Dr. Christine Loh, Founder and Chief Executive Office of Civic Exchange in Hong Kong, and member of the IBAVI’s Advisory Board ([http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/christine\\_loh.html](http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/christine_loh.html)). As Dr. Jo Beall, Professor of Development Studies at the London School of Economics, and another IBAVI Advisory Board member ([http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/jo\\_beall.html](http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/bios/jo_beall.html)) concludes, “In a world characterized by asymmetries of wealth and power, international cooperation will be better achieved if we can understand and respect each other’s beliefs in the process of achieving shared values.”

### **SVV Guiding Questions**

On any given day, conferences are occurring all over the world on a range of topics and issues; several systems have been developed to organize and archive the processes and outcomes of such conferences, such as the United Nations Conferences and Events (<http://www.un.org/events/>), Union of International Associations (<http://www.uia.org/meetings/>), and the “directory of all conferences.com” (<http://allconferences.com/>). Although this administrative infrastructure is very important, a review of such organizing and archival systems through a sustainability lens raises substantive questions of redundancy, relevance, buy-in, impact, and collaboration. As such, participants at *Sustainable Visions and Values: Calling the Global Academy to Action* will be asked to consider the following meta-analytic questions before, during, and after this conference.

1. How do we facilitate an optimal level of interdisciplinary and inter-professional collaboration in the common pursuit of conference goals and objectives?
2. How do we ensure a pluralistic and representative balance among stakeholders (e.g., international, cross-cultural) and epistemologies (e.g., different beliefs, values, and world views) throughout conference deliberations, processes, and outcomes?
3. How best can we promote synergy among scholarship, education, practice, and outreach (e.g., two-way dialogue among researchers, teachers, advocates, policy makers, and other professionals and public figures)?
4. What systems and mechanisms should be developed to fund, facilitate, and monitor the follow up and implementation of action plans that emerge from this conference?
5. When and how should the goals, objectives, processes, and outcomes of this conference be communicated to the academy, policy makers, other relevant communities, and the public at large (including, but not limited to, *Beliefs and Values* and the video series)?
6. How should we pursue sustainability, cost-effectiveness, relevance, and impact vis-à-vis our action plans over the short- and long-term?

### **Registering for the SVV Conference**

Because this is a working conference dealing with complex global and values-based issues and themes, participants from a wide range of international backgrounds, experiences, professions, and disciplines are encouraged to attend. A block of rooms has been reserved in a conference hotel, which is located in the beautiful and historic Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. We will also arrange for transportation to and from several airports servicing our region. Registration information (e.g., conference rates, booking a hotel room, transportation assistance) and an application are available by clicking on the following link: <http://SVVregistration@jmu.edu>.

### **Co-Sponsoring the SVV Conference**

Institutions and organizations that wish to co-sponsor this conference may do so by sending a delegate representative to the conference and making a financial contribution to the SVV conference, which will be used to offset expenses (e.g., on-site; keynote speakers; pre- and post-conference planning). All co-sponsoring institutions or organizations will be listed as such in 1) *Beliefs and Values: Understanding the Global Implications of Human Nature* (and automatically receive copies of the pre- and post-conference issues), 2) the video series, *Making Sense of Beliefs and Values: A World of Views*, and 3) any documentation or publications regarding this conference. The steering committee will also include all co-sponsoring institutions and organizations directly in conference planning and development processes. If your institution or organization is interested in co-sponsoring the SVV conference, please contact the IBAVI at +540-568-6477 or [ibavi@jmu.edu](mailto:ibavi@jmu.edu).

## **SVV Steering Committee**

The IBAVI's Advisory Board serves on the steering committee for the SVV conference (see <http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi/leadership.html>). Comprised of a distinguished and international assemblage of leading scholars, humanitarians, and organizational representatives from around the world, all of these individuals also serve on the editorial board for *Beliefs and Values*. In the context of the above rationale, goals, and guiding questions, the steering committee is responsible for:

1. optimizing relevance, efficiency, visibility, and impact of the conference;
2. ensuring fidelity to conference goals, objectives, questions, and outcomes;
3. inviting leading international scholars, educators, organizational representatives, business leaders/entrepreneurs, policy-makers, advocates, and other relevant public figures and professionals to participate in this conference;
4. seeking additional financial support for the conference as well as related pre- and post-conference activities; and,
5. reviewing the implications and applications of the SVV conference to the journal, *Beliefs and Values*, and video series.

## **SVV Outcomes**

Although specifics will be finalized by the steering committee and conference participants, the SVV conference envisions four outcomes: 1) specification of relevant exemplars, recommendations, and resources; 2) development of summary reports; 3) publications in *Beliefs and Values: Understanding the Global Implications of Human Nature*; and 4) identification of individuals and organizations to participate in the video series, *Making Sense of Beliefs and Values: A World of Views*.

### **1. Exemplars, Recommendations, and Resources**

Working in groups, participants will discuss and identify preliminary exemplars, recommendations, and resources at the level of scholarship, teaching, and service (common areas of emphasis within the academy) across each of the six value-based themes that are listed above. **Exemplars** could include 1) scholarly programs of research and/or models or theories that are particularly relevant, 2) noteworthy curricula or courses (e.g., K-12, college/university, continuing education), and/or 3) innovative and effective programs, projects, or other applications “in the field” which would appear to have particular promise or impact. Based upon this overview of exemplars, working groups will also provide **recommendations** across each of these areas (e.g., theoretical questions that may need to be addressed; curricula or coursework that should be developed; outreach programs that should be implemented to meet particular needs). Essentially, these recommendations will form the basis for “future directions.” Finally, for each of the six value-based themes, working groups will be also asked to list any **resources** (e.g., reading materials, websites, conferences proceedings, relevant organizations, upcoming events) under each of the six value-based themes. Ultimately, all of this content can be organized in tabular form via the following theme-by-action grid:

	<u>I Conflict Resolution</u>	<u>II Human and Minority Rights</u>	<u>III Sustainability</u>	<u>IV Equal Treatment and Access</u>	<u>V Global Education</u>	<u>VI Religious and Cultural Understanding</u>
A. <u>Scholarship</u> 1. Exemplars 2. Recommendations						
B. <u>Teaching</u> 1. Exemplars 2. Recommendations						
C. <u>Service</u> 1. Exemplars 2. Recommendations						
D. <u>Resources</u>						

## 2. Summary Reports

Based upon workgroup deliberations, workgroup chairs will develop a summary report at the conclusion of the SVV conference. Although the content of summary reports will be determined by the SVV conference steering committee and participants, likely areas of focus would include: 1) exemplars, recommendations, and resources; 2) additional written context so that the complexity of these issues can be understood (e.g., historical, cultural, religious, political, gender-based, economic); 3) the names and contact information for all committee members; 4) how the results of this conference and future activities may best be disseminated (including, but not limited to, publication in *Beliefs and Values*); 5) identification of funding opportunities and resources that can facilitate this process over the long-term; and 6) consensus regarding the processes for continued dialogue and collaboration in the future.

## 3. Publication in *Beliefs and Values*

As noted above, the inaugural issue of *Beliefs and Values: Understanding the Global Implications of Human Nature* is designed to provide guidance to SVV conference participants; the second issue of *Beliefs and Values* will highlight relevant conference proceedings (e.g., from the above theme-by-action grid and Summary Reports) along with potential topic areas and guidelines for target articles in successive issues of *Beliefs and Values*. For example, informed by SVV conference results, future articles will juxtapose relevant theory and data with real world examples (e.g., actions, policies, and practices) across each of the thematic areas listed above; exemplars (e.g., model policies, programmatic research, educational curricula/initiatives, social entrepreneurship, demonstration programs or projects) will be encouraged as will readings and resources at the conclusion of each article (e.g., upcoming conferences, web-based information, audiovisual materials, relevant organizational contacts). Additional features may also be included in each issue of *Beliefs and Values* (e.g., commentaries, book reviews, interviews).

## 4. Participation in Video Series

Because individual delegates and organizational representatives to the SVV conference may participate in the video series (e.g., through selected conference proceedings; on-site filming of specific program activities), the SVV conference will provide an excellent opportunity to identify additional and relevant areas of emphasis.

### **Contacting the IBAVI and Additional Information**

To learn more about the SVV conference, *Beliefs and Values* journal, or video series, please contact the IBAVI at +540-568-6477 or [ibavi@jmu.edu](mailto:ibavi@jmu.edu).

Please see the following links for additional information about the International Beliefs and Values Institute (<http://www.jmu.edu/ibavi>), James Madison University (<http://www.jmu.edu/>), and Shenandoah Valley of Virginia (<http://www.visitshenandoah.org/>).