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Laurier professor combines religion and politics as new Balsillie School chair

WATERLOO – As one of five new Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) academic chairs appointed at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, Laurier religion and culture professor Dr. Paul Freston embraces the opportunity to combine religion and global affairs.

“This role is highly significant given the growing public visibility of religion across the globe,” said Freston.

Freston, recently named the CIGI chair of religion and politics in global context at the Balsillie School, is a sociologist with expertise in religion and global politics, religion and globalization and the sociology of religion. He has directed several international research teams.

“I regard my joint appointment within the religion and culture department at Laurier and the Balsillie School of International Affairs as an opportunity to, as it were, ‘face both ways,’” said Freston. “I’ll have the chance to bring political and sociological concerns into the study of religion and stress the importance of an understanding of religion for those concerned with international affairs.”

Freston was a distinguished senior fellow and director of the program for studies of religion in Latin America at the Institute for Studies of Religion at Baylor University, Texas before joining Laurier. He also serves as a professor for the post-graduate program in sociology at the Universidade Federal de São Carlos, Brazil.

He has written nine books and more than 65 articles on religion and politics, religion and globalization, and transformations in the Latin American religious field. He is co-editor of the forthcoming *Cambridge History of Religions in Latin America*.

As a CIGI chair, Freston will be expected to teach in the Balsillie School’s three graduate programs (PhD in Global Governance, MA in Global Governance and a Master’s of International Public Policy), conduct research and supervise graduate students. He will also help to enhance the international profile of the school.

The Balsillie School of International Affairs was founded in 2007 by Jim Balsillie, co-CEO of Research In Motion, and is a collaborative partnership among CIGI, Wilfrid Laurier University and the University of Waterloo.