

The Origin and Concept of Life
Workshop – Galapagos Islands 17-21 August, 2015
Universidad San Francisco de Quito – University of Oxford

The Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion (IRC) and the Galapagos Institute for the Arts and Sciences (GAIAS) are pleased to invite Latin American early career scholars to submit applications to take part at a workshop on *The Origin and Concept of Life* at the Galapagos Islands (Isla de San Cristóbal), Ecuador, 17-21 August, 2015, to be sent by 30 April, 2015.

The workshop will enable a select group of up to twenty-eight exceptional, early-career Latin American academics to interact with a team of three senior researchers, to foster interdisciplinary engagement across science, philosophy and theology. For this workshop, ‘early-career’ refers to post-graduate students (at masters or doctorate level), post-doctoral fellows, and scholars within their fifth year of tenure at any Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Latin America.

The main themes of the workshop will be the origin and concept of life, extra-terrestrial life, different kinds of life, and different perspectives on the definition of life. It is expected that accepted papers will engage with these themes from an interdisciplinary perspective including philosophical, scientific and theological understanding of life and its origin(s).

The organisers expect the workshop to be a venue for open discussion and debate, leading to the preparation of academic articles and papers to be published by the participants in national or international academic journals. The mornings of the workshop will be devoted to the lectures and discussion of the plenary speakers, while the afternoons will be reserved for the discussion in small groups of the participant’s papers. The programme will also include lectures on evolutionary biology, seminars on project management skills development, and a tour of the Islands. The main language of the workshop will be English.

Successful applicants will receive a stipend of up to \$1500 (which could be used to cover travel expenses), in addition to free accommodation and meals during the length of the workshop, and pre-reading materials to stimulate the discussions.

1. *Keynote speakers – “Who will lecture?”*

The organisers are pleased to announce an exceptional group of confirmed keynote speakers, who will engage in direct conversation, debate, and discussion with the participants on their own proposed papers and ideas:

- Prof Rafael Vicuña, Professor of Molecular Genetics and Microbiology, Universidad Católica de Chile. Prof Vicuña will address questions on the origin of life on Earth and the search for life on other planets, as well as the biological notion of life.
- Prof Celia Deane-Drummond, Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame, United States. Prof Deane-Drummond will engage with theological understandings of life as well as the theological and ethical implications of extra-terrestrial life.
- Prof John Brooke, Emeritus Professor of Science and Religion, Oxford University, will discuss historical debates in philosophy, theology and natural history, on extra-terrestrial life, as well as Darwin’s engagement with the question of life on Earth and its diversity.

2. Eligibility – “Who can apply?”

Any early-career scholar from Latin America can apply to participate in these workshops. In particular the organisers are interested in applications from scholars working on the biological sciences (including exobiology or astrobiology), the philosophy of biology or other philosophical related fields, theology (in relation to scientific work on life), and historians of science (in particular working on evolutionary biology). Scholars working on other fields are encouraged to contact Dr Ignacio Silva (latin.america@theology.ox.ac.uk) in advance to find ways of integrating their plans to the themes and topics of the workshop. Please visit the project’s website for a detailed, non-exhaustive list of possible research questions (www.cyral.org).

Up to twenty-eight early career scholars from Latin America who show exceptional promise, selected by means of the competitive assessment, will be invited to take part of this workshop. For this workshop, ‘early-career’ refers to post-graduate students (at masters or doctorate level), post-doctoral fellows, and scholars within their fifth year of tenure at any HEIs in Latin America.

3. Application instructions – “What do I need to send?”

Interested participants should submit their applications by **30 April, 2015**.

All applications, written in English, should include:

- A 1000-word statement of purpose, indicating the reasons for applicant to take part in the workshop, how she/he will benefit from it in particular relating to the stage of her/his career, and what are the prospect for her/his future academic career.
- A 1000-word summary of their proposed paper, to be discussed during the afternoon sessions, indicating with which keynote speaker she/he would like to work, and the intended journal/s for publication of the paper (the journal can be local or international). The paper itself can be in English, Spanish or Portuguese.
- An academic curriculum vitae.
- A letter of recommendation from her/his current or former graduate supervisor, or the home institution stating support for the application. These letters should be sent directly by the supervisor/institution to Dr Ignacio Silva (latin.america@theology.ox.ac.uk).

Application documents should be sent to Dr Ignacio Silva at latin.america@theology.ox.ac.uk, by **April 30 2015**. Notification of the assessments should be expected by May 30 2015.

4. Selection criteria – “What does a successful application look like?”

The applications will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Academic promise, as evidenced by CV, personal statement, and recommendation letter.
- Quality of abstract and paper proposed.
- Plans for publications.
- Future academic plans.

All enquiries, correspondence, and submission of applications should be sent to Dr Ignacio Silva at latin.america@theology.ox.ac.uk.