A18-100
Public Understanding of Religion Committee
Theme: Committee Meeting
Friday, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM (In Person)
Evan Berry, Arizona State University, Presiding

Panelists

Vincent Biondo, Humboldt State University
Alisha L. Jones, Indiana University
Sara Kamali, Kamali Consulting
Rachel Mikva, Chicago Theological Seminary
Nathan Walker, 1791 Delegates

A18-101
Regions Committee
Theme: Regions Committee Business Meeting
Friday, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM (In Person)
Brian K. Pennington, Elon University, Presiding

Panelists

Business meeting for the members of the Regions Committee
Derrick Lemons, University of Georgia
Tiffany Puett, Institute for Diversity and Civic Life, Austin, TX
Matthew Vaughan, Columbia University
Jake Nagasawa, University of California, Santa Barbara
Philippa Koch, Missouri State University
Terence Kleven, Central College
Amy Donaldson, Independent Scholar
Cynthia Hogan, Washington and Jefferson College
Ronald Bernier, Wentworth Institute of Technology
Jeremy Fricke, Tri-Faith Initiative
A18-102
Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession Committee
Theme: Committee Meeting
Friday, 9:00 AM-12:00 PM (In Person)
Benae Beamon, Bucknell University, Presiding

Panelists

Daniel Ballon, Emory University
W. Scott Haldeman, Chicago Theological Seminary
Eziaku Nwokocha, University of Miami
Teresa Smallwood, Vanderbilt University
Jessica Vazquez Torres, Crossroads Antiracism Organizing and Training

A18-103
Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee
Theme: Business Meeting
Friday, 9:00 AM-1:00 PM (In Person)
Business Meeting
Angela Parker, Mercer University, Presiding

A18-104
International Connections Committee
Theme: ICC meeting
Friday, 9:00 AM-3:00 PM (In Person)
Olga Kazmina, Moscow State University, Presiding

Panelists

John P. Burgess, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Kimberly Hill, University of Texas, Dallas
Wei-Jen Chen, Chicago Theological Seminary
Fabio Rambelli, University of California, Santa Barbara
James Ponniah Kulanadai Raj, University of Madras

A18-105
Professional Development
THATCamp – The Humanities and Technology Camp
Theme: THATCamp 2022
Friday, 9:00 AM-4:00 PM (In Person)
Younus Mirza, Shenandoah University, Presiding
Adam Porter, Illinois College, Presiding

THATCamp is an open meeting welcoming anyone interested in technology and humanities of all skill levels and experiences. It is an unconference: participants propose and determine what
sessions to offer at the meeting. It is informal and focuses on productive collaboration and learning. THATcamp has Talk sessions (discussions about issues or questions), Make sessions (participants collaborate to complete a project), and Teach sessions (how to use tech in research or the classroom).

THATCamp is the place for you: if you are doing something interesting with technology and want to share it or to discuss its use or implications (should I turn Skynet on?); if you know of a product or resource that you want to share with other faculty members; or if you want to hang out with others who are interested in the intersection of technology and humanities. Lunch is not included, though a lunch break is provided.

Registration: $35

**A18-106**  
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe  
**Religion and Media Workshop**  
Theme: *Mediating Catastrophe and Repair*  
Friday, 11:00 AM-5:00 PM (In Person)  
John Borchert, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, Presiding

There is no doubt that we are in a moment of catastrophe, which we are experiencing on several registers on every scale. However, we are not passive recipients of this moment but active participants in its development and possible outcomes. Therefore, this workshop seeks to theorize disaster while offering methods by which catastrophe might be otherwise. Rather than a traditional panel, this workshop brings together a group of scholars working in religion and media who focus on restorative and reparative ways we might engage our shared world through a series of roundtable discussions, presentations, and shared readings. In particular, we interrogate the potential of religion to amplify and/or mitigate catastrophe as well as how the experience of catastrophe is mediated. Thus, we seek to explore dynamic intersections of religion and media in a broad sense to conceptualize spaces of repair and glimmers of hope amidst ongoing catastrophes.

Registration: $80

**Panelists**

Nabil Echchaibi, University of Colorado  
Deborah Whitehead, University of Colorado

**A18-200**  
**Status of Women in the Profession Committee**  
Theme: *Meeting of the AAR Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession*  
Friday, 12:00 PM-3:00 PM (In Person)  
Kathleen T. Talvacchia, Independent Scholar, Presiding  
Business meeting of the members of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession.
Panelists

Sarah Imhoff, Indiana University
Vanessa Lovelace, Lancaster Theological Seminary
Maria T. Davila, Merrimack College
Amy Elizabeth Steele, Vanderbilt University
K. Christine Pae, Denison University

A18-201
Academic Relations Committee
Theme: Committee Meeting
Friday, 1:00 PM-4:00 PM (In Person)
Susan E. Hill, University of Northern Iowa, Presiding
Committee Meeting

Panelists

Elizabeth Castelli, Barnard College
Lee Hayward Butler, Phillips Theological Seminary
Reggie Williams, McCormick Theological Seminary
Peter Valdina, Albion College
Russell T. McCutcheon, University of Alabama

A18-202
Graduate Student Committee
Theme: Committee Meeting
Friday, 1:00 PM-4:00 PM (In Person)
Sabina Ali, Indiana University, Presiding

Panelists

Devin Burns, Florida State University
Maxine Katz, University of Illinois
Michael Laminack, University of Denver
Andrea Scardina, University of Iowa

A18-203
Professional Development - Employment
Public Scholarship and Practical Impacts Workshop
Theme: Media Training and Work Outside the Academy
Friday, 1:00 PM-4:00 PM (In Person)
Amy Defibaugh, Temple University, Presiding
Benjamin Marcus, Religious Freedom Center, Presiding
Join the Applied Religious Studies Committee for this workshop that will empower scholars of religion to communicate about their work in the public sphere. During the first part of the workshop, a panel of experts will discuss the ways that several scholars of religion are engaging with the general public, emphasizing social impact. During the second part, panelists will join registrants in small groups to discuss registrants’ current projects.

This workshop is designed for those seeking an opportunity to talk to experienced public scholars about reaching general audiences through various media. We will pay particular attention to challenges faced by scholars off the tenure track and outside the academy who are committed to communicating about the relevance of religious studies scholarship to interdisciplinary and general audiences.
Registration: $35

Panelists
Andrew Henry, Boston University
Simran Jeet Singh, New York University
Mandy Benoualid, Independent Scholar

A18-204
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Theology and Ethnography Workshop
Theme: Teaching and Supervising Qualitative Research
Friday, 1:00 PM-4:00 PM (In Person)
Rachelle Green, Fordham University, Presiding
Hendrik Pieter De Roest, Protestant Theological University, Presiding

We invite educators, researchers, and PhD students into a social learning collaboration to share unique challenges and effective practices for teaching and supervising qualitative research. Together, we will examine practices and strategies of research and address critical questions that emerge in the process of teaching qualitative methods—questions such as: Have ethnographic research approaches changed the ways we teach and supervise? What creative research methods do we teach and use in the field, and how are these interrelated? How do students in theology and religious studies acquire research competencies both individually and in teams? How do we teach and supervise students to conduct research of ecclesial, church-related and/or religious practices at different educational levels (undergraduate, graduate, doctorate) and how do these levels matter? How do educators teach and supervise through the tensions inherent to ethnographic research (e.g. use of theory, histories of harm, self-reflexivity and accountability, etc.)?

Panelists
Jeffery L. Tribble, Columbia Theological Seminary
Emmanuel Lartey, Emory University
Elisabeth Tveito Johnsen, University of Oslo
Sabrina Müller, Zurich University

**A18-205**
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching

**Comparative Hagiology Workshop**
Theme: *Teaching Hagiography in a New Way*
Friday, 1:00 PM-5:00 PM (In Person)
Nikolas Hoel, Northeastern Illinois University, Presiding
Massimo Rondolino, Carroll University, Presiding

The workshop will function as a way to explore ways in which a comparative and collaborative approach to studying “hagiography,” or perhaps more accurately, “hagiology,” can be brought to the classroom. The workshop thus builds on past AAR pre-conference Comparative Hagiology workshops, which focused primarily on (re)defining a theory and method for the study of hagiographic sources in a comparative and cross-cultural perspective. Moreover, while theorizing and writing about hagiology is valuable, teaching forms the backbone of the duties of many scholars of religion. To that end, this workshop asks, among other questions:

1) what is the value of teaching the comparative study of religious life writings in a global perspective;
2) how may this be done comparatively, and to what benefit; and
3) how do we make the material, theories, and methods of collaboration and comparison that engage students of all levels using culturally relevant pedagogy?

Registration: $50

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**A18-206**
Professional Development - Publishing

**Motherhood and Religion Workshop**
Theme: *Consolidating Matricentric Perspectives*
Friday, 1:00 PM-5:00 PM (In Person)
Florence Pasche Guignard, Université Laval, Presiding
Pascale Engelmajer, Carroll University, Presiding

After our first two online workshops on the intersection of motherhood and religion, our current goal at the 2022 AAR meeting is to reflect more deeply on two aspects of such scholarship: first, on the notion of engaged scholarship and on the relevance of such a topic in today’s world, and, second, on specific avenues to present and publish our work on mothers, motherhood, and mothering in religious studies or theology, whether through historical, archaeological, material, anthropological, sociological, literary, or other approaches that integrate a matricentric focus.

The first part of the workshop will provide researchers at various stages of their career an opportunity to establish or consolidate their networks and to briefly present their research to peers in similar areas of studies. We will then welcome a guest speaker who will share her experience relating her scholarship on motherhood with contemporary issues in religion and society. Finally, a last section of the workshop will identify publications venues for works in religious studies and in theology that center on motherhood, as well as organizations outside of religious studies or theology who welcome such work as part of their own conferences and meetings.
Panelists

Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder, Chicago Theological Seminary

A18-207
Professional Development
Women's Caucus
Theme: Women's Caucus Workshop Gathering
Friday, 2:00 PM-4:00 PM (In Person)

This year, the Women’s Caucus is celebrating its 50 years anniversary, and we would like to invite all scholars and students to celebrate with us and learn more about the work that we do. In a workshop-style session, we will engage the 2022 AAR conference theme from the perspective of those researching on gender, sexuality and religion. This is an opportunity for networking, sharing ideas on how we might advance the public engagement of this topic through our research, in our institutions, and beyond. In addition, we would like to give a special welcome to those attending the annual meeting for the first-time. This is a great opportunity to make new friends and learn the hopes on how to navigate the conference.

A18-208
Professional Development
Centers for Religion in Public Life Workshop
Theme: Networking and Dialogue Opportunities
Friday, 2:00 PM-5:00 PM (In Person)
Andrew Davies, University of Birmingham, Presiding

An important networking and dialogue opportunity for anyone involved in leading or supporting a research, public engagement or educational center or programme focusing on the impact of religion in public life, comprising opportunities to share best practice, pool ideas and develop collaborations. Registration fee: $35.

A18-300
American Lectures in the History of Religions Committee
Theme: Committee Meeting
Friday, 3:00 PM-5:00 PM (In Person)
Duncan Williams, University of Southern California, Presiding

Panelists

Michelle Gonzalez Maldonado, University of Scranton
R. Marie Griffith, Washington University, Saint Louis
Megan Robb, University of Pennsylvania
A18-400
Trans Caucus
Theme: Trans Caucus Meeting
Friday, 5:00 PM-7:00 PM (In Person)

A18-401
Journal of the American Academy of Religion (JAAR)
Theme: JAAR Editorial Board Meeting
Friday, 6:00 PM-7:00 PM (In Person)
Andrea Jain, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis, Presiding
Kevin Schilbrack, Appalachian State University, Presiding

A18-500
Films
Films
Theme: Pilgrimage to Magdalena/Peregrinaje a Magdalena (Border Community Alliance, 2021)
Friday, 8:00 PM-10:00 PM (In Person)
Seth Schermerhorn, Hamilton College, Presiding
This award-winning 30-minute film documents the contemporary pilgrimage to Magdalena de Kino in modern-day Sonora, Mexico, honoring Father Eusebio Francisco Kino (1645–1711), who worked for 24 years in the Pimería Alta region, a region now divided by the US/Mexico border. This film explores the diversity of pilgrims—from the US, from Mexico, and from indigenous lands such as that of the Tohono O’odham—and the diversity of their practices and beliefs in relation to this important ritual. Produced by the Tubac, Arizona-based nonprofit Border Community Alliance, the film emphasizes what one participant calls “an eye-opening experience” of the pilgrimage and the fiesta at Magdalena—the sense of community “coming together as one” despite and through this diversity of identity, history, and nationality. The producers of the documentary, a scholar of indigenous religious traditions, and a Tohono O’odham elder will offer reflections on this pilgrimage as a model of community and respond to questions after the film, moderated by Spencer Dew and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd.

Panelists
Jerry Haas, Border Community Alliance
Alex La Pierre, Border Community Alliance
Seth Schermerhorn, Hamilton College
Magda Mankel, University of Maryland
Responding
Spencer Dew, Ohio State University
Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, Northwestern University
A19-100
Tours
Theme: Morning Yoga
Saturday, 7:00 AM-8:00 AM (In Person)
Morning Vinyasa and flow yoga honors individuals' energetic levels earlier in the morning. This 1-hour class allows you to arrive and enjoy quiet stillness, warm up and energize the body, and leave class ready to enter the rest of your day with vitality and equanimity. Mats will be provided as well as 2 instructors to ensure movement support and guidance. Morning Yoga will take place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, Agate C.
Cost: $45

A19-101
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
Academic Relations Committee
Theme: Department Chair and Program Coordinator's Breakfast
Saturday, 7:30 AM-8:45 AM (In Person)
Susan E. Hill, University of Northern Iowa, Presiding
Breakfast for department chairs and program coordinators.

A19-102
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
American Academy of Religion
Theme: New Members' Breakfast and Annual Meeting Orientation
Saturday, 7:30 AM-8:45 AM (In Person)
Alice Hunt, American Academy of Religion, Presiding
Matt Vieson, American Academy of Religion, Presiding
Mayra Rivera, Harvard University, Presiding
New (first-time) AAR members in 2022 are cordially invited to a welcome breakfast hosted by the AAR Staff and Board of Directors, including a brief orientation to the AAR Annual Meeting.

A19-103
African Religions Unit
Theme: Rituals of Grieving, Solidarity, and Resistance
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
David Amponsah, University of Pennsylvania, Presiding
As the ramifications of the global pandemic continue to unfold, the toll of the pandemic on bodies and practices of presence and absence grow ever more pronounced. Namely, how are religions in Africa and the African diaspora finding avenues to reclaim ritual spaces that rearticulate solidarity within novel constraints on physical presence? The importance of mourning in moments where gathering and collective ritual action are challenging, if not impossible, are coupled with the renegotiation and shifting of gender roles in providing care and accompaniment.
  • Rode Molla, University of Denver
    From Holistic Theology to In-Between Theology
In the era of Ethiopian identity politics, the EECMY needs a theological response that could enable Ethiopians to live in the in-between spaces with in-between consciousness. In-between theology may enable Ethiopians to transcend ethnic hereditary identity and fictive Amhara identity with a consciousness that demonstrates in-between spaces for all Ethiopians in schools, religious organizations, and regional states. In-between spaces are socially, politically, and spiritually just and liberating spaces that demonstrate Ethiopians’ ability to live with self-dignity that accepts the other, whether that other is like no other, like some others, and like all others.\[1\]


- **Loreen Maseno, Maseno University, Kenya**
  *Reconceiving Burials and Grief in the light of Covid-19 Among the Tiriki of Kenya*
  This essay addresses the destabilizing of Tiriki traditional spirituality and values in the conducting of burials during the Covid-19 period. It takes a sharp focus on a burial ceremony, already in the public domain, of a respected Tiriki man. Owing to Covid-19 rules to seal the dead body in bags with no room for viewing, a wrong body was interred. According to the Tiriki belief system, life does not end with death but continues in another realm. Death and burial among the Tiriki are looked at from both spiritual and cultural perspectives with the goal of stabilizing the elements involved and avoiding further calamity for the living. However, this Covid-19 burial was botched as per Tiriki, traditions and customs. Multidimensional grief theory is utilised to explore the effects of Covid-19 deaths, deployment and effects.

- **Ketty Thomas, Michigan Technological University**
  *What Do The Women Do? Examining the impact on women at the intersection of race, politics, and religious orthodoxy*
  This paper uses a Haitian Baptist Church in Brooklyn, NY as a model to investigate how the intersections between Haiti and the African Diaspora; Haitian Protestantism, Catholicism, and Vodou; and, Haiti and the American discourse on race and Civil Rights, impact the discourse on gender. The model illuminates the tensions that inform gender practices, such as how men and women interact, engage sexually, and create family structures. How are women "constructed" within the crossfires of race, politics, and religious orthodoxy? How do we understand the African diaspora woman's experience relative to discourses of religious and political determinism?
This session offers historical, ethnographic, and theological analyses to consider the futures of Asian American Christianities, refracted through questions of diaspora, race, and sexuality. The first paper, ""Thy Kin-dom Come": Idealized Christian Nation and Identity Formation of Korean Immigrants, 1903-1919," centers on Korean immigrants who arrived at the San Francisco port from 1903 to 1919. It explores how Korean immigrants’ racialized experiences reshaped their conception of “Christian America” and in turn refashioned their ethnic, religious, and national identity in the American West. "Embodied Solidarity: Imagining the Future of Southeast Asian Kachin Baptist Diasporic Church-Community in the U.S.," employs womanist theologian M. Shawn Copeland’s work to examine constructive theological and ecclesiological methods and sources to imagine the future of the Burmese, Kachin Baptist Diasporic church-community in the U.S. The third paper, "Indecent Theology from an Indo-Guyanese Perspective: Toward Christian Liberation and Acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community," offers constructive proposals for disrupting heternormative beliefs and practices in the Indo-Guyanese Pentecostal Church. The final paper looks forward by looking backwards at two case studies, the 2004 Rickshaw Rally and 2009 Deadly Viper campaigns to illustrate the centrality of blogging in evangelical, Asian American "worldmaking."

• Chanhee Heo, Stanford University

"Thy Kin-dom Come": Idealized Christian Nation and Identity Formation of Korean Immigrants, 1903-1919

Centering on Korean immigrants who arrived at the San Francisco port from 1903 to 1919, this paper explores how Korean immigrants’ racialized experiences reshaped their conception of “Christian America” and in turn refashioned their ethnic, religious, and national identity in the American West. As late nineteenth-century Korean society shifted from traditional ideals of Neo-Confucian morality to social Darwinism, concurrent with American missionaries’ arrival in the country, many Koreans perceived the United States as a “divinely sanctioned Christian country” founded on democratic values which promised political and religious freedom. By examining the monthly magazine Taedo, published by the San Francisco Korean United Methodist Church, and transnational print media Sinhan minbo, this paper suggests that in the face of California legislative activities and national immigration regulations, many Korean immigrants gradually divorced America from its association with Christianity, adapting Christianity into a Korean context while continuing to celebrate the American democratic ideal.

• Htoi San Lu, Vanderbilt University

Embodied Solidarity: Imagining the Future of Southeast Asian Kachin Baptist Diasporic
Church-Community in the U.S.

Engaging womanist theologian M. Shawn Copeland’s work, this paper examines constructive theological and ecclesiological methods and sources to imagine the future of the Kachin Baptist Diasporic church-community in the U.S. The Kachin Baptist community in the U.S. originates from Burma/Myanmar. I present Copeland’s theological anthropology that focuses on subjectivity and agency of despised bodies; her Christology which focuses on the historical, material, and mystical body of Jesus Christ; and her ecclesiology that centers on embodiment of basileia praxis, defined as “acts of justice-doing, empire critique, love and solidarity.” My engagement of Copeland’s work offers theological gestures towards the future in which the Kachin Baptist diaspora in the U.S. practices embodied solidarity and actively participates in racial justice struggles among communities of color, while at the same time understands multi-racial identities in the U.S. and dismantles white supremacy and anti-Blackness within the Kachin Baptist community.

- Dennis Saavedra Carquin-Hamichand, Iliff School of Theology

Indecent Theology from an Indo-Guyanese Perspective: Toward Christian Liberation and Acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ Community

"Isn't it time the Christian heterosexuals came out of their closets too?" The Indo-Guyanese Pentecostal Church is constantly growing in Guyana, the Caribbean, and the U.S., holding much power in shaping the epistemology and morality of its adherents. Uniquely, Indo-Guyanese exists in multiple interstices, Asian, Caribbean, Latin and North American, in which they uphold anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiments. I offer three points of action that respect the human rights of the LGBTQIA+ that are necessary for the church to challenge its heteronormativity: (1) An autocritical analysis of how the church participates in the violence of the LGBTQIA+ Community. (2) Instead of being bystanders, the church must become active participants fighting for the humanity of the LGBTQIA+ community through a "theology of seeing," not staring. (3) Use a decolonial queer theology of liberation that is "indecent," which will challenge the antiquated and oppressive beliefs that harm LGBTQIA+ peoples.

- Justin Tse, Singapore Management University
- Ellen Zhou, Singapore Management University

Unsilencing the Exodus: Revisiting Blogging as an Asian American Evangelical Online Future, 2004 and 2009

One of the futures often heralded in Asian American evangelicalism – and in religious studies circles more generally – is the sphere of online publication activity on the Internet, especially in terms of social media posting and open letters. Our paper seeks to revisit this story of a cyberfuture by contesting the often-told story of Asian American evangelicalism’s origins in the 1990s from the ‘silent exodus.’ We argue that their success in challenging white evangelical publishing houses lay in their mastery of the
form and practice of the blog, notably by producing a large, consistent, and constant volume of content that dominated evangelical messaging. We revisit two case studies, the 2004 Rickshaw Rally and 2009 Deadly Viper campaigns, through a virtual ethnographic methodology. In so doing, we contribute to the discussion of Asian American religious futures by pointing to the past when the Internet was the future.

Business Meeting

Helen Jin Kim, Emory University, Presiding
SueJeanne Koh, University of California, Irvine, Presiding

A19-105
Buddhist Philosophy Unit
Theme: Norms of Attention in South Asian Buddhism
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Heather Moody, University of Virginia, Presiding

The topic of norms of attention is an exciting and emerging area of research, involving the convergence of analytic philosophy, non-European philosophy (e.g., Buddhist, Islamic, Indian, Chinese), and cognitive science. Normative claims about the responsibility we have for our attention underlie beliefs about what objects we should pay attention to, how we should attend, and the results of specific forms of attention. While some philosophers have sought to develop original accounts of normative attention, others have turned to non-European thought as sources of analytic categories, conceptual frameworks, and ethical orientations. By hosting papers which identify normative conceptions of attention, this panel seeks to augment Buddhist thought from South Asia in the emerging cross-cultural conversation on the norms of attention. As contemporary societies debate topics such as what we should focus on, now more than ever we need to investigate the norms which govern our attention.

- Nicolas Bommarito, Brown University

Attention as Ethical Tool in Gyaltsé Tokmé

I analyze the ethical role of attention in 14th-century Tibetan figure Gyalsé Tokmé Zangpo’s famous text The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas (rgyal-sras-lag-len-so-bdun-ma). Attention functions in the text as a type of tool for ethical and spiritual development in particular via Gyalsé Tokmé’s use of nested attentional vignettes where a reader attends to their way of attending in different situations. This functions both to direct the reader’s attention to certain kinds of situations and to adopt a more distanced perspective on their own attentional patterns.

- Aaron Schultz, Emory University

Vasubandhu, Reactive Attitudes, and Attentional Freedom

This presentation draws attention to the way in which a subset of reactive attitudes–
hatred, anger, resentment, and the like–make us less free. Vasubandhu’s explanation of reactive attitudes (kleśas) shows us how they make us less free, as well as how they cause us to act wrongly by binding us and narrowing our attention. The kind of freedom that reactive attitudes take away is our ability to pay attention to what matters. This freedom is a thread that runs through the fabric of the Buddhist tradition; we can call it attentional freedom. When we have attentional freedom, we are free to choose amongst the options that matter; when we lack attentional freedom, we are not free to do so. According to P.F. Strawson, reactive attitudes provide us with a ground for moral responsibility because they are a part of our humanity. This presentation addresses Strawson’s omission of reactive attitudes making us less free and the implications of this.

- Sean Smith, University of Hawai‘i

*Buddhaghosa on Affective Bias and Norms of Attention*

This paper argues that the pervasiveness of affective bias on our conscious attention makes our attention normatively assessable in various ways. Inspired by the work of the South-Asian Buddhist philosopher, Buddhaghosa (5th-6th CE), this paper addresses how attention is dealt with normatively in Buddhaghosa’s account; specifically, I will analyze how even wholesome forms of empathetic attention can go wrong. My reconstruction of Buddhaghosa and the positive view I find there contrasts with the widespread reading of Buddhist views that focuses on the attenuation and elimination of bias in order to meet some attention norms. This solution is wrong-headed because all attention is always affectively biased to some extent. Therefore, insofar as our capacities for attention come in for normative assessment, our best bet for dealing with our failures is to train our attention with biases that work, biases that harmonize with those norms we reflectively endorse.

- Karma Lekshe Tsomo, University of San Diego

*Attention as Normative in a Monastery for Women in Zangskar*

This paper is a philosophical anthropological approach to the topic of attention and an exploration of whether universal norms of attention can be established, focused on norms of attention in the lives of nuns at Changchub Chöling Monastery in Zangskar, Ladakh. In this paper, I will argue that the practice of attention or attentiveness is incorporated not only in textual studies and contemplative practices, but also in every aspect of daily life. In contrast to Susanna Siegel’s contention in *The Rationality of Perception*, I will argue that attention is not necessarily subject to rational evaluation, but is a nonrational, precognitive awareness of the object before it is named, distinguished, or evaluated. Further, I shall argue that the cultivation of attention in the context of a religious community makes the practitioner more attentive both to their own mind and mental factors but also the presence and needs of others.

- Blaine Patrick Werner, University of Virginia
How to Judge Attention: Mindfulness, Vigilance, and Awareness in Śāntideva’s Bodhicaryāvatāra

Recent scholarship in religious studies has pushed back on the definition from clinical psychiatry of mindfulness as “present-centered, nonjudgmental awareness” and sought to clarify it with theoretical accounts based on Buddhist sources. Within Buddhist philosophy, the relationship between mindfulness and ethics has long been established. This paper presents Śāntideva’s account of mindfulness in Bodhicaryavatara as a normative account of attention and puts forth two claims: 1) in the fifth chapter, the joint operation of mindfulness (smṛti) and vigilance (saṃprajanya) applied to the objects of body and mind elevates attention from a basic activity to the focus of one’s life, thus ethicizing attention and training an ethicized consciousness; 2) in the fourth chapter, awareness (apramāda) involves an orientation to the morally salient features in conscious experience, manifests moral cares or concerns, and involves goals and knowledge. This paper concludes considering the implications of these claims for conscientiousness, climate, and catastrophe.

Responding

Vesna Wallace, University of California, Santa Barbara

Business Meeting

Karin Meyers, Mangalam Research Center, Presiding
Constance Kassor, Lawrence University, Presiding

A19-106
Chinese Religions Unit
Theme: Building and Sharing Open-Access Online Resources for the Study of Chinese Religions
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Katherine Alexander, University of Colorado, Presiding

Since 2020, the pandemic has severely limited scholars’ ability to travel for fieldwork and research in local archives, and has hampered research projects in the study of Chinese religions. As we pivoted to mainly online teaching, conferences, and socialization, many have started reflecting on whether keeping some of these endeavors online might improve accessibility, ease pressures on institutional resources, and reduce our carbon footprint. In this roundtable, a group of scholars share their experiences in building innovative, open access online resources for the study of Chinese religions. They seek to promote a model of collaborative, open inquiry, and dissemination that, in addition to being pandemic-proof, may also help to address inequalities in the field. Presenters will reflect on pitfalls and best practices, limitations and strengths of digital platforms, concrete research outcomes, and plans for future development. The roundtable avoids technical specifics in favor of an inclusive discussion of the resources.
Panelists

Elena Valussi, Loyola University, Chicago
Fenggang Yang, Purdue University
Jonathan Pettit, University of Hawai‘i
Gregory Adam Scott, University of Manchester

Business Meeting

Susan Andrews, Mount Allison University, Presiding
Rongdao Lai, McGill University, Presiding

A19-108
Class, Religion, and Theology Unit, Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Unit, Religion and Sexuality Unit, and Women and Religion Unit
Theme: Reproductive Labor
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Annie Blazer, College of William and Mary, Presiding

This panel features papers that thematize reproductive labor, which encompasses both biological and social reproduction, in both past and present contexts. These papers define and/or queer reproductive labor in multifaceted yet clear ways and show how it interlocks with classed, gendered, raced, sexualized, and many other inequalities.

- Amanda Griffin, Yale University
  Christian Salvation and Failed Reproduction
  Lauren Berlant has shown how the legal production of U.S. citizenship and personhood is tied historically and symbolically to the sentimental ideology of (white) women as both wounded subjects and paradigmatic agents of social reproduction, with the latter utopianism inspiring redress of the former trauma. Armaryah Armstrong’s “Surrogate Flesh” connects this sentimental logic to an anti-Black Christian theology of redemption. Such theology links Black wombs to damnation by figuring them as threats to social reproduction’s futurity. Without presuming to escape altogether the binaries of redemption/damnation or utopian/traumatized, this paper pursues an alternative account of Christian soteriology that could disrupt their sentimental “time schemes” (Philip Fisher) as a way of staying committed to the problem (to echo Marika Rose’s definition of faithfulness). To do so, I turn to Stephen Best’s “historicism of failed reproduction” to develop a queer relation to salvation history against sentimental redemption’s anxieties about reproductive futurity.

- Shelly Tilton, University of Virginia
  Rebekah K Latour, University of Virginia
  Erections and Erectile Wills: A Theory of Male Reproductive Labor
  This paper argues that discussions of reproductive labor must incorporate non-metaphorical theorizations of the reproductive labor of cis men. In contrast to theological scholarship and popular-level discourse focusing on women’s reproductive labor – and specifically, questions about abortion – we argue that to describe women’s experiences
more holistically and liberatively, scholarly discourse must uncover and critique the paradigm of involuntary and un-responsible male reproductive labor. We highlight Margaret Kamitsuka’s work as a case study of the limits of current discussions, and drawing on Foucault’s analysis of Augustine’s “bad will” qua Adam’s erect penis, we trace oppressive constructions and reproductions of gender, positing that such reproductions unduly burden women. Building on this critique, we use Hortense Spillers’ work to trace effects of this reification of unequal, gendered labor, which in its extremity, recapitulates racist stereotypes and harm against Black people. In conclusion, we call for an ameliorative political theology that centers male reproductive labor.

- Erin Beall, Texas Christian University
  
  *Furniture, Fiend, or Female: Asserting the Humanity of Bilhah and Her Descendants
  
  Bilhah, the enslaved woman forced to bear two of Israel's sons, is variously treated in the Genesis tradition(s) as a nonhuman object. This enslaved woman, though listed among the mothers of the twelve tribes of Israel, is far from traditioned as a matriarch; rather, the texts from Genesis through the Second Temple Period present her as subhuman—sexually assaulted and alternately silenced, victimized, and demonized. These traditions variously represent her as an enslaved body, a field, a tool, an animal, a piece of furniture, and finally, something akin to a demonic manifestation of evil. So, too, in modernity, guided in large part by these traditions, people with wombs are treated as subhuman—especially women, gender-nonconforming and transpeople, and BIPOC. By reexamining and resurrecting the human beings represented in these foundational stories we may finally see people like Bilhah as fully human.

- Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Fordham University
  
  *Hetty and Elizabeth: Women's Ecclesial Reproductions in an Economy of Enslavement
  
  Encompassing both biological and social reproduction, ecclesial work and surrogate sex work, this paper offers a micro-history of a closely-bonded female pair and their entwinement in a complex social-ecclesial and economic set of relationships. Through methods that collect the fragments of their stories, we meet Hetty of St. James and Elizabeth Pinckney on the ‘frontier’ church of St. James the Greater in Colleton County, South Carolina, a Black Catholic center of education and ecclesial life. The complex relationship between Hetty and Elizabeth demonstrates that production and reproduction of the Catholic Church relied on the illicit gains of obstetric violence, perpetrated by women as well as men and creating capital for Catholics both South and North. It is only with new methods that we might envision enslaved Catholic women building the Catholic Church, both willingly and as the victims of its violence.

**Responding**

Elana Jefferson-Tatum, Tufts University

**A19-109**

Books under Discussion

**Cognitive Science of Religion Unit**


Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Paul Robertson, University of New Hampshire, Presiding
This panel includes a presentation by the author, followed by responses from panelists from the perspective of religious studies, psychology, and cultural and evolutionary anthropology.

Panelists

Wesley J. Wildman, Boston University
Glen Hayes, Bloomfield College
Robert Campany, Vanderbilt University

Responding

Edward Slingerland, University of British Columbia

P19-145
Colloquium on Violence and Religion
Theme: Theologies of Mercy and Black Liberation: American Christianity Through the Lens of Mimetic Theory
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Julia Moore, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Presiding
Jaisy Joseph, Villanova University, Presiding
Brian Carpenter, Saint Mary's Seminary and University, Maryland, Presiding

This panel explores the nature of racial rivalries within the lived experiences of American Protestantism and Catholicism and considers the gap between theologies of communion and concrete experiences of communion. This gap, in part, results from the impact of racism on experiences of belonging among Christian people of color that shape notions of mercy and liberation within the Christian faith. As female professors, Julia Robinson Moore and Jaisy A. Joseph approach this topic as inside practitioners of Christianity. As women of color, Moore and Joseph also inhabit insider/outsider perspectives from the periphery of racial power that structure their respective faith traditions and academic institutions. Specifically, Moore is an African American woman and ordained Presbyterian minister. Joseph is an Indian-American SyroMalabar Catholic in communion with Rome. Both scholars use mimetic theory to reveal how the scapegoat mechanism operates within the sacred contexts of American Christianity.

- Brian Carpenter, Saint Mary's Seminary and University, Maryland
  Sacrifice Recapitulated - The Eucharist as the Sacrificial Foundation for a New Religion and a New Culture
  René Girard's Mimetic theory proposes that repeated sacrifice of a foundational murder is at the center of all religion. Religion then establishes the norms and taboos in which culture is ultimately grounded. Christ exposes the mechanism and establishes a new sacrificial system that rejects the model of appeasing gods through the violent expulsion of a victim. He then institutes the Eucharist as a new sacrificial system that is grounded in self-offering rather than kenosis. Rather than endorse violence, Christ urges us to imitate (and participate in) his "model" of self-offering by participating in the Eucharist. Participation in the self-offering of the Eucharist becomes the sacrificial basis for a new
religion and new culture (the Kingdom of God).

**Business Meeting**

Grant Kaplan, Saint Louis University, Presiding

**A19-111 Comparative Studies in Religion Unit**

Theme: **Comparative Methods in Undergraduate Pedagogy: Transforming Teaching in Trying Times**

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Ivette Vargas-O'Bryan, Austin College, Presiding

In 2022, as the pandemic grinds on and environmental and social issues loom ever larger in our collective minds, we (as academics and educators), as well as our students, find ourselves confronted by weighty existential questions about the meaning and significance of the intellectual work that we do in our classrooms. The "so what" question has never resounded more clearly. This panel suggests that disciplined comparison can provide meaningful answers to such questions, not only by serving as a valuable means for investigating “religion” (defined broadly) as a cross-cultural phenomenon, but also by presenting students with a robust, generalizable system for making sense of the world. Rather than focusing on theoretical issues, this panel aims to foster a conversation on specific applications of comparison in undergraduate pedagogy, and will thus adopt a "show-and-tell" format. Attendees will be encouraged to ask questions and participate in the conversation.

**Panelists**

Christopher Jensen, Carleton University
Oliver Freiberger, University of Texas
Roberta Sabbath, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Breanna Nickel, Goshen College
Raissa Von Doetinchem De Rande, Rhodes College
Steven Ramey, University of Alabama
Liz Wilson, Miami University, Ohio
Leslie Smith, Avila University
Sarah Catherine Cook, University of Georgia

**A19-112 Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit**

Theme: **'Cosmopolitan Ontological Ecosystems': Interrogations of the Inner, Outer, and Under**

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Giovanna Parmigiani, Harvard University, Presiding

Diverse ontologies and the location of their sacred personhoods are hallmarks of Contemporary Pagan movements and their polymorphic antecedents. These panelists examine sacred
personhood from within the hollow hills of Celtic cosmology to plant structures across their soils, from hypostatic cosmic elements in chthonic grottos to the mental cosmos of the reality architect. Reflexive and longitudinal ethnography, iconographic analysis, and horticultural discourse each reflect dimensions of religious personhood as affected by place, and place as inflected by personhood.

- Natalia Schwien, Harvard University
  “The Plant Delighteth: Plant Personhood in the Study of Western Esotericism”
  Although numerous studies have identified plant personhood practices in non-Western cultures, limited attention has been granted towards similar practices present in Western cultures. In the Study of Western Esotericism, where research on alternative cosmologies and European Earth-based religions finds an academic home, discussions on the topic are curiously absent from the field’s foundational works. None of the seminal overviews by two pioneering scholars, Christopher Partridge and Wouter Hanegraaff, delve into the cultural significance of animism present in the paradigms they examine – unless in relation to entheogenic plants. However, evidence of practices of personhood acknowledgment between humans and plants is documented in prayers, incantations, and agricultural traditions, often related to esoteric threads. These demonstrate that plant personhood is not only native to the European ontological and epistemological canon, but has continued to be both present and active in the West from the Enlightenment through the Industrial Revolution into today.

- Jenny Butler, University College Cork
  Contemporary Irish Paganism, Otherworld Traditions, and the Materiality of Place
  This paper explores the relationship between contemporary Paganism in the Irish context and traditional Irish cultural understandings of the spiritual realm or otherworld. The study is based on longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork with the Irish Pagan community, focusing on the traditions of Pagan Witchcraft and Druidry. The role of place is examined and the conceptualisation of Ireland’s landscape as sacred. In this analysis, there is identification of cultural concepts found in contemporary Paganism as a globalised religious tradition and how these relate to the traditional Irish culture. The perceptions of fairies in contemporary Pagan culture more widely are addressed. The comprehension of the otherworld as accessible via landscape has implications for embodied experience and ritual practice. Physical space as the locum for contemporary Pagan religion is addressed, drawing on applications of the spatial analysis approach in the study of religions.

- Damian Lanahan-Kalish, University of California, Santa Barbara
  Architects of Reality: Mackical Approaches to a Subjective Reality
  At The Green Man metaphysical store in North Hollywood, California, practitioners of Ced witchcraft learn to become “architects of reality.” Through a series of classes, they are trained to mold their own reality using ritual magick. This paper explores how academic concepts of a subjective and changeable reality have become instrumentalized in this form of witchcraft. Based on a yearlong ethnographic study of this group, this paper shows how ideas that began primarily as critique in the academic sphere have been put to constructive use in the world of witchcraft. This innovation is set against an academic and popular retreat from this critique in the face of similar instrumentalization by the far right, exemplified in terms such as “alternative facts” and “fake news.” Ced witchcraft is offered as an argument against such a retreat – another example of this
critique being put to work in aid of very different ends.

- Thomas Cattoi, Graduate Theological Union
  *Neo-Gnostics Underground: Iconographies of Inner Transformation in Damanhur’s Subterranean Temples in Northern Italy*
  The purpose of this paper is to explore the iconographic representation of the stages and goal of spiritual practice in the context of the community of Damanhur- the Italian religious community established in 1975 the by spiritual leader Roberto Airaudi (Falco Tarassaco, 1950-2013). This mapping of Damanhurian iconography –with particular attention to the pictorial works in the Temples of Humankind- in light of the community’s system of beliefs about individual transformation, the condition of humanity and its role in the cosmos will help us uncover the echoes between the movement’s philosophy and the gnostic traditions of the early common era. In particular, the exploration of some specific images in the Temple of Humanity will foreground the specific Damanhurian understanding of subjectivity and gender and its resonances in the writings of the early gnostic tradition informing the writings of authors such as Ireneus of Lyon (130-202) or Origen of Alexandria (185-256).

A19-113
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit and Middle Eastern Christianity Unit
Theme: *Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christianity in the Midst of Catastrophes*
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Amy Fallas, University of California, Santa Barbara, Presiding

In the spirit of the 2022 AAR Presidential Theme, the papers in this session address the lived reality of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Christianity in the midst of catastrophes, past and present. This session considers how mass disruption and hardship affect the core elements of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox religious identity, hoping to shed light on the local and experiential reverberations of global cataclysmic forces within an Orthodox Christian context. The papers in this session analyze these lived realities from a variety of disciplinary and methodological perspectives, with a special interest in the ways that COVID-19 or other contemporary and historical crises have affected the liturgy and the ways liturgical practice has responded to catastrophes.

- Pavlo Smytsnyuk, Ukrainian Catholic University
  *Pandemics and the Suspension of Eucharistic Ecclesiology*
  My paper explores the relationship between the pandemic and the Eucharist. I argue that pandemics is a moment of the ‘reversed’ judgment: it is not the community that is judging the world (as Eucharistic ecclesiology would claim), but the world that pronounces a judgment upon the community. Through pandemics, the creation ‘refuses’ to be symbolically transfigured, for the reason that, in reality, it is being disfigured by humanity and the Christian community. Current pandemic can be read as a moment through which the creation is both challenging and suspending the Eucharistic ecclesiology. The pandemic is apocalyptic in so far as it reveals the end of ‘sacramentality’, and constitutes a call to spiritual and ecological conversion.

- Joshua Donovan, Columbia University
Violence, Displacement, and the Making of Antiochian Orthodox Identity in the Modern World

Ongoing crises in Syria and Lebanon have displaced millions and have raised difficult questions of religious and national identity. To better understand how Middle Eastern Christian communities grapple with such catastrophes, this paper turns to the history of the diverse and understudied Antiochian Greek Orthodox Christian community of Bilad al-Sham and its diaspora in the 19th and 20th centuries. Through a comparative lens and a multi-disciplinary approach, this study examines how Orthodox Christians navigated the aftermaths of local episodes of sectarian violence and the redrawing of political borders in the region. It centers Orthodox voices by drawing on an array of sources produced by members of the community itself, including the archives of the Antiochian Patriarchate, community newspapers published in Arabic, personal correspondence, and cultural production. Ultimately, I argue that experiences of violence, displacement, and forced migration shaped the community’s engagement with fluid national and religious identities in profound ways.

- Aaron Eldridge, University of California, Berkeley

Destruction and the Drive: The Topology of the Soul in a Contemporary Arab Orthodox Text

This paper reads the question of contemporary destruction and its reverberations in post-civil war Lebanon through a monograph composed by a Syrian-born Lebanese Orthodox ascetic Hieromonk Aspiro Jabbur (d. 2018), al-‘itirāf wa al-tahlīl al-nafsi (Confession and Psychoanalysis, 1990) as it stages a complex and aphoristic encounter between psychoanalysis and Orthodox Christian ascetical practice. It considers Jabbur’s citation of the ambivalence of the death drive—as both a Divine injunction and a potentiality of the soul—in parallel with Freud’s own twin essays, “Thoughts for the Time of War and Death” (1914), as they engage with the agency of a destructive trieb (drive). I conclude by considering the topology of the soul under these terms of destruction as one which defies an intuitive structure of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’; destruction, as in the drive, is neither ‘inside’ nor ‘outside’ but akin to the very torsion that forges the nafs, the subject.

Responding

Candace Lukasik, Washington University, Saint Louis

A19-114

Ecclesiological Investigations Unit

Theme: Theologies of Ecclesial Dialogue, Discernment, and Consensus-Building

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Aaron Hollander, Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute, Presiding

Dialogue is a longstanding component of ecclesial praxis, especially in recent years in the ecumenical movement and in other areas of inter- and intra-ecclesial relations. Various contemporary events and movements have restored focus upon dialogue, discernment, and consensus-building in the Christian churches. Dialogue and consensus-building seem to many Christians a part of the nature of the church and not an optional practice. These papers approach questions of dialogue, consensus, and decision-making from a variety of perspectives. The first
two papers highlight case studies of ecclesial dialogue, and the second two papers address more theoretical questions of ecumenism and ecumenical dialogue.

- Elsa Marty, University of Chicago

*Contextual Theology and Ecclesial Dialogue: Local Identities and Mutual Transformation among Adivasi Lutherans in Jharkhand, India*

This paper examines efforts at ecclesial dialogue between two Adivasi (indigenous) Lutheran churches in North India. The churches’ division stems not from doctrine but rather the way they engage with ethnic differences. I explore the history of their conflict and the theological underpinnings of the two churches’ positions, noting in particular the relevance of their differing approaches to contextual theology. Building upon the work of Jhakmak Neeraj Ekka, one of the leaders involved in the dialogue, I argue for an approach to ecclesial dialogue that embraces local identities but does so as part of the ultimate goal of mutual transformation.

- Tamara Grdzelidze, Ilia State University, Georgia

*Masters of Border-Making and Misreading Boundaries: Contemporary Orthodox Ecclesiology*

Autocephaly as the paradigm of political autonomy imbued with religiosity has easily been transformed into orthodox nationalism; i.e. orthodox nationalism is related to the imperial heritage carried out by autocephaly throughout centuries without a proper reflection in the church.

Nationalism – whether according to modernists or as a perennial ethnicity - has been a soft spot of the orthodox ecclesiology, demonstrating an immense capacity to absorb as well as to expose the *national* at the request of the *political*. On the other side, there is the Eucharistic ecclesiology, a driving force of the Orthodox tradition, like any other dynamic power, assembling in a systematic way spiritual gems disseminated in time and space. The Eucharistic vision is perfectly capable of helping the autocephalous churches in their reception of one another’s differences in peace and love.

- Jakob Rinderknecht, University of the Incarnate Word

*Reconceiving the Quest for Unity: Ecumenism Today*

The modern ecumenical goal of full-visible unity has been redefined over time. Many originally assumed that this would mean official reconciliation between church officials and lead to a single unified church structure. Over time, ecumenists proposed that diversity in unity might look like communions of churches. Today we cannot ignore the real divisions that exist between Christians within our traditional ecclesiastical boundaries. Ecumenical cooperation has even at times even been used to foster disunion within communions. This paper will argue that the achievements of the magisterial
ecumenical movement and the lessons of receptive ecumenism must be used to foster a new phase of ecumenical reconciliation that directly attends to the real wounds existing within and across communions, prioritizing the places where the church has failed to “discern the body” within its midst. Such an ecumenism must move beyond "hierarchialism" to prioritize the whole church's unity, especially with those historically marginalized.

- Josiah Baker, Fuller Theological Seminary

*The Function of Charisms in Pentecostal Theologies of Ecumenical Dialogue*

The charismatic dimension of discernment decenters the teaching office in the work of ecumenical dialogue. Discernment is a charism given to the church by God to guide its members into truth. The teaching office is entrusted with particular charisms, yet discernment is a charism exercised by the whole Christian community. The charismatic nature of the church is a result of God’s presence within the Christian community. For dialogue to contribute to the task of ecumenism, dialogue commissions must foster equitable participation of all those who enjoy koinonia with each other. I demonstrate this from the experience of Pentecostal participation in ecumenical dialogue. How Pentecostal communities around the world have engaged efforts of dialogue offers insight into the place of dialogue in the church’s life. Pentecostal experience in dialogue has elevated the charismatic nature of discernment, decentering the role of the teaching office in achieving consensus among churches.

**A19-115**

Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe

**Evangelical Studies Unit**

Theme: Evangelicalism and Environmental Catastrophe

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Jessica Wong, Azusa Pacific University, Presiding

- Thomas Creedy, South West London Vineyard

*The Scandal of the evangelical environmentalist? Climate crisis and Christian Discipleship*

A reasonable cultural perspective on evangelicalism would not align it with environmental concerns. Particularly in its’ noisier, white and North American manifestations, the complex and growing phenomena of evangelicalism(s) has a reputation for a focus on the eternal salvation of human souls; to the detriment of reasonable concern for the present world. This paper suggests that there is a scandal of evangelical environmentalism, rooted not in an anti-science phenomenology, but rather in a failure to take the bible as seriously as the movement claims to.

This paper will draw on the recent history of evangelicalism to attempt to show that whilst popular perception and lay reality may indeed point to a scandal of the lack of an
evangelical environmentalism, the resources exist within and from that tradition to address it.

- **Dylan Parker, Fuller Theological Seminary**

  *Work and Keep: Reclaiming the Possibility of an Evangelical Response to the Environmental Crisis*

  The evangelical community in the United States offers no united approach to addressing – or denying – the impending environmental crisis; nevertheless, it has been deemed a major hinderance to adequate environmental progress. Given this deficiency, how must U.S. evangelicalism grow/adapt in order to adequately respond to the polymorphic challenges of the environmental crisis? Related, can this be accomplished by resources distinctive to the evangelical tradition without evolving into something else entirely? This paper will argue that evangelicalism’s foundation of gospel-centric biblicism is capable of grounding a truly evangelical response to the environmental crisis only if it is able to sever evangelical fidelity to partisan politics and constructing a vocational anthropology consistent with the evangelical focus on faith in the redeeming work of Christ that restores believers to right relationship with God, others, and creation.

- **Monica Schaap Pierce, Reformed Church in America**

  *Slaying the “Green Dragon” of “Climate Alarmism”: Militant Masculinity, Evangelical Anti-Environmentalism, and an Ecotheological Response*

  In face of the current climate crisis, evangelicals’ denial of or ambivalence about the climate is well documented. But perhaps more disturbing is the growing movement to vilify ecotheology and Christian campaigns for climate justice. Spearheaded by prominent evangelical leaders, the Cornwall Alliance is a religious anti-environmentalist initiative that includes a program titled “Resisting the Green Dragon,” which denounces creation care as neo-pagan nature worship and proffers instead a dualistic gospel that weds sin to creation and Christianity to free-market capitalism. The alliance’s anti-environmentalism is entangled with a militant Christianity where enemies abound and Christians—like God—reflect a rugged masculine ideal in their role as “masters of the earth.” Utilizing the research of Kristin Kobes Du Mez, who shows that the cultural ideal of American manhood has exceedingly shaped evangelical ideals like those of the alliance, as well as the creation theology of John Calvin, this paper argues for an ecotheology that takes seriously the dangers of idolatry and reclaims Calvin’s robust pneumatology of creation as a resource for understanding the value of the earth.

- **Samuel Tranter, Durham University**

  *Ecological Responsibility and Eschatological Renovation: What's the Evangelical Story?*

  The connection between commitment to addressing the ecological crisis and differing conceptions of Christian eschatology has been widely observed in recent decades. In
particular, it has often been assumed that the necessary theological response to evangelical inaction on environmental issues is a strongly this-worldly–continuationist–vision of new creation. (See e.g. Wright.) At the same time, there has been retrieval of elements of Christian hope which foreground themes of discontinuity (Boersma, Allen). Moreover, there have been challenges to the exegetical basis of strongly continuationist claims (Adams) and doctrinal reactions to reductions of hope to an immanent frame –eschatological naturalism (Sonderegger, Allen). This paper raises the question of where all of this leaves the connection between ecological witness and the content of evangelical hope. While highlighting some salutary emphases of continuationist construals, it explores how more discontinuous pictures need not undermine action for ecological justice, and can in fact (as Thurman noticed) sustain commitment when prospects seem bleak.

**Business Meeting**

Peter Choi, Graduate Theological Union, Presiding

**A19-116**

**Hinduism Unit**

Theme: *New Books in Hindu Studies*

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Sohini Pillai, Kalamazoo College, Presiding

This Roundtable features four first monographs in Hindu studies with the aim of both exposing scholars in the field to new theoretical interventions, and of providing concrete ideas about how to incorporate those interventions into scholars’ own pedagogies. The authors are grouped in pairs and then respond to each other’s books. While all four books this year analyze aspects of Vaishnava traditions, the content and scope of each book is strikingly varied. The first pair of books closely examine premodern works of Vaishnava literature alongside texts from other religious traditions: Christianity and Islam. The second pair explore devotion to Krishna using two very different yet equally fascinating frames: geoaesthetics and branding. Spanning diverse locations from Braj to Bengal to New York City, languages including Sanskrit, Bengali, Hindi, and English, and both textual and ethnographic methodologies, these books provide a snapshot of the breadth of the field of Hindu studies.

**Panelists**

Gloria Hernández, West Chester University
Ayesha Irani, University of Massachusetts, Boston
Sugata Ray, University of California, Berkeley
Nicole Karapanagiotis, Rutgers University, Camden

**Business Meeting**

Harshita Kamath, Emory University, Presiding
Varun Khanna, Swarthmore College, Presiding
On the 25th anniversary of the groundbreaking volume *Lived Religion in America* (Hall 1997), this panel reexamines the increasingly prominent field of “lived religion.” Theoretical formulations of the approach emphasize personal narratives, localized practices, and overcoming oppositions between the high and low, elite and popular, and institutional and lay. As the field has developed, however, it has often reinforced the very oppositions it sought to overcome, through greater emphasis on individual, lay, and marginalized practices. Moreover, evidence from Buddhism and Japanese religions has been overshadowed by a predominant focus on Western contexts. This panel aims to help correct that. The four papers range from medieval to contemporary Japan, and all span such divides as the individual and institutional, lay and monastic, and official and “everyday.” Collectively, they widen the spotlight on boundary crossing that lived religion studies aim to illuminate, while redressing the category from closely situated Japanese contexts.

- **Susan Dine, University of Michigan**

  *The Potency of Practice: Myōe’s Sanji Sanbōrai to Mitigate Disaster*

  In early thirteenth-century Japan, Buddhist practitioners faced many types of disasters: effects of famine and drought, violence and its results, and spiritual precarity with the widespread belief in the decline of Buddhist teachings. To deal with these situations, various Buddhist practices were propagated. One that gained wide popularity was the exclusive *nenbutsu*, promoted as a singular effort allaying the need for adherence to Buddhist morality and other “self-power” traditions. For the monk Myōe (1173-1232), dealing with both personal and social conceptions of “disaster,” this newly-popularized practice itself presented a danger to Buddhist teachings. In response, he crafted the *sanji sanbōrai* (“veneration of the Three Treasures thrice [daily]”) practice incorporating a painted ritual image. This paper discusses the painting and practice through the lens of a lived religion framework to address the role of religious praxis in individual and communal responses to a range of disasters.

- **Matthew Mitchell, Allegheny College**

  *Two Tickets to Paradise: Lived Religion, Mendicant Patriarchs, and Amitabha Amulets in 19th Century Nagoya*

  In the autumn of 1800, a crowd gathered in a small temple just outside of Nagoya to see Ta’a Son’yū, the 54th patriarch of the Ji sect. Petitioners received slips of paper with the name of Amitabha Buddha on them, which were popularly called “tickets to paradise” (*gokuraku e no fuda*). Our guide to Son’yū’s visit is the samurai-cum-publisher, Kōriki.
Tanenobu (1756-1831). Kōriki was an avid attendee of festivals and temple displays, and he recorded his visits in journals and illustrated short books. In his work, Kayazu dōjō sankei ki, we see the push of the crowd, the touch of the slips of paper, the cool of the water for handwashing. In this paper, I use Adam Yuet Chau’s modalities of doing religion and David Morgan’s discussion of the visual and material aspects of lived religion to examine the practices at this temple.

- Michaela Mross, Stanford University

*Lay Buddhist Choirs in Contemporary Sōtō Zen*

In the 1950s, Sōtō reformers invented a style of chanting hymns, named Baikaryū (lit., lineage of plum blossoms). Other Buddhist schools had already founded lineages of hymn chanting in the early 20th century based on older hymns called goeika. When Sōtō reformers modernized their religion after WWII, they used these as models to create their own hymn chanting style for choirs. These choirs became popular among lay devotees, especially women.

This paper examines how practitioners interpret this practice based on ethnographic fieldwork and publications of the Baikaryū. I show that clerics understand singing as an expression of the realization of buddhahood, a practice equal to seated meditation. Many lay devotees follow this interpretation, but the participation in choirs also fulfils additional functions, such as grief care, social support, and leisure. Thus, I suggest that music is a vital aspect of Zen as a lived religion.

- Adam Lyons, University of Montreal

*When the Orthodoxy is Stupid: Some Reflections on the Practice of Censorship and ‘Lived Religion’ in Japan*

This paper introduces ethnographic data from Japan to elaborate a theme found in studies of lived religion: what is the relationship between the individual and institutional orthodoxy? Applying insights from anthropologist David Graeber’s work on the connection between power and stupidity, this paper examines case studies of conflicts between individuals’ diverse modes of moral (and religious) expression and experience and the institutional orthodoxies that aim to limit and censor them in the name of preserving hierarchy and control. It is argued that the experience of dilemmas imposed by obviously counterfactual institutional orthodoxies is an important feature of lived religion for those in Japan’s clerical vocations today. The case studies presented show how individuals struggle with reality-denying dogmas surrounding taboo topics like violence against children in the criminal justice system and the accelerating financial decline facing most Japanese religions today.

**Responding**

David Quinter, University of Alberta
This roundtable convenes an interdisciplinary bench of scholars to discuss new directions in the study of the sanctuary movement. Here, the sanctuary movement refers to both the tactics of harboring undocumented im/migrants in churches as well as the broader set of practices such as accompaniment, hospitality (or what Derrida terms hostipality), and advocacy. Such sanctuary practices are based on millennia old-traditions brought into modernity via religious and legal actors and apparatures. Most recently we have witnessed how since Trump’s election in 2016 houses of worship, college campuses, cities, counties, states, and private businesses rushed to invoke sanctuary. To be sure, the meaning of sanctuary has shifted across these various sites. For the U.S. for the past several decades, sanctuary has largely been (and continues to be) a movement and set of practices invoked mostly to aid undocumented im/migrants and families of Latin American decent. Centered on Latina/o/x experiences of sanctuary in the U.S., this roundtable will critically examine the received stories about sanctuary and some of the prevalent assumptions about the movement.

Panelists

Felipe Hinojosa, Texas A&M University
Mary Ward-Bucher, Temple University
Sergio Gonzalez, Marquette University
Lloyd Barba, Amherst College
Carlos Ruiz Martinez, University of Iowa
Barbara Sostaita, Harvard University

Reviewers

Ruben Rosario Rodriguez, Saint Louis University

Business Meeting

Lauren Frances Guerra, Loyola Marymount University, Presiding
Ángel Gallardo, Southern Methodist University, Presiding

A19-119
Law, Religion, and Culture Unit
Theme: **Intellectual Property, Branding, and Religion**
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Andrew Ventimiglia, Illinois State University, Presiding

This roundtable investigates issues involving religious communities’ claims to and practices regarding intellectual property and branding. Intellectual property claims (the idea of exclusive ownership of an idea, practice, or symbol) and branding practices (wherein such logic of ownership is expanded to marks of identity and processes of marketing) are advanced with increasing frequency by mainstream religious institutions, new religious movements, and indigenous communities. Yet, these practices are understudied both within religious studies and legal and economic scholarship. This panel features a range of scholars drawing on diverse case studies, grappling with the legal and economic claims of intellectual property (over doctrine, names, iconography, and even practices) and marketing (trademark/branding logics) and the complex entanglements that result from their mobilization by religious communities.

**Panelists**

Spencer Dew, Ohio State University
Kristin Peterson, Boston College
Ari Y. Kelman, Stanford University
Benjamin Zeller, Lake Forest College
Brad Stoddard, McDaniel College
Nathan Fredrickson, University of California, Santa Barbara

**A19-120**

**Mysticism Unit**

Theme: **Troubling "Mysticism": Expanding the Horizons of the Category**
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Margarita Simon Guillory, Boston University, Presiding

The category of “mysticism” has often functioned to capture marginal, iconoclastic, and rebellious figures, movements, and schools of thought. And yet it too has been constrained by its own (often implicit) conceptual horizons. Each of our authors seeks to trouble the category of mysticism, challenging implicit assumptions that confine the category and threaten to obscure or overlook those phenomena we might illuminate through it. They ask us to re-imagine the category to address new types of phenomena that lie at the outer margins of what we commonly recognize as the religious/mystical, to decenter historically dominant influences that may do violence to our subject matter, and to revise elements of its intellectual inheritance that truncate its theoretical vision.

- James W. Perkinson, Ecumenical Theological Seminary

*An Experimental Reading Towards Decolonizing Mysticism: Letting Deloria’s Land “Revelation” Challenge Christian Anthropocentrism*

In his 1991 essay entitled “Reflection and Revelation: Knowing Land, Places, and
Ourselves,” Standing Rock Sioux theologian/lawyer Vine Deloria, differentiates the “religious experiences” of “mystics of other religious and philosophical traditions” from those of various Native American traditions in terms of the latter’s frequent emphasis on “specific locations” grounding both sacred reflections and intense moments of revelation (Deloria, 1999). In what follows here, I will summarize Deloria’s arguments—supplemented by the work of Potawatomi scholar Robin Kimmerer on Anishinaabe understandings, African American theologian Willie James Jennings’s review of Yup’ik, Apache, and Ju/wasi and Gwi (southern Africa) experiences, and African American historian of religion Charles Long’s adaptation of Rudolph Otto’s *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*—to challenge Western generalizations of mystical experience not tethered to, or expressive of, particular ecosystems and topographies, and conclude with a “decolonizing experiment” in re-reading the gospels’ Transfiguration accounts as just such a land-based encounter.

- Nicholas Collins, Rice University

*Paranormal Path Dependencies in Global Mythology: Their Relevance for the Study of Mysticism*

Paranormal phenomena, such as UFO/UAP contact experiences, have emerged as a viable category in the study of religions, and particularly of mysticism. Though occurring outside of the boundaries of religious traditions, these phenomena clearly share essential features with more classical expressions of mysticism, such as out of body “soul flights,” telepathic communications and encounters with beings perceived as divine or superhuman, and the procurement of metaphysical knowledge through such encounters, all of which points to a common genetic lineage. Such a lineage may be illuminated by historical-comparative studies of global mythology, extending back to pre Out-of-Africa (80kya) mythological substrates, and identifying the emergence and persistence of particular “path dependencies” conditioning – largely unconsciously - subsequent layers of mythic-mystical experience, right up to the present. It is the interplay of these path dependencies with the participatory involvement of human consciousness which filters and facilitates the irruption of these phenomena into reality.

- Daniel Fishley, McGill University

*Mystical Bodies and Social Embodiment: Grace Jantzen and Materiality of Transcendence*

This study examines the scholarship of Grace Jantzen. Jantzen’s project was key to altering the ways in which power, sexuality, and gender were understood within the field of mystical studies. In short, for Jantzen, to study the mystical was to study the material bodies that inhabit this conceptual world. In my analysis I situate Jantzen’s early scholarly work against the backdrop of her 2004 *Foundations of Violence* series. I argue that in Jantzen’s critical analysis of ‘the mystical’, and in her appeal to ‘the beautiful’—both framed within a stark awareness of patriarchal norms, cultural violence, and our material existence—she provides a provocative space within which the paradox of
mystical ascent is reimagined in modernity. Jantzen’s project, I show, thinks the mystical via the languages of finitude provided by the conceptual resources of Continental philosophy; my study examines how she specifically uses Continental thought to trouble ‘the mystical’.

- Paul Gillis-Smith, Harvard University

*Profane words with God: Mysticism on the Immanent Plane*

Studies of mysticism have relied on the language of “transcendence.” This privileging of a transcendental paradigm has excluded divine encounters that arise from within the material universe. I propose an initial sketch of mysticism that emerges from a Deleuzian “immanent plane.” My intervention would allow for a materialist view of mysticism and a serious accounting for the experiences of agnostics, animists, and earth-based spiritualities. An immanentist view of mysticism also substantiates “profane illuminations,” a sub-tradition within modernity most readily associated with Walter Benjamin, Charles Baudelaire, and Thomas De Quincey. Ultimately, my analysis of this profane sub-tradition opens up a space for an alternative form of mystical experience in which new relations are formed with one’s body, the divine, and the natural world.

**Business Meeting**

Jason N. Blum, Davidson College, Presiding

*A19-121*

Books under Discussion

**Nineteenth Century Theology Unit**


Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Brent Sockness, Stanford University, Presiding

For three-quarters of a century, Barthian historiography has painted a contemptible image of Ernst Troeltsch’s politics and their relationship to the nineteenth-century “Kulturprotestantism” he purportedly embraced. In The Crucible of German Democracy, Robert Norton argues that—far from being an uncritical, militaristic, or chauvinistic supporter of the Kaisersreich—Troeltsch in fact became Germany’s most influential defender and shaper of democracy. Focusing on Troeltsch’s extensive activities as a public intellectual in Berlin (1914-23), Norton reads Troeltsch’s speeches, essays, journalism, and actions against the backdrop of war and revolution and amidst the fierce controversies taking place over Germany’s future. Three experts from the fields of theology, religious studies, and history will assess the book and engage its author. How might Norton’s new portrait of Troeltsch the politician and publicist change the way we think about his theology and ethics?

**Panelists**
Lori K. Pearson, Carleton College  
Friedemann Voigt, Philipps University of Marburg  
Helmut Walser Smith, Vanderbilt University  

Responding

Robert E. Norton, University of Notre Dame

A19-122
North American Religions Unit
Theme: Religion, Moral Panics, and the American City
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Savannah Finver, Ohio State University, Presiding

The papers on this panel each offer case studies that consider the relationship between religion and moral panics in American cities, historically and today.

- Kolby Knight, University of California, Santa Barbara

_The Singing Priest of Chinatown and Catholicizing an American City_

This paper explores the career of Father Tom McLoughlin, a New York City priest and national celebrity who became widely known as "The Singing Priest of Chinatown" at the turn of the twentieth century. Through lectures and vocal performances, McLoughlin celebrated the harmony of Catholic art and music while targeting the "noise" and "ungodly instruments" emanating from the Chinatown Theater close to his church, along with the “ragtime buffoony” of Harlem jazz clubs. Using McLoughlin’s personal writings, police records, and urban planning documents, this paper traces how McLoughlin, alongside other Catholic and non-Catholic reformers during the so-called "City Beautiful Movement", worked to protect “sacred” Euro-American communities from “profane” populations inhabiting the urban landscape at the time. This paper also explores how McLoughlin theorized the religion of his neighbors as underdeveloped and premodern even as he recognized that his own parishioners were drawn to their well-developed and modernizing institutions.

- Lynne Gerber, Independent Scholar

_A Scandal in a Catastrophe: The Reverend Lynn Griffis, Anti-Gay Violence, and AIDS in 1980s San Francisco_

In 1989, Reverend Lynn Griffis, a lesbian minister in an LGBTQ church, claimed to have been physically attacked. Griffis was the San Francisco congregation’s first AIDS minister and her accusations touched a nerve in a community beset by catastrophe. They generated a wave of moral fervor against LGBTQ violence that crashed when her accusations were discovered to be false. This paper will use archives, media accounts, and interviews to tell the story of Griffis’s accusations and the revelation of those
accusations as fraudulent. It will examine how the case mobilized the city against hate crimes, provoking religious leaders and police to condemn anti-gay violence. And it will analyze how moral passions can be generated not only in moral panics, where the target of the panic is imaginary, but in situations where the target of moral feeling is very real and efforts against it hindered by moral attention inflated by falsehood.

- Seokweon Jeon, Harvard University

_Selling and subletting the body of Christ: Buying, Selling, Closing, and Subletting Churches in Greater Boston_

As an attempt to overcome the upper-mentioned limitations and to give a more holistic account of the interconnected issues of immigration, race/ethnicity, city, culture, and religion, this paper delves into one specific contemporary socio-religious phenomenon: the growing trend of buying, selling, closing, and subletting church buildings in Greater Boston since 1970.

This project pays special attention to the fact that not only have ethnic, immigrant religious institutions ‘emerged’ around the country but many local religious congregations and communities have struggled to incorporate these new immigrant groups into their established congregations and neighborhoods. By focusing on conflicts, struggles, messiness, and mutual negotiations behind this phenomenon, I suggest that selling, buying, leasing, and closing congregations become a social process and a site of strategic, political action.

**Responding**

Alyssa Maldonado-Estrada, Kalamazoo College

**Business Meeting**

Kathleen Holscher, University of New Mexico, Presiding
Isaac Weiner, Ohio State University, Presiding

**A19-123 Books under Discussion**

**Open and Relational Theologies Unit**

Theme: _Book Panel: Process Thought in Roman Catholicism: Challenges and Promises (Lexington Press, 2022)_

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
John Becker, Lyon College, Presiding
Marc Pugliese, Saint Leo University, Presiding

This book panel brings together contributors to the recently published _Process Thought in Roman Catholicism: Challenges and Promises_ (John Becker and Marc A. Pugliese, eds.), alongside respondents to explore convergences and divergences between Process thought and
Roman Catholicism with the goal of identifying reasons why Process philosophy and theology has not had the same impact in Roman Catholic circles as in Protestantism and of constructively navigating avenues of promising engagement between Process thought and Roman Catholicism. In creatively considering the Roman Catholic tradition from the vantage point of Process thought, different theoretical perspectives are brought to bear on Catholic characteristics of historical theology, fundamental theology, systematic theology, moral theology, social justice, and theology of religions.

Panelists

Catherine Keller, Drew University
Leo Lefebure, Georgetown University
Elaine Padilla, University of La Verne
Daniel Speed Thompson, University of Dayton

Business Meeting

Krista E. Hughes, Newberry College, Presiding
Jon Paul Sydnor, Emmanuel College, Boston, Presiding

A19-124
Pentecostal–Charismatic Movements Unit
Theme: The Resurgence of Kingship in the Pentecostal Social Imagination
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Dara Delgado, Allegheny College, Presiding

The ascensions of Jair Bolsonaro and Donald Trump, stylized as evangelical “kings,” into presidential offices in the US and Brazil animated forceful challenges to both democracies. This roundtable examines and compares the provenance, function, and dissemination of kingship tropes in evangelical political narratives in the US and Brazil.

Panelists

Erica Ramirez, Auburn Seminary
Leah Payne, George Fox University
Joao Chaves, Baylor University
Ryan Burge, Eastern Illinois University
Sam Kestenbaum, Independent Religion Reporter

Business Meeting

Andrea Johnson, California State University, Dominguez Hills, Presiding

A19-125
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit
Theme: **Climate Catastrophe, Eco-Anxiety and Climate Grief: Psychological and Religious Perspectives**
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Lisa M. Cataldo, Fordham University, Presiding

The terms “climate grief” and “eco-anxiety” have been used to describe various reactions to the impact of climate change, including human loss from climate disasters, loss of species and landscapes, and uncertainty or hopelessness about the future of the planet and humanity’s future on earth. This session will focus on work that addresses these phenomena from the intersection of psychology, culture, and religion.

- **KwangYu Lee, Drew University**

  *An Ecopsychological Understanding of Humans within Nature: between Climate Change and Climate Anxiety*

  This paper aims to urge the significance of changing how we see and interact with nature. Its main argument is that now it is critical to re-learn how to live harmoniously with nature in anticipation of rapidly increasing climate catastrophes that give rise climate anxiety. To support the argument, the author takes three steps. First, our collective/ecological dissociation between our knowing about nature in danger and our acting for it will be explained with apparently noticeable consequences of global warming and anecdotes about individuals who suffer climate anxiety. Second, how such collective dissociation took shape in the human mind will be explained, with three concepts: *biophilia* (Erich Fromm and Edward O. Wilson), *solastalgia* (Glenn Albrecht), and collective Trauma (Kai T. Erikson). Third and last, the author will introduce an ecopsychological understanding of humans within nature as a way to revive *biophilia*.

- **Leah Thomas, Lancaster Theological Seminary**

  *Climate Change as a Traumatic Stressor: The Implications of Trauma Studies for "Climate grief" and "Eco-anxiety"*

  Scholars have coined the terms “climate grief” and “eco-anxiety” to speak about the various reactions to climate change, which include (but are not limited to) human loss from climate disasters, loss of species and landscapes. Responses to these phenomena manifest psychosomatically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually, and can include anxiety, uncertainty, fear and hopelessness (without limit). Much of the work in the area of religion has focused on the intersection of “climate grief” and “eco-anxiety” with literature on grief. There is little, however, written on the presence of trauma—particularly notions of traumatic loss and communal trauma. Drawing on insights from trauma studies and embodied cognition, this paper examines how climate change may function as a traumatic stressor, particularly for marginalized communities. This has implications for the wider framing of “climate grief,” and for role of religion and spirituality as potential pathways toward integration and healing.
Pamela McCarroll, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

*Climate Trauma: From Climate Denial, Grief and Eco-Anxiety toward Earth’s Flourishing*

Literature has begun to identify climate trauma as a distinctive form of trauma that impacts the public in diverse and complex ways. This paper presents literature on trauma and the climate crisis arguing that the framework of *climate trauma* provides hermeneutical architecture to interpret diverse phenomena occurring in the public sphere— from climate denial and indifference, to political polarization to overt expressions of eco-anxiety and eco-grief. Further, the paper shows how the framework of climate trauma may help to conceive effective pathways for public and religious practices to serve earth’s flourishing.

Kerry Danner, Georgetown University

*The Need for Resistance not Resilience: Courage, Hope & Climate Catastrophe*

Human acts of resistance, no matter how small, are central to maintaining courage and hope in the face of climate catastrophe. The scale of resistance will and must differ; nonetheless, all resistance is emboldened when understood as part of a larger scale concern. This paper draws on findings from the study of climate grief and civil resistance, Christian virtue ethics, and moral psychology. I begin by situating climate grief to perceptions of power, agency, and vulnerability in the context of civil resistance. I then place power, agency, and vulnerability in conversation with the virtues of courage and hope in their secular and Christian manifestation. Doing so demonstrates how such interdisciplinary approaches deepen resources for individual and social transformation. Findings from psychology and my own research in anticipated and experienced behavioral changes around climate change are integrated into my analysis.

**Responding**

Storm Swain, United Lutheran Seminary

*A19-126
Qur'an Unit and Study of Islam Unit
Theme: Reception History of the Qur'an
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Lauren Osborne, Whitman College, Presiding*

This panel features papers focused on the reception and interpretation of the Qur'an in Islamic tradition.

- Zarif Rahman, University of Virginia
The Qurʾān in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī’s Paradigm of Human Perfection

Disillusioned with the discipline of theology, Islam’s great philosopher and theologian, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (1149-1209), increasingly turned to the Qurʾān in the later stages of his life. One way to understand his mounting inclination for the Qurʾān is by seeing how he found within scripture the means to human perfection. For al-Rāzī, mankind can reach perfection through achieving the knowledge of God. Such knowledge can be attained by means of a certain form of rational reflection and spiritual discipline. An analysis of al-Rāzī’s later exegetical works demonstrates that he found within the Qurʾān both of these means within their proper balance: the Qurʾān imparts to its readers an orderly but non-abstract form of rational reflection that points to the Divine while putting a relatively greater emphasis on spiritual discipline, which for al-Rāzī holds the key to the endless knowledge of God.

Syed Zaidi, Emory University

The Use of the Qurʾān in Mīr Dāmād’s Conception of Time and Eternity

In this paper, I argue that Mir Mohammad Baqer Asterabadi’s (known as Mīr Dāmād) (d. 1631-2) Book of Blazing Brands (al-Qabasāt) conception of time and eternity demonstrates how he combined Qurʾānic symbols with Twelve-Imām Shīʿite ontology and Neoplatonic cosmology to chart a way by which human beings can bring themselves closer to God. I show how the concepts of time, eternity, and perpetuity are addressed in his Blazing Brands. Although this work has been translated, a study of how and why he employs the Qurʾān, in comparison to his Peripatetic predecessors, has not been undertaken. Through a study of Mīr Dāmād’s exegetical method in the fourth chapter of the Book of Blazing Brands, I argue that although Mīr Dāmād’s understanding of time and space fits within traditional Neoplatonic cosmologies, his utilization of verses of the Qurʾān validated his approach to ontology and cosmology in a Shīʿite Muslim context.

Shuaib Ally, McGill University

al-Ṣafaḍī, Trivia and Riddles of Qurʾānic Style in 14th C Mamluk Letters

My paper examines letters involving Qurʾānic riddles and trivia in poetic verse sent by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ṣafaḍī (d. 764/1363) to his contemporaries. Specifically, I examine the correspondence sent to Zayn al-Dīn al-Mawṣilī and Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (the problem of repeating a referent in Qurʾān 18:77, The two of them asked its folk for food); Jamāl al-Dīn al-Subkī (a lack of parallelism at the beginning of Qurʾān 76:3); Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Laṭīf al-Subkī (an incongruent use of an intensive noun form); and al-Ḥusayn b. Sulaymān b. Rayyān (a grammatical riddle). My paper shows how non-specialists engaged with matters of Qurʾān commentary in a playful medium that struggled to serve its purpose. I also show how one correspondence comes to be promoted historically. My paper lends new insight to Ṣafaḍī’s correspondence, scholarly networks, the medium of poetry for inter-scholarly communication, and his participation in a specialized discipline
like Qurʾān commentary.

Responding

Hadia Mubarak, Queens University, Charlotte

A19-127
Religion and Disability Studies Unit
Theme: Interrogating Disability in History, Time, and Text
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Heike Peckruhn, Daemen University, Presiding

These presentations examine both problematic and promising uses of "disability" at various intersections of critical inquiry: an archival analysis of how disability was used in 19th-century Protestant rhetoric surrounding slavery, a constructive use of feminist disability scholar Alison Kafer's work to imagine messianic time as "crip time," and an application of a narrative-critical approach to a passage in the Qur'an focused on female (in)fertility and their linking to environmental phenomena.

- Calli Micale, Yale University

  Angelic Bodies, Demonic Flesh: Protestant Pro-slavery Rhetoric of Disability and Blackness

  This archival analysis of 19th-century Protestant rhetoric shows how positive evaluations of disability as a sign of God’s grace worked to justify debilitation practices on plantations. The examination complicates a dominant narrative in disability histories that associates Christian rhetoric with only a negative evaluation of disability as indexing a state of sin. Instead, the paper explains that positive and negative evaluations of intellectual deficiency coalesced to shore up white Christian consciences, allowing for and encouraging violence perpetrated against the enslaved. The paper concludes, following Jina B. Kim and Julie Avril Minich, to query whether merely re-inscribing a positive evaluation of disability does disability justice.

- Madeline Jarrett, Boston College

  Crip Time as Messianic Time: Insights from the Disabled Body on Temporality and Futurity

  Narratives of grim crip futurity imagine disability as a tragedy that effectively prevents an individual from leading a “good” life. Feminist disability scholar Alison Kafer rejects grim futurity, offering “crip time” as a more accurate conception of disabled temporality. Often out of bodily necessity, crip time is shaped by changing needs and abilities, challenging hegemonic conceptions of pace, priorities, and productivity.

  This paper presents crip time as an enfleshment of messianic temporality. Both are
grounded in radical openness and attentiveness to the present, rejecting capitalist attempts at control of both present and future. The simultaneously disabled and resurrected Messiah is a symbol of embodiment capable of both reshaping ableist socio-cultural imaginaries and reinvigorating the ecclesial vocation to embody the time of the Messiah. In this temporal framework, resurrection becomes inscribed onto and performed by each person and community who is present to the God of the “now.”

- Halla Attallah, Georgetown University

*Narrative Prosthesis, Female (In)fertility, and the Environment in Qur'an 51:24-30*

The Qur'an’s annunciation scenarios emphasize God’s omnipotence by recounting the stories of the birth of a son to non-reproductive bodies. This paper examines (in)fertility in the Qur'anic story of Isaac’s annunciation in Q 51:24-30. Using a narrative-critical approach that engages the concept of “narrative prosthesis,” I argue that female (in)fertility, and its association with the concept of natural disasters, is invoked as a “prosthetic” to make the Qur'an’s theological arguments more “accessible.” The term “barren,” for example, is used to describe both Sarah and the winds destroying the non-believing community of ʿAd. I argue further, that conceiving bodies are also connected to environmental phenomena and evoked to lend physical meaning to divine retribution. Sarah’s reaction to the annunciation, I propose, hints at the anxieties surrounding pregnancy, valorized by other parts of the Qur’an, including Q 51, which illustrates the imminence of Judgment by invoking representations of bodies “carrying” a burden.

**Business Meeting**

David Scott, Iliff School of Theology, Presiding

**A19-128**

Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe

Religion and Ecology Unit

Theme: *Decolonization, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and Care Ethics in Environmental Collapse*

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Kimberly Carfore, University of San Francisco, Presiding

Climate change has caused localized environmental issues requiring imaginative responses. This panel identifies political and ecological problems and strategies for addressing them. By bringing together different locations with varying political contexts, this panel reveals the variety of ways people develop environmental ethics through resources from religious traditions. The first paper outlines coral decimation and its impact on Pasifika islanders, whose Hawai‘ian and Samoan religious perspectives inform farming and fishing practices ensuring the health and sustainability of the reefs. The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan has coexisted with unstable landscapes, using Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) to adapt to stochastic change. The ongoing legacy of colonialism is present in ecological degradation. Addressing this includes increased access to land ownership and developing small scale farming and ranching projects. Aotearoa/New Zealand.

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Zealand vaccine protesters demonstrate their resistance to mandates through ecological healing practices, advocating against public health measures in favor of land-based community.

- Brian Kolia, Malua Theological College
  Frances Flannery, James Madison University

_The Case for Coral-izing Biblical Texts from Decolonized Perspectives_

Scientists predict that 70-90% of coral will die within twenty years, creating global ocean dead zones. Among the peoples most impacted by the loss of these animals are Pasifika peoples who live on islands in the Pacific Ocean. We draw on their religious perspectives, examining Hawai’ian and Samoan stories of the origin of coral as divinity, ancestor, or divine gift for families. The Pasifika reverence shown for coral invites us to “coral-ize” or center coral as an animal in our readings of biblical texts. Using historical-literary critical methods to examine biblical texts in their original context, we contest colonialisit hierarchical theologies of “man’s dominion over nature.” We examine explicit references to coral (Heb: _ramoth_) in Job 28:18, Lam 4:7 and Ezek 27:16, and texts on “swarming things,” the sea, bone, and rock, to discover deep reverence for tiny animals that have a divine origin.

- Elizabeth Allison, California Institute of Integral Studies

_Toward an ecological care ethic: Insights from traditional ecological knowledge in Bhutan_

Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) – the deep-rooted ancestral knowledge of living with a landscape conveyed through stories, rituals, and practices – understands humans as integral components of an interconnected, responsive landscape. This approach to relational interconnection extends caring beyond human kin to include other-than-human beings, as well as forests, mountains, waterways, and the landscape itself, revealing an implicit care ethic. Building on the work of feminist care theorists and Indigenous studies scholars, this constructive paper identifies and articulates an ecological care ethic, arising from animist, shamanist, and Buddhist cultural values in Himalayan Bhutan. In addition to the established care ethics principles of attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness (Tronto 1993), this paper identifies two more – humility and reciprocity – as inherent in an ecological care ethic.

- Wade Casey, Loyola University, Chicago

_Toward a Social and Ecological Ethic of Care: Wendell Berry and Willie Jennings in Conversation_

This paper considers the role of human displacement from the land as a key component of ecological degradation. It begins by evaluating theologian Willie Jennings and his work on how colonial powers, through the slave trade and the eradication of indigenous peoples, engaged in a project of separating people from the land. After reviewing
Jennings’ historical perspective, it will turn to Wendell Berry’s work to show how many of the same dynamics Jennings uncovers in the colonialist era have found a new expression in the contemporary period through the industrialization of agriculture. In this way, the paper demonstrates how ecological degradation and human community disintegration often go hand-in-hand. It concludes by arguing for increased access to land ownership, in a climate that is increasingly making ownership of property unattainable for many, and a shift in education and beyond that (re)connects people the land.

- Sadie Rittman, University of British Columbia

*Healing in the “Anthropause”: Reclamation, Resacralization, and Anti-Vaccination in Aotearoa/New Zealand*

Amongst spiritual practitioners I worked with in Aotearoa/New Zealand, “healing” is a widely used term that may be understood as a response to climate change. It involves reclaiming spiritual connections and re-sacralizing relationships that are human, nonhuman, more-than-human and transhuman. Participatory “connection” is emphasized in opposition to the separations that are at root of our climate crisis. In this context, and particularly as Aotearoa/New Zealand was spared the worst of the pandemic, the social interruption presented by Covid-19 was widely understood as a time of hope and healing, accompanied by profound personal experiences. This understanding could come to clash with government solutions in the form of vaccinations, masks, and mandates, resulting ultimately in a protest at parliament taking shape as a festival.

**Business Meeting**

Joseph Wiebe, University of Alberta, Augustana, Presiding
Kimberly Carfore, University of San Francisco, Presiding

**A19-129**

**Religion and Politics Unit**

Theme: **Christian Nationalism and the Limits of Liberalism**

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Ann Duncan, Goucher College, Presiding

In the wake of the Trump presidency, this panel explores the theological and practical implications of Christian nationalism as a basis for theological reflection, paradigms of gender, and the formation of new religious and political movements. The first paper explores the Christology of Christian Nationalism in groups such as QAnon through a spiritualization of nationalism and messianic views of political leaders. The second explores the roots of illiberal and antidemocratic conservatism in natural theologies of gender. Finally, the third paper explores the theology and praxis of Lance Wallnau and the influence of his Seven Mountain Mandate on Evangelical and Charismatic Christians in the Trump era. All three case studies demonstrate the broad and continued influence of nationalistic theology on the American political and religious landscape.
David Ritchie, West Texas A&M University

“Sketching a Christology of Nationalism: How Nationalism Utilizes Messianic Characterizations to Elicit Spiritual Devotion and Religious Affection”

Famed scholar of nationalism Anthony D. Smith posited that nationalist ideology may be understood as a “species of religion.” Thus, in addition to an interrogation by the social sciences, nationalism(s) can be and must be examined as inherently religious and fundamentally spiritual phenomena. Building on this supposition, this paper will explore one virtually ubiquitous religious element of nationalist movements—what I term as “the Christology of nationalism.” By examining a variety of historical and contemporary examples, I illustrate the spiritual dimension of nationalist movements via the ways such movements appropriate messianic characterizations of political figures. Furthermore, this paper will explore how nationalist Christologies are instrumentalized to provoke religious—and often fanatical—devotion within the enterprise of political engagement. Special attention will be paid to recent instances in which Qanon and Qanon-adjacent communities radicalized adherents by cultivating a religo-political imagination through a syncretistic blend of Christian and nationalist messianism.

Stephen Waldron, Boston University

Natural Theologies of Gender in National Conservative Ideology

National conservatism has been characterized as an authoritarian ideology that offers a critique of liberal democracy. To understand what this critique is, I argue, we have to examine the role that natural theologies of gender play in undergirding the views of the nation held by national conservatives. I evaluate the roles that gender plays in the thought of political theorist Yoram Hazony, theologian R. R. Reno, and philosopher Patrick Deneen. For all of these “post-liberal” thinkers associated with national conservatism, gender is essential to the construction and security of the nation. They appeal to natural theology rather than revealed theology in making these claims, which enables interreligious unity among national conservatives. This analysis enables us to understand major shifts in conservative thinking, especially the move away from the U.S. “fusionist” consensus between economic liberalism and social traditionalism and the rise of illiberal or anti-democratic tendencies among conservative thinkers.

Matthew D. Taylor, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies

The Seven Mountains of Colorado: The Capitol Riot and the Ascendant Independent Charismatics in the Religious Right

Lance Wallnau was one of the principal theological architects of the Capitol Riot, but his widespread influence has been largely overlooked. This could be because Wallnau, an independent Charismatic prophet, author, and celebrity, is mostly unheard of (or mocked) within elite Evangelical circles, despite being one of the most influential pro-Trump Evangelical voices. This paper situates Wallnau within a cadre of nondenominational
Charismatic leaders who surfaced in the Trump Era and formed the inner circle of Trump’s Evangelical advisors. Far from marginal, Wallnau is perhaps the most influential political theologian of Charismatic Evangelicalism, and his core idea – the Seven Mountain Mandate – has become ubiquitous within Charismatic networks. I argue that Wallnau’s political theology is inherently anti-democratic and envisions a strategy for global Christian supremacy that is antithetical to liberal democracy. Nonetheless, Wallnau’s influence continues to grow through the Truth and Liberty Coalition, a Colorado-based nonprofit he cofounded in 2017.

Business Meeting

Ann Duncan, Goucher College, Presiding
John D. Carlson, Arizona State University, Presiding

A19-130
Religion and Popular Culture Unit
Theme: Perverted Pleasures: New Sexual Frontiers in Religion and Popular Culture
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Roger A. Sneed, Furman University, Presiding

This panel explores dynamic changes in representing religion and sex in Japan, the United States, and the virtual Anglosphere. Focusing on Buddhist deities in a multitude of contemporary Japanese media, queer white poverty in 1970s American horror, and gay Satanists on Twitter this panel investigates the way that religion and sexuality are dialectically constructed through popular culture.

- Simona Lazzerini, Stanford University
  
  *Edifying, Entertaining, and Erotic: Buddhist Deities in Contemporary East Asian Pop Culture*

  Buddhist characters have been employed in popular culture for centuries: their awesome powers, epic adventures, beautiful bodies, and dark origin stories make them the perfect candidates for novels, theatrical plays, manga, anime, and videogames. Buddhist deities can be used in popular educational works to teach and promote Buddhist doctrines; they can maintain some religious elements but be completely removed from their “original” context for purely entertaining reasons; they can assume brand new roles that are often hyper-sexualized. In this paper I examine three case studies focused on the Buddhist goddess Hārītī (a Taiwanese cartoon, a Japanese manga, and a videogame) to shed light on the impact of Buddhist figures in popular culture. I argue that religious figures appearing in popular culture should be considered valid because they inform us on the new roles deities have assumed in the twenty-first century, and how people, Buddhist or not, understand them.

- Timothy Burnside, Florida State University
**Backwoods, Backwash, Bumfuck Nowhere: White Trash Poetics, Queer Domesticity, and Perverted Nature Religion**

This paper explores the production and poetics of “white trash” in American popular culture as an iconographic figure of perverted nature religion. Through popular hicksploitation films and pop culture ephemera—namely the films *Deliverance* (1972), *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), and *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977)—it looks to hillbillies as a censure for white supremacist masculinity’s imagined body, a cautionary tale of white Christian men’s presumed dominance over nature soiled by its abject intimacies with the bestial. The horror of “white trash,” it argues, is the imagined penetration and saturation of the modern masculine body by the rural with its abject oozing of superstition and sexuality. Tracing the imagining of rural spaces as sexually violent and religiously deviant, this paper unearths queer histories of rural religion as a dialectical homoeroticism and homophobia: white men’s spiritual bonding in and through nature regurgitated back as white trash’s superstitious bestiality in bumfuck nowhere.

- J Selke, University of California, Riverside

**Hail Satan’s Phallus: A Critical Analysis of Gay Pornographic Satanism on Twitter**

This paper employs netnography and critical discourse analysis to examine the ways gay men on Twitter foster Satanic communities and orient themselves to gay Satanic practice. How do these men centralize the language of pleasure, the erotic, and phallic objects as a linguistic ploy that both bathes in the pornographic and reifies their identities as Satanists? How does the use of cultural taboos within imagery shape the ways gay Satanists orient themselves within this social media context? For this project, common language, terminology, and themes surrounding queer pornographic discourses on self-identified Satanists twitter pages will be examined as touchstones that shape, twist, and deconstruct gay Satanic devotional practice. Each of these techniques will create a synthesized look at the employment of gay pornographic imagery and language and its potential benefits and complications for Satanists who exist in this social media-driven contemporary moment, intent on drafting community and connectedness online.

**Responding**

Claudia Schippert, University of Central Florida

**A19-131**

Religion and Public Schools: International Perspectives Unit and Religion in Europe Unit

Theme: Constructions of Religion in Education in Europe: Empirical and Theoretical Analyses

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Erik Owens, Boston College, Presiding

This session brings together papers that offer qualitative and theoretical analyses on how religion is being addressed, contested, construed, or otherwise conveyed within various schooling
communities and institutions across Europe both from below - in European school systems by all
actors involved in the educational process, and from above - in official documents of the
European institutions and of the various European countries that implement European guidelines.
The purpose of this session is to examine how the discourse and practices of religious
education have been developed and influenced by various actors in different European historical,
geographical, cultural, social, and political settings.

• Karsten Lehmann, University College for Teacher Education of the Churches,
Vienna/Krems

Religious Diversity at Viennese Schools during the 1920s and 1930s

The paper wants to have a look at religious diversity within the context of Viennese
schools during the 1920s and 1930s. It is based upon an Oral History-project under the
title ‘Religiöse Vielfalt an Wiener Schulen der Zwischenkriegszeit (ZwieKrie) / Religious
Plurality at Viennese Schools during the inter-war period’ – undertaken by the
Spezialforschungsbereich ‘Interreligiosität’ (SIR) / Special Research Focus
‘Interreligiosity’ that is situated at the Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule Wien/Krems
(KPH) / Private University College Wien/Krems. On the basis of in-depth interviews
with 24 contemporary witnesses, the project proposes that – at least as far as Vienna is
concerned – religious plurality has been very much part and parcel of the school-
environment during the inter-war period (Lehmann 2021). The analyses show in which
ways, the pupils of the 1920s and 1930s have been aware of religious plurality during the
inter-war period; and how they reconstructed their respective perceptions today. Along
those lines, the paper presents an analysis of the structures of religious plurality during
the inter-war period – with a particular focus on the micro-level of individual religious
self-descriptions as well as the meso-level of religious plurality - with a particular focus
on the school context.

• Carol Ferrara, Boston University

Learning religion in French private schools: categories and conflations through the lens
of Muslim, Catholic, and secular case studies

This paper offers a critical analysis of the category of religious education within France’s
private school system, shedding ethnographic light upon interpretations and
manifestations of religious education within different schools and schooling
communities. The emergence and expansion of private Muslim schooling alongside the
unprecedented growth of independent private schooling in 21st century France have
contributed to the politicization of religious schooling in France, making it essential to
better understand the contemporary nuances of the religious education landscape.
Drawing upon extensive ethnographic fieldwork carried out in French private Muslim,
Catholic, and secular schools intermittently from 2012-2020, I demonstrate how certain
assumptions and particular interpretations of the relationship between religion and culture
contribute to how religious education is understood within different French educational
contexts. I will also show how such assumptions can fuel unequal judgment and
treatment of schools, especially hyper-mediatized, and hyper-politicized Muslim schools.

- Angela Bernardo, Sapienza University of Rome

*Theorizing religion: religious education in the Italian public schools between interreligious dialogue and intercultural narratives*

This paper aims to analyze the projects *Finestre/Incontri* and the European Union (EU)-funded project *IERS-Intercultural Education through Religious Studies* as two competing but complementary examples of theorizing religion in education in Italy. Starting from the reconstruction of the environmental background and through the examination of the profiles of the associations and public bodies involved in both projects, the activities they have performed and the outcomes they have achieved, this paper intends to examine the core idea of religion that these projects have produced and to offer a critical approach to the discourses and narratives on the definition of religion in education in Italy.

Keywords: Italian educational system; the projects *Finestre/Incontri*; the European Union (EU)-funded project *IERS-Intercultural Education through Religious Studies*; the concept of religion; biographies, discourses, and narratives

- Ragnhild Iversen, University of Southeastern Norway

*Interrupting religion: Using a risk/potential matrix for thinking through the dilemma of play-based religious education for young children*

This presentation discusses dilemmas concerning play-based pedagogy in religious education (RE) for young children. While researchers and policymakers recommend play-based learning in general, religion is often related to seriousness rather than play, and surrounded by precautions in public education.

I discuss if play-based learning is a beneficial approach to RE, and how teachers can evaluate different didactical approaches within a matrix of risk and potential. The study is based on data from 37 days of fieldwork with children aged 4 – 6 in a Norwegian Kindergarten. I apply Biesta’s terminology of qualification, socialization and subjectification as entangled aims of education, and discuss possible consequences of what he calls a “pedagogy of interruption” (2010, 2021).

Play-based pedagogy may risk interruptions of cultural and religious conventions, but also create potentials for subjectification, contextually justifying the approach. The risk/potential matrix outlined here may aid teacher’s reflections when making pedagogical decisions in RE.

A19-132
Books under Discussion
Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism Unit
Theme: Author Meets Critics: Tisa Wenger and Sylvester Johnson's Religion and US
Empire: Critical New Histories (New York University Press, 2022)
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Adrian Hermann, University of Bonn, Presiding

This roundtable brings a diverse set of analytical perspectives to the topic of religion and US empire. It places the co-editors of Religion and US Empire (NYU, 2022) into conversation with scholars of African American religious cultures, American Islam, Asian American religions, American Catholicism, and the history of religion and race in the US. The United States has been an empire since the time of its founding, and this empire is inextricably intertwined with American religion. Religion and US Empire examines the relationship between these dynamic forces throughout the country’s history and into the present. The volume will serve as the most comprehensive and definitive text on the relationship between US empire and American religion. Together, the roundtable hopes to evaluate the state of the current discourse on the complex relationship between religion and empire in the American context and collectively reflect on future directions for the study of religion and US empire.

Panelists

Kathryn Gin Lum, Stanford University
Juliane Hammer, University of North Carolina
Kathy Chow, Yale University
Katherine Moran, Saint Louis University

Responding

Tisa Wenger, Yale University
Sylvester Johnson, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

A19-133
Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit
Theme: Health Humanities & Religion: New Initiatives in the U.S.
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Judith Weisenfeld, Princeton University, Presiding

The academic study of religion has been conspicuously absent from most conversations in health humanities. This is especially concerning given the rich body of scholarship produced by AAR members on the intersections of religious communities with many aspects of health, suffering, and healing systems. The entanglement of religious identities with experiences of discrimination is particularly relevant for those addressing health disparities. Health humanities in the U.S. often seeks to go beyond scholarly publications to emphasize the application of research to improve healthcare approaches or public understandings of health. This includes humanities programs that teach future healthcare professionals through undergraduate curriculum or training within medical or nursing schools. This panel brings together a diverse set of Religious Studies scholars to discuss new initiatives that incorporate religion into health humanities and to explore current trends, challenges, and opportunities in this area.
Panelists

Swasti Bhattacharyya, Harvard University
Jamil Drake, Florida State University
Brett Hendrickson, Lafayette College
Minji Lee, Reunion Institute
Anthony Petro, Boston University
Kristy Slominski, University of Arizona
Andrew Walker-Cornetta, Georgia State University

A19-134
Books under Discussion
Sacred Texts, Theory, and Theological Construction Unit
Theme: A Panel on Jessica Coblentz's Dust in the Blood (Liturgical Press, 2022)
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Hunter Bragg, Drew University, Presiding

This panel will feature three engagements with the book Dust in the Blood: A Theology of Life with Depression (Liturgical Press, 2022) by Jessica Coblentz. The author will respond.

Panelists

Elizabeth Antus, Boston College
Karen Bray, Wesleyan College
Andrew Prevot, Boston College

Responding

Jessica Coblentz, Saint Mary's College, Indiana

A19-135
Science, Technology, and Religion Unit and Sociology of Religion Unit
Theme: Modes of Digital Religion: Research Methods, Christian Traditionalism on Twitter, and Online Worship during Covid-19
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Di Di, Santa Clara University, Presiding

This panel examines two aspects of digital religion: the use of Twitter by Christian traditionalists and the use of digital modes of worship during the Covid-19 pandemic. Authors utilize a range of research methods, from qualitative digital research and personal interviews to big data and machine learning approaches. The first paper analyzes the discourse of Brazilian radical traditionalist Catholics on Twitter regarding environmental, economic, and theological concerns. The second paper examines how Orthodox Christian Twitter users focus on physiognomy as a tool of visual verification to determine racial and religious identities, a practice that reinvigorates scientific racism through popular discourse. The third paper relies on interviews with Boston-area Catholics to show divergences in lay perceptions of the authenticity of online worship. The
fourth paper explores how the Burning Man festival sought to recreate ecstatic moments when it transitioned its rituals and communal experience to a virtual context.

- Lauren Horn Griffin, Louisiana State University

*#RadTrads, Climate Change, and the Pachamama Controversy: A Machine Learning Approach to Catholic Traditionalism in Brazil*

This presentation analyzes the hashtag #RadTrad (specifically, the discussion of radical traditionalist Catholics) on Twitter as an example of the ways in which identities are created in discourse and, moreover, how it is precisely the flexibility, not the rigid orthodoxy, of ideas of “tradition” that render it an influential tool of this algorithmic culture. I focus here on just one topic in the Twitter data, Brazilian traditionalist Catholic discussions of climate change, to demonstrate the variety of purposes for which #RadTrad is mobilized. My data lays bare some of the lesser-discussed social and economic forces that inspire these contemporary debates in Brazil, and I hope it disrupts analyses that continue to view a “religion” as static and determinative of behavior. This talk will be of interest to those curious about computational text analysis, discourse on climate change, religion and social media, or how ideas of technology shape culture.

- Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, Arizona State University

*Verified: Internet Science, Biometrics, and Religious Orthodoxies*

Drawing on qualitative digital research, in conversation with the histories of American racism and European fascism, this paper explores a renewed focus on physiognomy among religiously conservative white men in the United States who are self-proclaimed radicals and fascists. In doing so, it teases out how these intolerant conceptions of the body and personhood, often formulated and mobilized through technological mobilized digital propaganda, are intimately tied to philosophies of traditionalism, the history of biologically focused racism, and the disciplinary structures of political authority. By looking at how the language of political authority and race are mobilized among Christian online surveillance collectives, we can better understand of how the religious far right is shifting the American political substrata through technological means.

- Tyler Fuller, Boston University

*What’s Really Important?: Differences in Catholic Experiences of Digital Mass During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

COVID-19 measures required many Catholics to watch mass digitally and scholars are studying how Catholics experienced this. Thus, I utilized grounded theory to conduct unstructured and semi-structured interviews with Catholics to understand their experiences and if virtual mass is authentic. I stratified analysis by an inductive theme: what participants said was the most important part of the mass. Participants who placed emphasis on the Liturgy of the Eucharist felt that digital mass was not fully authentic and
longed to return to in-person mass. Participants who placed emphasis on the Liturgy of the Word felt like digital mass was authentic and saw it as an attractive option for attending mass, even after COVID-19 measures end. This qualitative research adds to discussions of digital religion among Catholics and can help sociologists of religion contextualize and understand Catholic mass attendance, particularly when service attendance is a prominent variable in quantitative studies.

- Amarnath Amarasingam, University of Waterloo
  Jordan Loewen-Colón, Syracuse University

“We Will Always Burn the Man”: Taking the Ecstatic Moment of Burning Man Online

Since its inception in 1986, Burning Man has attracted hundreds of thousands of people to the Nevada desert for a psychedelic bacchanal. Many attendees consider their participation in the ritual gathering as a spiritual pilgrimage for an experience of communal creative ecstasy. With the onset of COVID-19, however, Burning Man organizers faced the problem of moving a fundamentally in-person communal experience to a virtual environment. This paper explores how in 2020 and 2021, the Burning Man project transitioned its rituals and worship experience to recreate ecstatic moments in a virtual context. Drawing from literature in affect studies, new religious movements, entheogenic esotericism, and the burgeoning area of psychedelic studies, we explore how Burners sought to inhabit the extreme conditions of the hot and dust-stormy desert remotely, to experience psychedelic sacraments in VR, and to generate the collective ecstatic religious affects of a “transformational festival” through a digital-virtual network.

A19-136
Sikh Studies Unit and Yoga in Theory and Practice Unit
Theme: Sikhi & Yoga
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Christopher Patrick Miller, Arihanta Academy, Presiding

The role of Yoga in Sikh practice and the influence of Sikhi in Yoga has been subject to debate and the topic of recent scholarly publications and interdisciplinary research questioning: Is there a Sikh Yoga? How might the study of Sikh and Yoga offer new approaches and insights? This roundtable panel will engage key scholars in the field using a variety of disciplinary approaches from religion, theology, philosophy, anthropology, ethnomusicology and literature. They will investigate the nature of encounter between Sikhī and Yoga traditions by looking at near-contemporaneous texts associated with the Nāth Yogis, reorienting Yogic thought within the writings and music of Sikh Gurus. Additionally, they will address influences of Sikh-adjacent groups (Udasi, Radhasoami, Nirmala, Kabir Panth, etc.) and the role of scholarship, innovation, interpretation, commodification, and cultural appropriation within the history of modern yoga and Yogi Bhajan's Kundalini Yoga.

Panelists

Balbinder Bhogal, Hofstra University
This session explores ecologies of ritual and trauma through a number of different frameworks, methodologies, and case studies. Through the lens of a Buddhist Urban Village in the People's Republic of China, an early twentieth century British millenarian group, a minority Muslim community in Europe, a Western Buddhist practitioner on the Indian subcontinent, and coal and oil "sacrifice zones" in the United States, the authors here examine both displacement and place-based strategies for meaning-making and transformation. Together, these papers highlight creative and destructive forces, the ways sacred and the secular are entangled, and the symbolic and ritual meaning in the built environment and natural landscape. Additionally, the authors examine religious actors and communities in their struggles for justice, recognition, and visibility in response to capitalism's destructive tendencies as well as a range of responses and forms of resilience and resistance to the forces of climate change and the power of the state to determine religious and ecological futures.

- Kai Shmushko, Tel Aviv University

*Buddhism After Capitalist Destruction – The Case of Wutong Urban Village and Culture-Capitalist Soft Power in China*

The Anthropocene timeline begins not with our species but with the advent of modern capitalism (Tsing 2015); within it, urbanization is a major player. The People's Republic of China (PRC) accelerated in recent decades with various ramifications on local cultures, including religious traditions.

By focusing on the phenomenon of Urban Villages, this paper illuminates some of the particularities of urbanization and its ramifications on Buddhism. Fieldwork conducted in 2019 presents a contemporary ethnographic landscape of Buddhist modalities existing in Wutong village, Shenzhen metropolis area. The paper explores Buddhist lay practice groups and the Hongfa temple worship and practice. The study traces the capitalist trajectory of urban villages and how it affects an emerging, evolving Buddhist landscape. It argues that cultural and artistic forms of Buddhist religiosity are favored and
encouraged by shaping state Soft Power in an evolving urban space.

- Alastair Lockhart, University of Cambridge

*Creating a Sacred Garden: An English Millenarian Case Study*

Based on the self-understanding of an English millenarian group active in the 1920s and 1930s, this paper evaluates the complex of interacting processes implicated in their creation of a sacred garden from a multidisciplinary perspective. The group drew on Southcottian prophecy, mainstream Christianity, and newer spiritual practices such as spiritualism and theosophy in the formation of a dynamic community religiosity. When they believed they were under attack from Satan, they began to collapse the distinction between their mundane garden and the biblical Garden of Eden. With a particular interest in the framework of understanding suggested in studies of the personal and social benefits of community gardens, this paper draws out the way in which the garden became a complex religious artefact for the members of the Society, how their mundane physical space became transcendent, and how sociological and psychological approaches can help us understand the religious significance of place.

- Ehsan Sheikholharam, University of North Carolina

*Dilemmas of Recognition and the Cultural Politics of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture*

The Aga Khan Award for Architecture marks an illuminating site at the intersection of religion, politics, and architecture. It was established in 1977 by the leader of the Ismailis—a minority Muslim group scattered from Tibet to Texas. Beyond recognizing architectural excellence, the Award highlights the struggles of displaced communities as they seek to integrate into secular life. Two ethical dilemmas are integral to the Award. First, what does it mean to “serve” through architecture? For example, while the awarded projects “empower emerging Muslim communities” in stigmatized neighborhoods in Europe, they also facilitate gentrifications of these spaces. Second, why does the Aga Khan, purportedly a religious leader, concern himself with architectural patronage? Through these dilemmas, this paper examines how the Aga Khan—a graduate of Harvard and a royal based in France—draws on the symbolic power of architecture to expand the sphere of recognition for his transnational community.

- David Geary, University of British Columbia

*Yogi Mike under the Bodhi Tree: sacred space and the embodiment of dharma in Bodh Gaya*

It has been 20 years since the Mahabodhi Temple Complex – the place of Buddha’s enlightenment – was formally declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. These efforts to formalize a heritage landscape and safeguard a site of “outstanding universal value” has come into direct conflict with the pilgrimage activities and restoration practices by
Buddhist communities themselves, whereby, the renovation of a living sacred site is seen as an integral part of ritual merit-making and forms of devotion. Drawing on the experience and life story of one prominent Western Buddhist at the Mahabodhi Temple, this paper explores some of the tensions around heritage place-making and the embodiment of dharma in the making of a World Buddhist Centre in north India, especially the tensions between permanence and Buddhist conceptions of impermanence (annica) in relation to sacred space and the materiality of the built environment.

- Ryan Juskus, Wake Forest University

*From Sacrifice Zones to Sacred Zones: Theorizing Environmental Justice as the Work of Transforming Expendable Places into Places of Sacred Life*

This paper draws on fieldwork among and textual analysis of environmental justice (EJ) activists to theorize the work of EJ as transforming “sacrifice zones” into “sacred zones.” According to EJ activists and scholars, “sacrifice zones” are places where toxins and ecological devastation are concentrated in order to sustain the socio-ecological health of other places. This paper examines the meaning some religious groups make of sacrifice zones as not only sites of injustice but also as privileged sites of action intended to make sacred that which has been made expendable. Developing the notion of sacrifice as “making sacred”—from the Latin *sacra* (sacred) and *facere* (to make)—it seeks to reframe climate change and climate action. If climate change frameworks tend to foreground abstract concepts and elite and international institutions, the framework developed here foregrounds place-based knowledges and forms of meaning-making that can inform creative and pluralistic responses to environmental injustices.

**A19-138**
**Tantric Studies Unit**
**Theme:** Scholars, Practitioners, and Scholar-Practitioners: Negotiating Method, Relationship, and Secrecy in Tantric Studies
**Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)**
Anya Golovkova, Lake Forest College, Presiding

This panel represents a robust exploration of a persistent, ethically-fraught question that remains largely un-theorized in the field of Tantric Studies: the complex dynamics among scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners. With a variety of historical and contemporary perspectives, our five panelists offer a comprehensive investigation of the status of the field and explore a variety of interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and transpersonal approaches to scholarly praxis. These include issues in engaging meditation as a pedagogical tool, theorizing Tantric concepts as research models, negotiating complex identities and relationships in the field, and the impact of scholarship on living Tantric communities. Panelists draw on historical scholarship, personal experiences in the field and the classroom, and Indigenous and decolonial scholarship to identify novel and emerging strategies for researchers in Tantric Studies. Taken together, these papers contribute to a much-needed discussion of politics and praxis, and suggest vital ethical and methodological strategies for research.
Arousing Pedagogy: Troubling the Scholar-Practitioner Model

If an instructor integrates experiential practice into a Religious Studies course, how do students respond? What pedagogy is required? What institution support is required to assist students embarking on a journey of deep exploration, especially if the exploration brings forth issues around mental health when the probability of ambivalent experiences arising is high? Is it appropriate for non-initiates to practice esoteric lore?

This paper reports experiences from an instructor and students in a graduate-level, Harvard course, offered Fall 2021, titled "Arousing Cosmic Energy in the Subtle Body: The Scholar-Practitioner Model." The class met twice per week: one session dedicated to readings on the subtle body in Hindu and Buddhist Tantra traditions, the second session a meditation workshop, experimenting with mantras and visualization. For a keystone, students built and cultivated a practice of their own. In the end, I explore ambivalent institutional support and challenges to pedagogy arising during the course.

Striving beyond subjectivity: sādhanā as scholarly method in Tantra

Specialists in the disciplines of religious studies and anthropology usually agree on the importance of ethnographic methods, wherever applicable, and this also holds true for the academic study of Tantra. This paper adds a new approach to these discourses on method by highlighting the concept of sādhanā, derived from a Sanskrit term meaning “practice” or “effort,” and showing how this concept has the potential to mediate and inform scholarly debates over subjectivity and objectivity. The first part of the paper introduces the semantic range of the term sādhanā and analyzes contemporary scholarly participation in lived contexts where the term is salient. The second part of the paper shows how adopting this concept as a primary method has helped the author navigate Tamil contexts of “Tantric yoga” as well as this yoga’s relation to the esotericism of the Theosophical Society and other movements in the colonial and contemporary periods.

“All Scholars Are Assholes”: Secrecy, Distrust, and the Politics of Tantric Studies Research

This paper investigates the current, post-Orientalist Tantric Studies research landscape both in the field and in the academy. Using extensive fieldwork among Tantric communities and practitioners in Northeast India, discussions and interviews with scholars in the field of Tantric Studies, and inspired by collaborative approaches in Indigenous and decolonial scholarship, it represents part of a larger, broadly reflexive study which aims to illuminate and deconstruct the politics and historical impacts of conducting research with practitioners in esoteric traditions, with a focus on post-colonial
South Asian contexts. This includes problematizing insider-outsider dichotomies in research praxis; exploring the historical relationship of scholarship with practice traditions; investigating the secrecy and distrust between and among scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners in the field and the academy; and evaluating methods and potential models for decolonizing research praxis in practitioner communities as well as within the field of Tantric Studies.

- Hugh B. Urban, Ohio State University

*The Many Robes of Agehānanda Bhāratī: The Scholar as Tantric Practitioner, Transmitter, and Critic*

This paper examines the complex life and writings of Agehānanda Bhāratī (born Leopold Fischer, 1923-1991), with special attention to his multiple roles as a scholar of Tantra, a transmitter of Tantra to the U.S., and a critic of Americanized versions of Tantra. Best known for works such as *The Ochre Robe* and *The Tantric Tradition*, Fischer/ Bhāratī underwent numerous changes of identity, donning many different “robes,” from his youthful involvement in the Nazi Indian Legion in Austria, to his initiation into the Daśanāmi monastic order, to his more secret initiation into Tantra in Assam, to his academic life in the United States. Fischer/ Bhāratī’s complex relationship to Tantra can be seen both in his Tantric initiation—which he revealed only belatedly and partially in his published work—and in his relationship to American Tantra—upon which he was a seminal influence but of which he was also very critical.

**Responding**

Hamsa Stainton, McGill University

A19-141

Theological Education Committee

Theme: Theological Education Committee Meeting

Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

John Thatamanil, Union Theological Seminary, Presiding

Pamela Lightsey, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Presiding

The annual planning meeting of the AAR's Theological Education Committee.

**Panelists**

LaKeesha Walrond, New York Theological Seminary

Namdrol Miranda Adams, Maitripa College

Nevin Reda, University of Toronto

J. Kameron Carter, Indiana University

A19-139

Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Unit
Theme: **Womanist Cultural Aesthetics, Womanist Embodied Love**  
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Eboni Marshall Turman, Yale University, Presiding

“Womanist Cultural Aesthetics, Womanist Embodied Love” offers a womanist public witness of artistic, digital dexterity, expansive readings on queer readings, and chaplaincy that embrace the private and public intersections of loving all the people, notably as we engage the expanse of ecology and environment. As we move into the fourth decade, womanist thought and activism embrace a broad spectrum of religious, rigorous rhetoric. A womanist public witness is critical given the uptick of trauma through violence, disparities, and injustice diminishing black bodies.

- Elonda Clay, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

*From Cyberwomanism to Digital Womanism: Theorizing Womanist Approaches to Digital Praxis and Technology Politics*

In this paper, I introduce cyberwomanism and digital womanism as different yet mutually informing womanist approaches to technology politics and digital praxis. I argue that in using the dual cultural lens of a cyberwomanist/digital womanist (CWDW) research model to guide the research process, scholars, activists, and practitioners can consider the ethical and societal implications of information communication technologies and digital technologies over the long term, providing a framework that addresses the life affirming and demonic aspects of technology design, use, and social impacts. Drawing from the work of Emilie Townes, Dolores Williams, and Anna Everett, this paper calls attention to how the digital is currently being taken up to collaborate and mobilize for womanist concerns and identifies social justice challenges involving digital technologies in the near future.

- Jennifer S. Leath, Queen's University

*The Future is Quare*

In his essay, “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother,”[1] E. Patrick Johnson offers a definition of “quare” that builds on Alice Walker’s definition of “womanist.” In this paper, I argue that “quare” is not just a *black* way of being queer, but also a *womanist* way of being queer. First, I show the ways quare expands the horizons of studies in both womanism and queer studies of religion. I then demonstrate the ways that quare approaches to religion can inform new theories of justice. Finally, I show the ways that quare readings open scholars to fresh insights and approaches to public discourse and social transformation. I argue that the future of the studies of Black religion is a quare future.

[1] Johnson, “‘Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from My Grandmother.”
Kimberley Gordy, Union Theological Seminary

*Transformative Love: Black Women as Chaplains in Black Literature*

Engaging Lorraine Hansberry’s, *Raisin in the Sun* and *To Be Young, Gifted and Black* in conversation with Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and *The Source of Self-Regard*, this paper emphasizes ways that Black women have served as chaplains within their environments as well as their familial and romantic relationships despite the pressures of American society that strains said relationships. It highlights Black literary examples of the ability to love one another in ways that transform their navigation of life in the face of racism, classism and sexism as catastrophic forces that constrain liberatory existence. This paper offers a redefinition of chaplaincy that speaks to Black women as caregivers supported by my own empirical epistemology to describe the role of embodiment in generative sources that facilitate transformation through love in spite of efforts of strangulation by American society.

Iris Manburg, University of Chicago

*Towards a Womanist Theomusicology: Surveying Proto-Womanist Sonic Aesthetics in the Twentieth Century*

This paper centers the sonic aesthetics of twentieth century, proto-womanist female musicians by tracing the intersections of their experimentalism and spiritual activism through sound. It contends that womanist trends of self-authorship and (anti-)politics, can be located at the metaphysical intersection of sound, space, and consciousness. As a survey of twentieth century womanist sound, four artists will be highlighted: Bessie Smith, Alice Coltrane, Nina Simone and Betty Davis. Their creative aesthetics—whether overtly sensual or spiritual, oppositional or communal, utopian, dystopian, or hybridized—blur boundaries and effectively dismantle the (false) dichotomy of the sacred and secular. Bringing together a womanist integrative approach and a theomusicological analytical framework, this paper aims to (re)cover traces of political spirituality within black female sound in the twentieth century. In doing so, it ultimately seeks to underscore womanist theomusicological research as a generative paradigm for amplifying the socio-political and spiritual function of womanist sonic aesthetics throughout time.

**Responding**

Jennifer S. Leath, Queen's University

**Business Meeting**

Melanie Jones, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Presiding
Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, Independent Scholar, Presiding

A19-142
Books under Discussion

Women's Caucus
Feminist Liberation Theologians in Honor of Rosemary Radford Ruether
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Elaine Nogueira-Godsey, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Presiding

As the AAR/SBL Women’s Caucus celebrates fifty years in the academy, this session highlights the 2021 publication of Valuing Lives, Healing Earth: Religion, Gender, and Life on Earth, which honors pioneering feminist theologian and ecofeminist Rosemary Radford Ruether, whose scholarship gives voice to marginalized women’s experiences and histories on a global level. Valuing Lives, Healing Earth brings together feminist scholars in the Global North and South, demonstrating global feminist dialogue, transdisciplinarity, and mutual solidarity. In this roundtable discussion, we will reflect on the trajectory of feminist scholars intersecting religion and ecology since the publication of Ruether’s foundational book, Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion, in 1996. From different perspectives, editors, and authors will consider the contributions this body of work brings to methods of research and teaching strategies that engage decolonialism, ecofeminism, anti-racism, spirituality, the arts, food justice, liberation theology, and sexuality.

Panelists

Sarah Robinson, Pacific Lutheran University
Theresa A. Yugar, California State University, Los Angeles
Sylvia Marcos, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico
Rosalind F. Hinton, LAOUTLOUD
Adrienne Krone, Allegheny College
Jea Sophia Oh, West Chester University
Laurel Potter, Boston College
Frederique Apffel-Marglin, Smith College

Responding

Mary E. Hunt, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual

A19-140
World Christianity Unit
Theme: African Megachurches: Attraction, Innovation, and Lived Religion
Saturday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Afe Adogame, Princeton Theological Seminary, Presiding

In Africa, megachurches form a significant part of the renewal and growth of Christianity across the continent. Since the 1970s, hundreds of churches with thousands of congregants have emerged primarily in the urban landscapes of Africa. This panel includes presentations from interdisciplinary scholars researching the largest churches in Nigeria, Ghana, and Kenya. Using surveys, participant observation, and extensive interviewing, we investigate how and why these
churches have grown so fast and so large; who attends these churches and why; how these churches differentiate themselves from each other; and how these churches have been shaped by and are shaping the world around them. In addition, the analytical framework draws from 1) the role of modernization and globalization in megachurch development, and 2) Christianization, innovation, and megachurch attraction. As such, this research provides insights into the public role of these megachurches alongside a rich picture of the lived religious experience of attenders.

- Felicity Apaah, University of Ghana
  Allison Norton, Hartford Seminary

*Ghanaian Megachurches: Globalization, Attraction, and Innovation in a Time of Crisis*

This study explores the remarkable rise and public visibility of megachurches in Ghana and their recent adaptations in response to the pandemic crisis. Part of the “Global South Megachurches Project,” we present findings from the Ghanaian context, focusing on 1) adaptation and change in response to Covid-19, 2) the insertion of megachurches into, and adaption to, the global world around them, and 3) characteristics and beliefs of attenders – how and why congregants are attracted to these large churches, the factors that create loyalty to churches and leaders, and how faith affects attenders’ personal lives and relationships to families, vocation, income, and social/political attitudes. Drawing on key informant surveys, attender surveys, participant observation, interviews, and focus groups, this presentation provides an in-depth and nuanced investigation of the role of two Ghanaian megachurches in the larger society alongside intimate insights to the faith perspectives and formation of congregants.

- Dodeye Williams, University of Calabar
  Abimbola Adelakun, University of Texas
  Olanike Ogunnowo, University of Ibadan

*Adapting Church to Culture and Redefining Megachurches: Perspectives from the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Nigeria*

The RCCG, founded in 1952, has lived through different socio-cultural and socio-political epochs in Nigeria. To become a megachurch and even exceed its notions, the RCCG has adapted its purpose and programming to specific cultural elements that have contributed to shaping an identity that allows it to be both unique and relevant in various cultural contexts. We explore the pragmatisms and dynamism that underscore the status of the RCCG as a megachurch. We consider how the RCCG had handled religious competition and cooperated even with non-Christians. We argue that by adapting church to changing world culture—even while they appeared to reject it—the RCCG has been able to sustain growth and relevance beyond Nigeria to Africa and the rest of the world. While the RCCG checks the boxes of the features of what constitutes a megachurch, its experiences in the last decade also challenge the standard definition of megachurches.

- Damaris S. Parsitau, Egerton University
  Okelloh Ogera, Saint Paul's University, Kenya

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on both mega and small churches globally. The roles and influence of a significant number of Kenya’s leading megachurch clergy also appears to have been adversely affected by the pandemic. Based on ethnographic research carried out on two influential but radically different Neo-Pentecostal mega church clergy during the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper examines the influence or lack of it therefore of Prophet David Owuor of the Ministry of Repentance and Holiness (MRH) and Rev. Teresa Wairimu of Faith Evangelistic Ministries (FEM). We argue that while the influence and stature of some megachurch pastors appeared to wane or diminished during the lockdown, others experienced significant growth and influence including gaining national and political influence. This was partly due to how these popular mega church luminaries perceived, responded, packaged and shaped messages and sermons to the Kenyan public as well as their congregations. Similarly, their responses to the pandemic also largely shaped how they partnered or opposed governments’ healthcare policies and COVID-19 health protocols.

Responding

Kwabena Asamoah Gyadu, Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon
Olufunke Adeboye, University of Lagos

A19-143
Professional Development - Employment
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Committee
Theme: Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Committee Working Group Luncheon with Open Discussion
Saturday, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM (In Person)
Nicole Kirk, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Presiding
Willie J. Jennings, Yale University, Presiding

Anyone interested in academic labor is welcome to join us. Hosted by the Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Working Group, this annual gathering and business meeting brings together those concerned about changes in academic labor for discussion and a place to brainstorm ways to advocate and support contingent faculty and sustainable employment for all faculty. We will also have discussion tables on various topics, including the gig economy, contingent faculty scholarship, publishing, burnout, best practices, and more.
Valeria Luiselli was born in Mexico City and grew up in South Korea, South Africa and India. An acclaimed writer of both fiction and nonfiction, she is the author of *Sidewalks*, *Faces in the Crowd*, *The Story of My Teeth*, *Tell Me How It Ends: An Essay in Forty Questions* and *Lost Children Archive*. She is the recipient of a 2019 MacArthur Fellowship and the winner of DUBLIN Literary Award, two Los Angeles Times Book Prizes, The Carnegie Medal, an American Book Award, and has been nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Kirkus Prize, and the Booker Prize. She has been a National Book Foundation "5 Under 35" honoree and the recipient of a Bearing Witness Fellowship from the Art for Justice Fund. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times*, *Granta*, and *McSweeney's*, among other publications, and has been translated into more than twenty languages. She is a Writer in Residence at Bard College and lives in New York City.

**Panelists**

Valeria Luiselli, Independent Scholar

**A19-145**

Professional Development

**Women's Caucus**

Theme: *How to Be a Good Session Chair*

Saturday, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM (In Person)

Elizabeth Ursic, Mesa Community College, Presiding

Dr. Mary Hunt will present best practices for presiding at a conference session at the AAR. This informal roundtable discussion will provide ample time for Q&A.

**Panelists**

Mary E. Hunt, Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual

**A19-204**

African Religions Unit

Theme: *Gender, Healing, and Literature in African Religions*

Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Georgette Ledgister, Harvard University, Presiding

African religious traditions possess diverse, dynamic, and highly relational notions of gendered identity. Social and religious paradigms of gender have frequently had complex and mutually
influencing effects on one another, structuring how members understand themselves, each other, and their positions in society and the cosmos. This panel invites papers that analyze the various articulations of gendered identities in African (and Afro-diasporic) societies and religious traditions as well as the ramifications of these notions of gender.

- Michelle Ajisebo McElwaine Abimbola, Boston College

*Mourning and Healing Through Water: Ọsun’s Deep Thaw and Yemoja’s Great Transformation*

Ifá teaches us that mourning is not reserved only for times of bereavement. There is also grief in living—especially for women whose souls are intertwined with those of their children in physiological ways. The two iconic female divinities in this discussion both became rivers when they returned to heaven after their time on earth. The hierophany of the river’s flow illustrates the Yorùbá concept of grief, becoming, and overcoming. Ọsun teaches us how to heal childhood traumas and internalized oppressions, which become like solid sludge that clogs our psyche. Yemọja offers a glimpse into the grief of the Òrìṣà themselves, and how the powerful momentum of that emotion has the potential to transform one’s very existence.

- Ayodeji Ogunnaike, Bowdoin College

*Oduduwa: The Original Gender-Bender and Relational Identity in Yoruba Religion*

Could the creator of the world and founder of the Yoruba civilization have been a woman rather than a man as generally assumed? This paper argues that the answer to the question is both yes and no, or rather is dependent upon specific cosmological realities and the relational and communal nature of Yoruba notions of identity and gender. A close analysis of the surprising amount of documentation that Oduduwa—the progenitor of the Yoruba civilization and foundational oriṣa—has at times and in certain places been venerated as a woman reveals how the gender of even the most fundamental figures in the Yoruba cosmos is not fixed but context-specific. While engaging historical analyses of this phenomenon, the paper foregrounds cosmological reasons for the shifting gendered identity of Oduduwa by placing it within the broader context of comparative religion, Yoruba gender norms, and relationships with other oriṣa in the Yoruba pantheon.

- Nicholas Judt, New York, NY

"*Your Tongue Sings the Century*: The Effective Power of Literature in the Senegalese Sufi poem “Xarnu Bi”

In 1927, the Senegalese Sufi leader Amadou Bamba passed away and his followers (mourides) were besieged by famine and drought. In response, the poet Muusaa Ka wrote *Xarnu Bi (The Century)*, the recitation of which ended the drought. This paper argues that Ka’s poem allows us to understand the effective dimension of Sufi poetry, in West Africa
and beyond. *Xarnu Bi* was written to have a direct effect on the material world. Ka uses poetic language to climb a ladder that links the material world to the Divine, with Bamba and the Prophet serving as necessary intermediate stations. To support this interpretation, the paper begins with an analysis of how Bamba’s followers conceive of the relationship between material and non-material causation; proceeds to clarify the *mourides’* understanding of the cosmological function of language; and concludes by considering how Ka uses Wolof-specific idioms and imagery to climb the ladder to God.

**Business Meeting**

Georgette Ledgister, Harvard University, Presiding
David Amponsah, University of Pennsylvania, Presiding

A19-205
Animals and Religion Unit
Theme: *Animals in the Classroom (and beyond): Pedagogical Encounters*
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Adrienne Krone, Allegheny College, Presiding

Encounters with animals, corporeal and imagined, press humans against the limits of our understanding of other subjects. The ethical demand enjoined by animal encounters can stretch compassion, humility, and moral courage. This session is devoted to pedagogical practices and strategies in which encountering animals illuminates the work of religious studies and theology, and simultaneously, where exploring religious practices illuminates and transforms encounters with animals. Four presentations draw on experience teaching about animals in Tibetan and Pure Land Buddhism, Native American Traditions, and Christianity. These four presentations will be followed by an extended discussion of pedagogical resources and strategies where animals and religion meet.

- Kendall Marchman, University of Georgia

*Leaving the Nest: Experiencing the Birds of the Pure Land Outside the Classroom*

In the *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經, the Buddha tells Śāriputra about Amitābha’s Pure Land. He specifically observes the birds in the Pure Land, the only non-human beings that are mentioned in the scripture. At first glance, the Pure Land birds are just another feature that adds to tranquil ambiance of the Pure Land. However, the birds became an object of fascination that were consistently referenced in discussions about the Pure Land. This presentation highlights a pedagogical exercise centered on the Pure Land birds. After introducing students to the birds, the class reconvenes outdoors. Through a guided discussion that includes moments of reflection outdoors in nature, students gain an appreciation for why there are birds in the Pure Land at all. Birds (and animals in general) help us find the transcendent beauty in otherwise mundane moments that are too often ignored.
• Geoffrey Barstow, Oregon State University

_Incorporating Tibetan Buddhist Imagination Practices into Animal Welfare Activism_

Animal welfare campaign literature often asks its audience to reflect on the suffering that animals undergo at human hands. We are asked to imagine how animals experience life. This activist literature, in other words, asks us to imagine experiencing the world in a way we never have before.

The Tibetan Buddhist tradition also asks practitioners to imagine themselves experiencing life in a way they never have, only this time as a Buddha. Unlike animal welfare literature, however, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition includes practices specifically designed to cultivate the imagination in order to facilitate this experience. In this paper I will reflect on how some of these practices might be adapted to animal activism. Rather than simply asking people to jump right in and imagine themselves as animals, I’m proposing to use practices derived from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition to ease the imaginal leap involved in understanding animal experience and suffering.

• David Aftandilian, Texas Christian University

_Knowing Animals and Connecting with them More Deeply through Experience and Imagination_

How can we help our students get to know animals on a deeper level, and ideally learn to care more about and for them? I will discuss one or both of two innovative pedagogies that I have developed to address this question (as my allotted time permits): animal point of view stories, and creative or experiential service-learning final project options for an animals and religion class. These pedagogies are intended in part to accommodate students who may have different learning styles. After describing the pedagogies, I will provide examples of student responses to the prompts, and discuss what I feel worked well with each exercise as well as what could be improved for next time.

• Allison Covey, Villanova University

_Theological Ethology in the Undergraduate Classroom_

This presentation will outline the Animal Observation Project, an interdisciplinary, collaborative project I use in my undergraduate course on Animal Ethics and Theology. The course is offered as part of a program that privileges an Aristotelian concept of eudaimonistic flourishing, filtered through the work of Augustine and contemporary Catholic Social Teaching. This project puts these traditional, often anthropocentric approaches to flourishing into conversation with the voices of thinkers who seek to expand them. Through naturalistic observation of animals on campus, students are encouraged to question the conventional assertion that the human capacity for Reason is at the heart of flourishing and consider instead that all animal species possess a capacity to flourish according to their own kinds. Students investigate what it means for particular
species of non-human animal to flourish and identify some of the ways that our own
human activity on campus both fosters and inhibits this flourishing.

A19-206
Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Unit and Sociology of Religion Unit
Theme: New Works in the Sociology of Asian American Religions
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Dusty Hoesly, University of California, Santa Barbara, Presiding

In this roundtable, three sociologists of religion discuss their recent books and how each provides
important new insights for the study of Asian American religions. Carolyn Chen’s Work Pray
Code: When Work Becomes Religion in Silicon Valley (2022) explores how tech companies in
Silicon Valley bring religious practices such as yoga and meditation into the workplace and end
up spiritualizing work itself. Stephen Cherry’s Importing Care, Faithful Service: Filipino and
Indian American Nurses at a Veterans Hospital (2022) investigates how immigrant Filipino and
Indian Catholic nurses navigate xenophobia and church-state separation at a government hospital
in Houston. Chenxing Han’s Be the Refuge: Raising the Voices of Asian American Buddhists
(2021) critiques stereotypes of Asian American Buddhists while highlighting nuance among
young, socially engaged Buddhists of diverse backgrounds. These works chart new territories in
the sociology of religion, Asian American religions, globalization of religion, and religious
studies.

Panelists
Carolyn Chen, University of California, Berkeley
Stephen Cherry, University of Houston, Clear Lake
Chenxing Han, Institute of Buddhist Studies

A19-207
Black Theology Unit
Theme: Pneumatology and Eschatology in Black Theology: Spirit/s and Black Flourishing
in the World to Come
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Andrea C. White, Union Theological Seminary, Presiding

Is there a future for Black people given the resilience of virulent anti-blackness in Western
society? What is the role of Spirit in addressing Black precarity and offering the possibility for a
better future? This session will address pneumatology and eschatology in Black theology.
Presenters will expand and reimagine classical Christian understandings of the doctrine of the
Holy Spirit and the doctrine of the last things offering in ways that offer challenges and
possibilities for a new world where Black people can flourish.

• Kurt Buhring, Saint Mary's College, Indiana

A Theology of the Spirit(s)
Anthony Reddie has said that while Black Theology has always spent a great deal of time and effort on Jesus, there has been “comparatively little on the Holy Spirit.” Recognizing this reality, one hope of this paper is to invigorate and contribute to a conversation on the Spirit in Black Theology. After a brief examination of the intriguing work of Jawanza Eric Clark, who challenges taken-for-granted views of original sin and Christocentrism, the paper will explore understandings of spirit(s) within select Africa and Afro-Caribbean religions. The study will build from these pieces with a consideration of possibilities for constructive pneumatologies within contemporary Black Theology. The paper’s interest in the Holy Spirit is concerned primarily with the relationship between divine power and presence and human potential and responsibility, and especially in creative formulations of this dynamic that call for human action toward social justice, wholeness, and positive transformation.

- Andre Price, Villanova University

*Until Victory is Won?*

The motivation for this paper revolves around three underlying questions: what is the “world to come” in the face of antiblack racism where blacks live near perpetual death, can the subjugated have hope while rejecting notions of racial progression, and what is our ethical responsibility in the aftermath of slavery. This paper considers the irrevocability of the ontological structure of black non-being, arguing that the persistence of anti-blackness in the modern west, and Christianity’s reinforcement of its harmful logics, problematizes Christian confidence in the contours of “the life of the world to come” as a dimension of Christian eschatology vis-à-vis the Kingdom of God. The paper argues that the Spirit, who inhabits black bodies as an indwelling Spirit and disrupts the logics of slavery and its persistence, could be a site of “pessimistic hope” in the now in spite of an ontology that conceptualizes black debasement as totalizing and persistent.

- Elise Edwards, Baylor University

*The Future of Black Flourishing in the Built Environment: Insights from Black Theology and Afrofuturist Writing*

This paper is an introductory exploration of what architecture that supports black flourishing might look like. What will lead us to make buildings and cities that creatively and authentically express the experience of peoples of the African Diaspora? This paper suggests how we might use spiritual resources from Black theology and its Afrofuturist critiques to expose the deficiencies in current architectural practice and urban planning. Our current ways of building buildings and cities are not race-neutral. These practices are built on the legacies of segregation, disinvestment through redlining and predatory lending practices, narrowed and denigrating cultural representations of Blackness, and the memorialization of America's colonizing and racist past.
Responding

Jawanza Eric Clark, Manhattan College

Business Meeting

Eboni Marshall Turman, Yale University, Presiding

A19-208
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Bonhoeffer: Theology and Social Analysis Unit
Theme: Religion and Catastrophe: Bonhoeffer in Comparative Perspective
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Matthew Puffer, Valparaiso University, Presiding

In this session, scholars engage Bonhoeffer’s thought through a series of comparative studies in conversation with diverse traditions of religious and ecological inquiry. The papers examine Bonhoeffer in comparison with Sufi Muslim Ibn ʿArabī on "sainthood"; with Japanese philosopher Tanabe Hajime on "metanoia," or repentance; with contemporary ecology on “preservation” and “extinction imaginaries;” and with the world-ecology of capitalism on “cheap things.” Collectively, with Bonhoeffer, they seek to address “how a coming generation is to go on living.”

- Hans Harmakaputra, Hartford International University

BONHOEFFER, SAINTHOOD, AND ISLAM: A COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY OF SANCTITY AS A LIMINAL SPACE

Both Christian and Muslim traditions emphasize holiness as otherworldly spirituality. However, another similarity emerges from a comparison between Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theology of saint with that of Ibn ʿArabī, namely the hiddenness of saint. At the heart of the notion of hiddenness is the saint’s involvement in the world. However, there is another less apparent similarity related to sanctity, namely the hiddenness of saints. Guided by the notion of the hiddenness of saints, this paper will survey Bonhoeffer’s works to draw his theology of saints and juxtapose it with Ibn ʿArabī’s treatment of the hiddenness of saints using a comparative theology lens. The exposure will delineate how the idea of hiddenness correlates with sanctity as a liminal space between the banality of the world and the holiness of God in Christianity and Islam. Furthermore, the endeavor will also highlight the ways in which such comparison can enrich the dominant Christian theology of saints.

- Mac Loftin, Harvard University

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER AND TANABE HAJIME: METANOIA AS CONSENT TO DEATH
Bonhoeffer’s prison letters briefly mention *metanoia*, repentance, as a way for Christianity to overcome “self-preservation” and reckon with its complicity in past and present atrocities. I flesh out these scattered mentions by reading them alongside Tanabe Hajime’s *Philosophy as Metanoetics*. Tanabe, a Japanese contemporary of Bonhoeffer’s, makes explicit what Bonhoeffer implies: *metanoia* names not only acceptance of moral contingency but also consent to death. Both understand *metanoia* as individual and collective; not only must we accept our own moral limitation and death, we must also take responsibility for the moral failings of our community and accept that this community will pass away. After showing how both see *metanoia* as resisting ethnonationalism, I explore their relevance to today’s far-right’s push to ban “Critical Race Theory” and forestall a fantasized “Great Replacement” of the white race - attempts to secure both the moral purity and the perpetual existence of a white Christian America.

- Adam Vander Tuig, Union Theological Seminary

*A History of the Anthropocene in a Single Cheap Thing: Bonhoeffer, Cheap Grace, and the Future of the Planet*

In *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet*, coauthors Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore attempt to show how our modern world has been made through seven cheap things: nature, money, work, care, food, energy, and lives. This paper puts their work into conversation with Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Discipleship* to explore comparative notions of “cheap” and to argue that our modern world—including the cascading climate catastrophe that exponentially threatens it—has been made by “cheap grace,” too. The cheapness that restores a world-ecology ripest for capitalism has profound implications for Christian sacraments, ecclesiology, cosmology, discipleship, and spiritual practices in general.

- David Robinson, Regent University

*How is the Coming Generation to Go On Living? Bonhoeffer’s Ethics of Preservation Amid the “Sixth Extinction”*

Threats to the lives of other creatures are so acute that scientists now speak of an anthropogenic mass extinction event comparable with the five found in the geological record. What is our obligation to species threatened with extinction—or to those already extinct? Ecotheology has made significant contributions but often reaches its limit when faced with the moral ambivalence of nature. This essay therefore draws on Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s theological ethics of preservation, adapting his call for a world alliance against nationalist resentment and resource wars in order to counter the threat of an anthropogenic mass extinction. I connect this material to Karl Barth’s own treatment of divine preservation against the “nothingness” that threatens creaturely life. Finally, this essay engages with current scientific discourse regarding a practical target for biodiversity that can inform public policy, while also analyzing the use of de-extinction technologies in light of Bonhoeffer reconfiguration of “natural life.”

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A19-209
Buddhism Unit
Theme: Poaching Textual Authority: The Reception of the Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Reiko Ohnuma, Dartmouth College, Presiding

Scholars working to foreground the experiences of monastic women across Buddhist contexts are creating greater gender representation within the discipline of Buddhist Studies. A key factor in female Buddhist monasticism is the legal tradition governing women’s communities, or the Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya. This panel engages this foundational legal tradition and, especially, its reception across a variety of contemporary and historical contexts. Whereas commentarial studies presume the fealty of commentary to an authoritative root text and privilege questions of continuity and orthodoxy, a reception-oriented approach shifts the scholar’s focus to the varied experiences of voices, bodies, and cultures receiving the tradition. This panel highlights how Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya receivers approach the text as what Michel de Certeau referred to as “tacticians.” The four papers in this panel will explore the tactical hermeneutics employed by reception communities drawing upon the authority of the Bhikṣuṇī-vinaya but reading the tradition selectively as they engage in social experimentation.

• Manuel Lopez, New College of Florida

_Divergent Lives, Convergent Paths: Ordination, Education, and Social Status of Contemporary Bhutanese Nuns_

This paper explores the impact that the issue of bhikṣuṇī ordination and, in particular, the reception of the bhikṣuṇī-vinaya (or more accurately, the idea of it) has played in shaping the social status of contemporary Bhutanese nuns and the ways it has impacted their access to educational opportunities. In order to discuss this, my paper will focus on the life of four nuns with different institutional affiliations: Drukpa Kagyu, Nyingma, the non-sectarian Bhutan Nuns Foundation, and one from the only Karma Kagyu nunnery in the country. My main argument is that historical, cultural, and religious constraints imposed onto Bhutanese nuns have forced them to articulate a variety of responses around the issue of bhikṣuṇī ordination and the reception of the bhikṣuṇī-vinaya. Those responses, while diverse in their approach, do converge in challenging the status quo and improving the social status and education of Bhutanese nuns.

• Darcie Price-Wallace, Northwestern University

_Himalayan and Tibetan Buddhist Nuns’ Textual Communities in Northern India: On the Foundational Women’s Ordination Narrative_

Presently nuns in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition cannot receive full ordination as monastic communities did not transmit the nun’s full ordination (Tib. _dge slong ma_, San. _bhikṣuṇī_) lineage via the _Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya_ into Tibet. As Buddhist women cannot study the _Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya_ without having taken full ordination, the nuns create informal textual communities to circulate collective narratives about
women’s monasticism. My case study shows that nuns only receive and/or retell certain aspects of these narratives. The foundational history of women’s monasticism hinges on Mahāprajāpatī’s full ordination, which depends upon her acceptance of the eight heavy rules (Tib. lci chos brgyad, San. gurudharmas). I demonstrate how nuns’ mixed responses on the gurudharmas indicate a certain level of knowledge about these eight heavy rules; yet these nuns imply that these eight heavy rules remain irrelevant to their day-to-day practices, revealing the heterogeneous way that nuns receive and/or share their indirect knowledge of the Mūlasarvāstivādavinaya.

- Nicholas Witkowski, Nanyang Technological University

*Buddhist Monastic Women as Conduits of Charismatic Authority: A Study of Revolutionary Agency and Counterrevolutionary Reception*

This paper is a study of the reception of a particular Buddhist *Vinaya* (monastic legal codes) narrative within another early Buddhist community. This paper compares the Indic version of a *Vinaya* narrative about the female Buddhist monastic (*bhikṣunī*), Śuklā, with the Chinese translation/reception of this text. The textual elements of the Śuklā narrative cycle I wish to focus on in this paper appear in the Sanskrit and Chinese versions of the Mahāsāṃghika-Lokottaravāda *Bhikṣunī-vinaya*. These accounts of Śuklā are less well known, but are important in their own right, because they depict a woman as a popular public monastic figure among elite lay believers. In this paper, I will make the argument that Śuklā’s public role as a representative of the Buddhist monastic Order is dramatically reinterpreted—and specifically, circumscribed—in the Chinese reception of the Indic narrative.

- Annie Heckman, University of Toronto

*Counting to 180: Butön Rinchen Drub’s curation of nuns’ pāyantikā offenses from the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya(s)*

Centuries ago, scholar-monk Butön Rinchen Drub (Bu ston Rin chen grub 1290–1364) encountered an exegetical disaster, noting conflicts between two canonical texts for nuns: rules in the *Bhikṣunī-prātimokṣa-sūtra* recitation text did not fully align with their narratives and explanations in the *Bhikṣunī-vinaya-vibhaṅga*. Problems were particularly evident for the pāyantikā offenses. Butön remediated discrepancies among his sources in a narrative digest, the *Dülwa gélongmé lengbum* (*Dul ba dge slong ma'i gleng 'bum*, 1352). I argue that Butön made curatorial interventions to craft a set of 180 pāyantikās that made legal and narrative sense, even deferring to commentary over texts classed as the words of the Buddha. Emphasizing the fact that monastic "codes" in the plural—instead of a seamless code—would be inherited by those who wish to ordain as nuns in Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya textual traditions today, I suggest precedents for the embrace of such plurality.

**Responding**
Amy P. Langenberg, Eckerd College

A19-210
Books under Discussion
Christian Spirituality Unit and Contemplative Studies Unit
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Anita Houck, Saint Mary's College, Indiana, Presiding

The Soul of Higher Education explores such questions as “How can a contemplative culture be nurtured in the classroom? What difference does that culture make in teaching and learning? What is the role of individual and institutional leadership in creating and sustaining this culture? What is an appropriate epistemological grounding for contemplative higher education? We gather a variety of presenters to discuss ways in which contemplative pedagogy, research and institutional life might be advanced, both in the field of Christian Spirituality and in the field of Contemplative Studies. We will explore lacunae that remain in the discussion, and in the volume, in particular, and offer fresh ways forward, for example, in connecting contemplative studies to social justice efforts.

Panelists
Margaret Benefiel, Shalem Institute For Spiritual Formation
Mary Frohlich, Catholic Theological Union
Stephanie Paulsell, Harvard University
Daniel Barbezat, Amherst College

Responding
Bo Karen Lee, Princeton Theological Seminary
Leonard McMahon, Graduate Theological Union

A19-211
Christian Systematic Theology Unit
Theme: Disability, Hope, and Justice
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Oliver Crisp, University of Saint Andrews, Presiding

At the heart of ongoing conversations within disability theology lies the need to recognize all persons, regardless of ability (or lack thereof), as equal heirs of not just mere dignity but of the hope and justice which is promised to all humanity through Scripture. In this session, four approaches to the relationship between disability, hope, and justice are offered which provide both constructive and synthetic perspectives on more properly understanding the inherent worth of disabled persons. The session’s first two papers establish connections between lived experiences of disability at present re the atonement (anxiety disorders, OCD, and PTSD) while the latter two propose novel possibilities for the reasonable continuation of at least some
disabilities in the eschaton. As it brings to light new potential solutions for pressing, embodied concerns, this session fills several gaps currently left within the dialogues between systematic theology, philosophy of disability, neuropsychiatry, and clinical mental health.

• Samuel Youngs, Bryan College

*Marvelous Combat: Psychiatric Disability, Martin Luther, and Therapeutic Atonement*

Theology and disability studies regularly engage both physical and cognitive impairments, with Peter Bellini’s recent work broadening the field to include even the psychiatric disability of depression (*The Cerulean Soul*, 2021). Other psychiatric disabilities also stand to be constructively engaged by theological discourse. This study takes up the subjects of anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder, especially variants which feature specifically religious anxiety, moral scrupulosity, and pathological guilt, illustrating how transactional understandings of forgiveness and atonement can covary with the symptomatology of such conditions, possibly even exacerbating them. In response, I conscript Martin Luther’s provocative but oft-neglected description of Christ’s “marvelous combat with the Law” in order to stage a uniquely “therapeutic” outlook on atonement in which Christ’s passion is rendered as a struggle with the uniquely psychological contours of moral performance and the felt experience of guilt under divine judgment, offering embodied hope to the anxious and scrupulous conscience.

• Preston Hill, Richmont Graduate University

*Posttraumatic Disability and the Hope of Everlasting Union with God*

While disability has become a focus of theology, conversations have centered on congenital or aging disabilities such as down syndrome, autism, and dementia. This leaves other disabilities underrepresented and underexplored. Given catastrophes that are traumatizing people globally, this paper proposes psychological trauma as a psychiatric disability for theology. I begin by showing how PTSD symptoms present a challenge for recent synthetic and constructive models of atonement. If atonement is about renewing the divine-human relationship, how does this work for survivors who feel alienated from God by the sin perpetrators? I offer a constructive solution to this problem by drawing on insights from the positive psychological science of empathy. I propose in his cry of dereliction Christ achieved atonement by empathy not only toward humanity’s guilt but also toward trauma symptoms for which survivors are not culpable. By including PTSD as a disability, theologies of atonement today can offer greater hope.

• Joanna Leidenhag, University of Leeds

*Autistic Joy and the Hope for a Just Afterlife*

Christian theology flows from the joyous impetus to rethink all things in light of the resurrection of Christ, even our prior assumptions of what hope and justice look like. This
is the impetus at work in the argument that disabilities will persist in the new creation. However, whether interpreted as a natural kind or as a social construct, autism seems to be excluded from such arguments. This paper offers two constructive solutions to this dilemma. First, theologians need to narrate autism as a condition that includes a powerful capacity for joy, because joy is essential to resurrection hope, both now and in the future. I do this through engagement with autistic testimony and ethnographic research. Second, I offer disability theology a metaphysical model of the resurrection that is both faithful to the Scriptural witness and inspired by narratives of autistic joy.

- Aaron Davis, Union Presbyterian Seminary

*Horizons of Hope: Disability, Eschatology, and the Work of the Holy Spirit*

In this paper I propose a model of disability which synthesizes Amos Yong’s disability theology with Elizabeth Barnes’s “value-neutral model” of disability and then apply it to Sarah Coakley’s account of ante-mortem/post-mortem bodily fluidity. My model, the Eschatological (Dis)Continuity Model, provides a clearer picture both of what it is that is retained by resurrected disabled persons and how the persistence of their disabilities occurs without impinging at all upon the new creation’s joy. I first outline Yong’s bodily grounded disability theology before introducing Barnes’s value-neutrality for disability to it as a pivot point around which its eschatological imagery can turn. I then draw in Coakley’s work on the fluid nature of embodiment regarding gender and apply her methodology to disability to reveal the model’s ability to hold in successful tension the clarity of an adequate theological model and the mystery of an honest one.

- Derek Estes, Saint Louis University

"*For The Beauty of their Glory*": A Thomistic Argument for Disabilities in the Resurrection

Will there be disabilities in heaven? Many Christians believe there will not, with some scholars marshalling the work of Thomas Aquinas in support of their view. These scholars characterize Aquinas as believing that disabilities make those who have them intrinsically worse off, and since the resurrected bodies of the saints will be perfected, all disabilities will be eliminated in heaven. In this paper, I argue this view is mistaken. That is, I argue both that there will be disabilities in heaven and also that the work of Thomas Aquinas gives reason to think so. Contrary to how some scholars interpret him, I argue Aquinas believes that disabilities sometimes make a person more perfect.
centers on a conversation among attendees sparked by panelists’ opening comments (rather than traditional papers). Panelists will engage diverse forms of biological and social reproductive labor, including Black women’s political activism, the communities of care that single motherhood calls into being, farm labor as labor essential for life, and humans collaborating with the more-than-human rest of nature to become a world in which all living beings sustain one another. After brief opening comments, there will be 20-30 minutes of conversation in breakout groups for attendees to reflect together on how the concept/lens of reproductive labor, defined in this coherently capacious way, can advance their respective studies of religion; this will be followed by plenary conversation.

Panelists

AnneMarie Mingo, Pennsylvania State University
Karen Bray, Wesleyan College
Jeremy V. Cruz, St. John's University, New York
Claudio Carvalhaes, Union Theological Seminary

Business Meeting

M. Cooper Minister, Shenandoah University, Presiding
Annie Blazer, College of William and Mary, Presiding

A19-213
Comparative Theology Unit
Theme: The Significance and Legacy of Louis Massignon (1883-1962) for Comparative Theology
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Rita George-Tvrtkovic, Benedictine University, Presiding

2022 is the 60th anniversary of the death of Louis Massignon (1883-1962), the 100th anniversary of the publication of his magnus opus, THE PASSION OF AL-HALLAJ, and the 1100th anniversary of the death of al-Hallaj (858-922). This roundtable discussion critically examines the significance and legacy of Massignon for Catholic-Muslim comparative theology from three distinct perspectives. First, we discuss the relevance of his textual scholarship on al-Hallaj, noting where it has been foundational and where it has been criticized among theologians and scholars of Islam. Second, we discuss the role of friendship for Massignon’s scholarship and activism, particularly his friendship with Mary Kahil (1889–1979) and its complication of orientalist narratives. Third we discuss Massignon’s influence upon later Catholic-Muslim thinkers, especially Christian de Cherge (1937-1996) and Paolo Dall’Oglio (1954–), noting what in his work has and has not been appropriated.

Panelists

Brenna Moore, Fordham University
Jason Welle, Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies
Christian Krokus, University of Scranton
A quick Google search with the words “Confucian deities” leads us to a site which states, “There are no Confucian gods, and Confucius himself is worshipped as a spirit rather than a god.” Since Confucianism is conventionally regarded as a philosophy rather than a religion, “Confucian deities” appears to be an oxymoron. However, during the imperial era of China’s history, the Confucian state had a large pantheon of deities who required annual sacrifices. This panel’s essays shed light on the respect that Confucian deities commanded in pre-modern China. The gods addressed in the state religion were of such import that their sacrifices warranted the court’s upmost attention. Many believed that the highest Confucian deity could intervene in daily life, and through the phenomenon of spirit-writing, literati could ask for help from past Confucian heroes who could dispense advice suitable for the present.

- Thomas A. Wilson, Hamilton College

*Confucian Ritual Hermeneutics of Gods*

How did Confucian officers of the imperial court imagine the gods found in the Classics? Based on detailed records of court debates in the Song and Ming dynasties, I argue that Confucian officers constructed the gods within the context of ritual interactions with them in the built environments of altar terraces and temples used to feast them. The sources divulge an imperative to build ritual spaces to precisely reproduce the particular sphere of the cosmos in which each god circulated. Suburban Sacrifice feasted the deity called Vast Heaven High God at Round Terrace, which reproduced Vast Heaven as vaulted firmament populated by a host of lesser deities and traversed by High God. Based on this Ritual hermeneutic, I argue that Confucian officers construed these ritual spaces not as metaphors for or symbols of some other objective reality, but as perfect indexical reproductions of the Celestial sphere of the cosmos.

- Keith Knapp, The Citadel

*The High Deity as Head Honcho: Anthropomorphic Images of Heaven in Medieval Didactic Tales*

We generally do not give much thought to Confucian deities; indeed, the term sounds like an oxymoron. Nevertheless, in imperial China, the Confucian state cult was replete with
gods. None were more important than “The High Deity” (Shangdi 上帝). But what role did this spirit play in the lives and imaginations of literate men? Was it envisioned as an anthropomorphic being? What characteristics were attributed to it. In medieval (220-907) Confucian tales, Heaven was regarded as an anthropomorphic figure. When a filial child was in dire straits, Heaven felt sadness; upon witnessing outstanding filiality, Heaven expressed delight. When a wronged soul appealed its case to the High Deity, it displayed a sense of justice by allowing the victim to punish the perpetrator. Unfiliality angered the High Deity to the extent that Heaven itself would strike down the culprit with a thunder bolt.

- Daniel Burton-Rose, Northern Arizona University

*Apotheosized Confucians on an Early Qing Spirit-Writing Altar*

The consolidation of the Manchu conquest in the late seventeenth century entailed a new commitment to the synthesis of the Confucian tradition originally formulated by Zhu Xi (1130–1200). Scholarship on this period focuses on the Kangxi emperor (reigned 1661–1722), his efforts to court alienated ethnic Chinese scholars, and the officials who were willing to propound his imperial vision. This paper documents a previously overlooked discursive realm: what Song (960–1297) and Ming (1368–1644) dynasty Confucians themselves had to say about early Qing (1644–1912) developments, as evinced in conversations with their ghosts facilitated through spirit-writing. This paper contextualizes the circumstances of the descents of a half dozen Confucian spirit-altar deities and analyzes the content of their communications. It argues that they articulated a coherent strategy for how southern ethnic Chinese elites could adapt to Manchu rule, while showing Confucian religiosity at its most pliable and responsive.

**Responding**

Qiong Zhang, Southern Illinois University

**Reviewers**

Gil Raz, Dartmouth College

**A19-215**

Books under Discussion

**Contemporary Islam Unit and Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit**


Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Basit Iqbal, University of California, Berkeley, Presiding

This panel takes the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of Katherine Ewing’s *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam* (Duke University Press) and Stefania
Pandolfo’s *Impasse of the Angels: Scenes from a Moroccan Space of Memory* (University of Chicago Press) as an occasion to return to these two titles as events in the study of religion and psychoanalysis. Rather than simply summarizing each of their interventions in these fields, or recounting their reception in the disciplines of anthropology or religious studies, our panelists reread these titles together with a view to how they continue to shape the methodological and theoretical concerns of their own work and given fields (psychoanalysis, religion, poetics).

**Panelists**

Rajbir Judge, California State University, Long Beach  
Ana Vinea, University of Michigan  
Brent Eng, University of California, Berkeley  
Aaron Eldridge, University of California, Berkeley  
Ashwak Hauter, University of California, Santa Cruz

**Responding**

Katherine P. Ewing, Duke University

**A19-216**

Books under Discussion  
**Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit**  
Theme: *Author-Meets-Critics: Roundtable on John Lardas Modern's Neuromatic; or, A Particular History of Religion and the Brain* (University of Chicago Press, 2021)  
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)  
Jesse Lee, Florida State University, Presiding

This roundtable is an author-meets-critics session on John Lardas Modern's *Neuromatic; or, A Particular History of Religion and the Brain*, published by the University of Chicago Press in 2021. *Neuromatic* offers a cultural history of cognitive approaches to the study of religion. The book takes on the entangled histories of science and religion that lie behind our brain-laden present: from eighteenth-century revivals to the origins of neurology and mystic visions of mental piety in the nineteenth century; from cyberneticians, Scientologists, and parapsychologists in the twentieth century to contemporary claims to have discovered the neural correlates of religion.

**Panelists**

Gabriel Levy, Norwegian University of Science and Technology  
Tracy Fessenden, Arizona State University  
Ruth Marshall, University of Toronto  
Jason C. Bivins, North Carolina State University  
Jessica Johnson, College of William and Mary  
William Robert, Syracuse University  
Finbarr Curtis, Georgia Southern University
Responding

John Modern, Franklin and Marshall College

A19-217
Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit and Religion in Europe Unit and Religions, Social Conflict, and Peace Unit
Theme: Religion & the War in Ukraine
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Philip Dorroll, Wofford College, Presiding

This roundtable discussion will feature expert perspectives on religious issues related to the war in Ukraine. Five presenters will offer opening remarks before turning to a moderated discussion followed by Q&A. It will address the religious construction of “culture wars” and ideology, the political-religious entanglement in Russia, historical and future considerations, the response of religious leaders in Ukraine and around the world, and the role religion can play in addressing this crisis. Panelists include: Nicholas Denysenko, Regina Elsner, Cyril Hovorun, Paul Ladouceur, & Kristina Stoeckl.

Panelists

Nicholas Denysenko, Valparaiso University
Cyril Hovorun, Stockholm School of Theology
Paul Ladouceur, University of Toronto
Kristina Stoeckl, University of Innsbruck
Regina Elsner, Center for East European and International Studies, Berlin
Dimitry Uzlaner, University of Innsbruck

A19-218
Gay Men and Religion Unit
Theme: Religion and the Formation of (anti) Gay Male Identities
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Michael Pettinger, New York University, Presiding

The papers in this panel re-examine assumptions about the relationship between gay men and “religion” (implicitly understood as Protestant, White, and politically foundational), with case studies of men who seek an accommodation with this kind of religion, as well as an examination of the role of Christian opposition to gay rights in a society (Taiwan) where Christians are a small minority, and a consideration of the religious and sexual possibilities opened by Afrofuturism.

- Lucas Wilson, Florida Atlantic University

Guilt, Anxiety, and S(h)ame-Sex Attraction: The Affective Economies of
Heteronormativity and Conversion "Therapy" at Liberty University

Drawing upon oral histories of queer alumni of Liberty University, this paper examines how Liberty University, the world’s largest Christian fundamentalist university, subjugated, governed, and pushed its queer students into pursuing heteronormativity from the early 2000s until 2020. With a focus on the university’s heteronormative campus culture and conversion therapy program, this essay demonstrates how Liberty employs what Foucault terms disciplinary methods and techniques of the self in attempts to control and ultimately change queer students’ sexual and gender identities. These disciplinary methods and techniques of the self both catalyzed and were catalyzed by the affective economies of anxiety, guilt, and shame, which created an institutional setting that produced compliant self-policing subjects who conformed to policies that actively sought out the erasure of their queerness.

• Wei-Jen Chen, Chicago Theological Seminary

How Taiwanese Christians talk about homosexuality in the past 30 years

By reviewing Mark D. Jordan’s book, Recruiting Young Love – How Christians Talk about Homosexuality, and a recently published book, 30-years’ LGBTQ Movement in Taiwa (台灣同運三十：一位平權運動參與者的戰鬥發聲) (2021), this paper is to provide a picture of how, why, what the Taiwanese Christian propagated the right-wing Christian agendas from the US and contextualized with Taiwanese folklore religious, pedagogical, medical, societal, and political elements in the past 30 years.

• Keanu Heydari, University of Michigan

On Celibate Gay Christians: "Single Lives Become Strange Poems"

Through an examination of autobiographical literature produced by celibate gay Christians, such as Wesley Hill and Gregory Coles, this paper uncovers attempts of justify a uniquely coded sort of gayness that employs arguments, ideologies, and tropes associated with the discursive structure Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner identify as “national heterosexuality.” It further suggests that contemporary gay Christian celibacy is a form of heterosexuality in as much as it adjudicates between secular liberalism and fundamentalism and yields a workable, if fraught, synthesis, becoming a form of “cruel optimism.”

• B. Dundee Holt, Pacific School of Religion

Afrofuturism and Worlds of Infinite Possibilities

The idea of “possibilities” pervades Sneed’s The Dream and the Dreamer. He speaks of a fictional character walking “into a new world in which his possibilities are not constrained.” He quotes Christophe Ringer: “Transcendence of the past is the effect of the experience of the new possibilities in the present.” He holds that “possibilities
inherent in Afrofuturistic religious thought...involve expanded views of Black identities.” These include the identities of same gender loving (SGL) Black men.

This paper explores how Afrofuturism invites us to expand our views of God and of creation, imagining unimagined possibilities of what shapes that creation might take. It frees us envision a future in which Black SGL men can express the fullness of our shapes. Expanding on an idea from Sneed’s 2010 Representations of Homosexuality, Afrofuturism calls us to imagine a world wherein sexual difference is not only not antithetical to religious experience or the study of that experience but is essential to it.

Responding

Roger A. Sneed, Furman University

A19-201
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Graduate Student Committee
Theme: Religious Studies and Catastrophe - Past, Present, and Future(s)
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Chris Miller, University of Waterloo, Presiding
Maxine Katz, University of Illinois, Presiding

Inspired by this year’s Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe - the GSC Special Topics Forum reflects on the topic of catastrophe, as well as how this concept is utilized in the academy. Through this forum, we hope to launch a conversation that shines a light on the diverse topics, times, and contexts that scholars research, while also reflecting on how terms are used. How, when, and why do religious communities, popular media, or scholars invoke the term catastrophe? By classifying incidents as catastrophes, what power structures are challenged or reinforced? What solutions or idyllic alternatives can be proposed or imagined? We also seek to explore the unique ways in which scholars of religion are equipped to explain or untangle these complex issues.

- Jumana Al-Ahmad, Washington and Lee University

Resilient Responses to Displacement and Covid 19

One of the most horrific catastrophes is displacement and forced migration. Being uprooted and homeless is not only extremely traumatizing but also poses an existential threat. Along with it, refugees often experience the loss of loved ones in wars, conflicts, or during displacements. This proposal seeks to explore how refugees draw on their faith to give them resilience and strength to continue struggling to improve their lives. Resilience can be defined as finding ways to overcome challenges and catastrophes to imagine solutions and lead a purposeful life. The paper will also examine how communities respond to the challenges. The primary sources for this paper are documentaries that range from the years (2011 to 2021). My main goal is to identify lessons of resilience that can be applied to our current situation under the pandemic and
loss of many lives to Covid 19, and for future catastrophes or traumas. I would also like to explore how academics can use the concept of resilience in the classroom.

- Max Dugan, University of Pennsylvania

*Devotional Resilience of a Halal Restaurant in North Philadelphia as Islamic Practice*

This paper analyzes the devotional resilience of a halal restaurant in North Philadelphia as Islamic practice. The techniques of resilience of my interlocutors are "devotional" insofar as their engagement with Islamic discourses, ethics, and social bonds orients them toward God and against asymmetric forces. This restaurant faces challenges that afflict food service business across Philadelphia. As a locally-oriented and Black-owned business in an under-resourced community, these struggles have been especially acute. But they are not entirely novel. Whether eminent domain in the past or, more recently, family tragedy and slimmer profit margins, this business has persisted by circulating Islamic discourse, providing clean food, and cultivating Islamic social bonds. Catastrophe in the form of COVID-19 and market logics have pushed this restaurant to the edge of viability. Their devotional resilience shows some U.S. Muslims practice Islamic tradition by confronting catastrophe, as well as the neoliberalism and racialization entangled in it.

- Heidi Ippolito, Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver

*QAnon, Memes, and Morality: The Catastrophic Intersections of Pop Culture Fandom, Religious Rhetoric, and Conspiratorial Communities*

QAnon followers frequently reference films like The Matrix, Rambo, Star Wars, and Braveheart while also infusing their own religious and spiritual beliefs. For QAnon believers, memes that reference on-screen storytelling act as a kind of shorthand, hinting at "secret" knowledge, offering implicit commentary, and building real worldviews out of fictional storytelling. Religious communities and pop culture fandoms share a desire to connect and create community, but what happens when these groups begin to share ideologies and beliefs that perpetuate conspiracy theories, hateful rhetoric, and catastrophic apocalyptic narratives? A glimpse into QAnon’s participatory meme storytelling reveals the dynamic contours of conspiracy theories, religious contestations, and the technological tools that allow us to encounter and create communal narratives in online spaces. This presentation will explore how QAnon creates these narratives through a religious lens, a (pop culture) storytelling lens, and a participatory lens, and their community beliefs and practices are influenced by all three. Ultimately, it is not enough to merely recognize and regulate conspiratorial information online; we must also be cognizant of the way conspiratorial and apocalyptic stories are crafted and spread, and what makes them so compelling.

- Alexander McCrae, Concordia University, Montreal

"Catastrophe" - Reflections from an Emerging Religions Scholar on the Middle East
This commentary/reflection draws on my own experiences inside the MENA region and in particular; Turkey and Israel/Palestine. I have spent large amounts of time in both places during my Graduate studies and I have been afforded the opportunity to travel extensively in both places. The Palestinians have endured a brutal illegal military occupation for more than 50 years whilst Turkey’s Kurdish, Assyrian and Armenian groups have all faced institutional racism, bias and discrimination. It’s easy to dwell on the negative and to think about all the barriers that scholars of religion are trying to overcome. Travel is a luxury which allows to change the way we think and to look at the world differently. In Canada we have been accustomed to hearing horror stories about the treatment of Indigenous children which was normalized in the past through “racism”, “colonialism” and “Genocide”. It may appear “impossible” to conceptualize a way out of this historical catastrophe and its modern residue, but I argue that by looking outside the borders of North America we can find inspiration for hope that capitalism, racism, colonialism, sexism and speciesism could actually be overcome through the supremacy of the human spirit.

- Robert Monson, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

**Survival of the Fittest: Black Overcoming in a World Bent Towards Chaos**

While the Covid-19 pandemic has raged all across the globe, Black America has found themselves on the receiving end of continued marginalization that has been unrelenting. We know that African-Americans have been unfairly impacted by Covid-19. We know that Black people have also experienced multiple marginalization in this country. What has empowered continual survival? What has allowed thriving? This paper looks at the survival tools of many Black Americans inside and outside of the Academic setting that have been employed in order to remain steady in a world that has shifted towards brutality. This paper takes a close look at God and an embodied faith of Black people.

- Sadie Rittman, University of British Columbia

**Healing in the "Anthropause": Reclamation, Resacralization, and Anti-Vaccination in Aotearoa/New Zealand**

Amongst spiritual practitioners I worked with in Aotearoa/New Zealand, “healing” is a widely used term that may be understood as a response to climate change. It involves reclaiming spiritual connections and re-sacralizing relationships that are human, nonhuman, more-than-human and transhuman. Participatory “connection” is emphasized in opposition to the separations that are at root of our climate crisis. In this context, and particularly as Aotearoa/New Zealand was spared the worst of the pandemic, the social interruption presented by Covid-19 was widely understood as a time of hope and healing, accompanied by profound personal experiences. This understanding could come to clash with government solutions in the form of vaccinations, masks, and mandates, resulting ultimately in a protest at parliament taking shape as a festival.
This panel brings together five historians of Christianity to consider what “the sensory turn” in the humanities brings to the study of martyrdom in the Christian tradition. An outgrowth of interest in embodiment, the turn to the senses as media of knowing and experience has left an impression on the study of religion, and has fostered a range of productive questions. What does attention to the full range of the body’s sensory capacities add to our understanding of martyrdom? How did martyrdom and its diverse literary, material, and ritual representations engage and construct religious difference (pagan, Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Indigenous, or otherwise), and how did the senses shape or problematize these processes of difference making? The five papers on this panel explore the role of smell, touch, hearing, and taste in narratives of martyrdom from the fourth to the eighteenth century, from late antique Persia to early modern Canada.

- Katie Bugys, University of Notre Dame

*Embodying the Virgin-Martyr Saint Lucy in Communities of Religious Women in Medieval England*

This paper will study the exemplary effect that the life and death of the early Christian virgin-martyr Lucy of Syracuse, Sicily (d. 303 or 310), had on the composition of hagiographical texts in communities of religious women in central medieval England. It focuses on how the mortuary roll composed and circulated after the death of Lucy (d. 1225x1230), the founder and first prioress of Castle Hedingham, a community of Benedictine nuns in Essex, remembered her imitation of Saint Lucy’s virginity and martyrdom and invited the members of Castle Hedingham, present and future, to venerate both women as saints and to pattern their lives after theirs through sensual engagement with the roll: viewing its opening three illuminations depicting the ascent of Prioress Lucy’s soul, reading and listening to the encyclical’s praises of both Lucys’ meritorious deeds, and handling the roll as a treasured relic of their beloved dead.

- Sarah Porter, Harvard University

*Overwhelm: Late Antique Martyria and Choreographies of Desire*

Two late antique texts describe raucous happenings during feast days near saints’ relics. Gregory of Tours describes a congregation leaping and breaking the lamps that hang from the ceiling so the whole group is drenched in oil and exorcised. John Chrysostom describes “clamoring and disorder” near the altar at one of Antioch’s earliest martyria. Here I frame martyria as loud, chaotic places and consider their affective textures - not just piety but desperation (even if joyful!) for contact with the holy, and the physical ways that desperation expresses itself at martyria, which we might think of as abundant
• Jeffrey Wickes, University of Notre Dame

Deceit, Desire, and the Sensorium in the 6th-century East Syriac Martyrs’ Cult: Narsai's Poems "On Martyrs"

The prolific Syriac poet Narsai (d. 500 C.E.) delivered only two poems on martyrs, compared to the nearly thirty hagiographical poems of his Syriac poetic counterpart, Jacob of Serugh (d. 521). Jacob’s extensive hagiographical corpus also seems to reflect a more realistic view of the embodied character of martyrdom. Whereas the bodies of Jacob's martyrs become sites for the cultivation of a luscious, imaginative sensorium, Narsai uses the martyrs to reflect upon the deceitful character of the body's senses. This paper complexifies this perspective by taking seriously a range of tensions around embodiment that run throughout Narsai's two poems "On Martyrs." While Narsai does reify the martyrs' virtue as deeply disembodied, he develops this argument through a rich lexicon of sound, taste, and touch. This paper marks this tense place where the senses are both cultivated and denied to ask questions around embodiment and knowledge in the cult of the martyrs.

• Mary Dunn, Saint Louis University

Jesuits, Rhetoric, and the Plurisensorium of Martyrdom in Seventeenth-Century New France

In this paper, I propose to attend to the multi-dimensional sensorium of martyrdom as it is constructed by seventeenth-century Jesuit narratives of the North American martyrs in the Jesuit Relations and the Precieux Manuscrit of 1652. What is the role not just of the visual sense in representations of Jesuit martyrdom, but of the olfactory, haptic, auditory, and gustatory senses, too? In what ways do the senses work together to construct the categories of martyr and infidel, good and evil, faith and heresy so crucial to the martyrological genre? I propose to consider how the plurisensory representations of martyrdom shape not only conceptual understandings of the events of 1642-1649, but also affective responses to those events in a readership removed both geographically and temporally from the mission field of New France.

• Brandon Bayne, University of North Carolina

The Touch of Success: Relics and the Sensorium of Martyrdom in Northern New Spain

Beginning with the story of a “wondrously,” flexible and flesh-like Christ figure recovered after the death of Francisco Xavier Saeta in 1695, this paper argues that practices of physical intimacy with a dead missionary’s body, clothing, and devotional objects became central ways to evaluate not just the status of a potential martyr, but the very fate of Jesuit missions in northern New Spain. While letters, maps, and artwork verbally and visually displayed missionary sacrifice, these other forms of embodied...
intimacy were celebrated as key signs of Indigenous sincerity and evangelistic success. Through kissing and caress, converts supposedly signaled their devotion to the priests and their god, while more violent touch – ranging from cannibalistic feasting to sexual assault – featured heavily in Jesuit accounts of divine judgment. Taken together, this sensorium of martyrdom served as experiential evidence of the Christian god’s invisible work to redeem violence and bring life through death.

A19-220
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Liberation Theologies Unit
Theme: **Mapping Catastrophes: Vulnerability, Exclusion, and Hope for Liberation**
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Maria T. Davila, Merrimack College, Presiding

Catastrophes on a local, regional, and global scale are not new phenomena, especially for the most vulnerable, the impoverished, and the excluded by those who benefit greatly from the status quo and the systems they support and participate in. New to this time is the rapidly increasing impact of climate change, the rise of governments and political leaders that continue to pursue policies that are extractive of natural resources, exclusivist of peoples on the move and peoples on the margins, and the continued manufacturing of untruth at the service of nationalistic power and market progress. All of this makes it difficult to hear the voices of the excluded and marginalized as they identify sources and places for liberation and hope. This session gathers five papers exploring intersections of these themes in a variety of contexts.

- **Alina Jabbari, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani**

  *Modern Qur’anic Hermeneutics: Liberation Theology as frameworks for ‘Muslim Futuring’*

  As an attempt to seek theologies that counteract the often reactionary and apologetic discourse of contemporary Muslim thinkers, I argue that reading the Qur’an as a source for liberation, such as done by Farid Esack and Asma Barlas, can be examples for addressing systemic injustices and offer hopeful frameworks of ‘Muslim futuring’. More so, standing amidst, and being weaponized in the discussion on Islamic intellectual authority, I argue that their Islamic theology of liberation could offer a third voice, one that bypasses the counterpoising of Islam and the West whilst still offering an authentic Islamic response to the challenges of our time. As such, I argue that their reading of the Qur’an as one for liberation presents a proposal for alternative visions of resistance to exclusion, violence and human suffering, whilst simultaneously offering Muslims in the West an unapologetic response to the challenges of our time.

- **Sau Nam, Ellicot City, MD**

  *Solidarity with and within the Oppressed for Collective Liberation in the Church and Society*
This paper will answer the question “what agendas/issues are left out to discuss in the church and society for the liberation of all people?” I am going to state that solidarity among the oppressed and the oppressors is a needed basic step and strength for the collective liberation of all the oppressed in the church and society. In the first part of the paper, I will introduce a brief background of the Myanmar regime government and my conservative Kachin Baptist Convention. In the second part of the paper, I will present the limited understanding of liberation theologies. In the last section, I am going to argue that to have a genuine liberation for individuals in the church and society; the power holders need to ally with the oppressed in liberation movements. For my argument, I will use the Myanmar people’s spirit of solidarity during the current military coup that transcends racial, ethnic, political, sexual, religious, and class boundaries as an example and postcolonial approaches.

- Blair Wilner, University of Virginia

*The Ecology of Hell: Liberating Catastrophic Landscapes at the U.S.-Mexico Border*

This paper offers a political, ecological, and theological analysis of the United States’ border policy of “Prevention Through Deterrence” (PTD), a strategy that since the 1990s conscripts the desert landscape into inflicting punishment and death on border crossers. PTD transforms the borderlands into an ecology of hell, a site where the place itself punishes the reprobate of U.S. immigration policy. This operation resembles traditional Christian understandings of hell, where the damned are punished while the blessed in heaven observe from heaven rejoicing. This border regime is not simply about deterrence, but functions to create a catastrophic spectacle at the border that produces and reproduces conceptions of both “illegal” alien and citizen. Against this regime, Gustavo Gutiérrez’s soteriological understanding of creation can unmask this violent production of alien/citizen by seeing liberation as God’s intention for all, including both the border crossers and the desert itself.

- Timothy Couper, Fordham University

*The Hope and Failure of Liberation: Queer Theory and the Theology of Gustavo Gutiérrez*

Why has *A Theology of Liberation* rarely been placed in conversation with queer theology? This absence is especially noteworthy because queer theory shares with liberation theology central concerns of hope and futurity. The recent anniversary of Gustavo Gutiérrez’s landmark book invites reflection on the irruption of hope and on how his subsequent corpus modulates hope through time in the face of failure. This paper traces Gutiérrez’s concept of hope as a shifting insistence on utopian potentiality by reading Gutiérrez through the writings of Jack Halberstam and José Esteban Muñoz. Queer theory draws attention to the failures of liberation as examples of the necessary disappointment entailed in hope’s “indispensable excessive reach.” However, the heartbreak of failure is understood as the condition of possibility for imagining political transformation. Liberation theology, through queer eyes, can remap the Christian
imaginary and generate radical politics by embracing the queer art of failure.

- Joseph Drexler-Dreis, Xavier University, Louisiana

*The resiliency of matter: A response to neoliberalism*

In the context of the George Floyd rebellion, Tobi Haslett asked what force prompts people to, as he put it, “cross the mystic threshold between ‘respectability and dignity.’” Understandings of matter as inert and thus dependent on the human mind and systems of rules and morals fund the “respectability” side of this conflict. Understandings of matter as active and resilient fund the “dignity” side of the conflict. Dignity doesn’t lie in a response to a moral code; it is a response to matter. I argue that narratives emphasizing the activity and resiliency of matter can, in ways that narratives perceiving matter as inert cannot, account for and clarify revolutionary projects for dignity without folding them back into the realm of respectability. My presentation proposes using this understanding of mater as a way to re-connect liberation theology to historical projects.

**Business Meeting**

Iskander Abbasi, University of Johannesburg, Presiding

A19-221

*Native Traditions in the Americas Unit*

*Theme: Visibility/Invisibility: Native American Recognition and Sovereignty*

Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien, Pacific Lutheran University, Presiding

This panel considers ritual engagement with land as means of becoming visible, and achieving political recognition and cultural sovereignty. We consider how Indigenous communities (re)take space in National Parks, create mechanisms for negotiating agreements with the NPS and challenge accepted notions of what constitutes “religion.” Another piece explores Indigenous, land-based diplomacy and political philosophy from a Cree perspective, where land is not terrain to be acted upon but an agent that recognizes those who properly engage with it. A third considers notions of visibility and invisibility in (re)gaining recognition, through a consideration of strategic ways that going underground—becoming temporarily invisible—can a tool for survival. Finally, another project continues by considering how Southern non-federally recognized tribes push back against erasure, claiming visibility through women’s sacred work. The panel asks what it means to be recognized, and the role that engagement with sacred lands has in becoming visible.

- Khrystyne Wilson, University of Arizona

*Enacting Sovereignty to Protect Religion: Indigenous Ways of Negotiating as Seen through the Cherokee Plant Gathering Agreement*

On U.S. National Forests, Parks, or Monuments, it is illegal for all people to collect
plants without a permit issued for scientific or educational purposes. In 2019, however, the Cherokee Nation and Cherokee Medicine Keepers worked together with the National Park Service and the University of Arizona school of Anthropology to create a mechanism for tribes to negotiate agreements with national parks in their traditional homelands to gather traditional plants. This paper will examine the Cherokee Plant Gathering Agreement to argue that through enacting sovereignty in these negotiated agreements with federal agencies, the Cherokee have continued ancestral religious practices, ontologies and kinship relations and in doing so, the Cherokee not only provide for the continuation of ancestral ceremonies and healing, but also resist and push back against Western categories of religion ultimately creating space to redefine “religion” within the United States legal system.

• Meaghan Weatherdon, University of Toronto

*Insisting on Indigenous Visibility: A Cree Land-Based Politics of Recognition*

This paper presents a Cree (Iiyiyiu) politics of recognition and suggests it constitutes a decolonial spiritual practice and restoration of land-based diplomacy that departs from normative liberal frameworks. I begin by describing how certain Cree community ceremonies, such as the walking out ceremony and first snowshoe walk, model a distinctly Cree politics of recognition that involve land not simply as an issue to be taken into account in dealings with others, but as an actor who receives, grants, and moderates recognition among diverse beings. I then draw on two political events: the Cree-Inuit reconciliation ceremony at the Nastapoka river and the Journey of Nishiyuu to illustrate how the Cree assert this culturally informed model of recognition to negotiate external pressures and their relationships with others. Ultimately, I suggest Iiyiyiu political philosophies can be informative for reshaping discussions around recognition and reconciliation with the land.

• Julie Bongers, Independent Scholar

*Singing stewardships of waters and lands awake: Native Californians traverse new paths via traditional practices of building relations*

I’m hearing many stories of how little-known and unrecognized indigenous peoples across the California bio-region are finding unique means to reclaim waters, lands, and culture — even extending to new-comers their spiritual relationships with place. To survive, many tribes — Esselen, Tubatulabal, Northern Chumash, Smuwic, and Ohlone — have hidden and been considered extinct for decades — sometimes for well over a century. All these are now daylighting their identities, and alongside such federally recognized tribes as Yurok and Wiyot, are reawakening stewardship relations with traditional waters and lands. To survive, many let their songs, stories, ceremonies, languages, and visible participation in indigenous ecological knowledge go to sleep. Now, even when lacking casino wealth, these tribes are exhibiting the creativity through which they survived, embracing new paths via traditional practices for building good
relations, and thereby establishing unique and replicable models for land-back.

- Brennan Keegan, College of Charleston

*Native Women of the American South: Land, Religion and Identity in South Carolina*

Native American tribes in the American South largely exist in a state of invisibility. Within the state of South Carolina, only one of 17 Native communities has treaty lands and is federally recognized. This paper engages four Native communities, each with a different administrative status, but a shared history of erasure, revealing the complicated entanglement of land, religion, and cultural identity in South Carolina. Critical to this story is the role of both Native women and Christianity. Native women argue their traditional roles as mothers and teachers, paired with Christian commitment, are resources for their efforts to claim legal recognition, remake land-based traditions, and revitalize traditional arts and languages. Through the voices of Native women, this paper considers the unique challenges of non-federally recognized tribes in land back movements and the spiritual implications of these efforts for communities that identify largely as Native Christians.

**Responding**

Abel Gomez, Syracuse University

A19-222

Pentecostal–Charismatic Movements Unit

Theme: *Race and National Identity in Developing a Pentecostal Practice*

Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

KENNETH ARCHER, Southeastern University, Presiding

This panel consists of papers that look at pentecostal movements and draws conclusions about how their identities and practices have formed in light of national or ethnic identities.

- Mark Cartledge, London School of Theology

*The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil: Analysing Worship and Deliverance*

This paper explores the nature of exorcism/deliverance in the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil. Based on the observation of a worship service, it analyses the ritual practices in a specific church building associated with Zionist symbolism, as well as linking them to therapeutic soteriology and prosperity teaching. It places these symbols and practices within the wider context of Brazilian Pentecostalism as well as exorcism/deliverance in global Pentecostalism. Finally, it seeks to reflect on them theologically and wrestles with the idea that such practices provide liberation and hope for the some of the poorest people in Brazil.
• Creighton Coleman, University of Virginia

*The Whiteness of White Pentecostalism*

Pentecostal studies has long recognized the importance of race and social context for understanding Pentecostal movements. However, there is relatively little work analyzing the particularity of Whiteness in White Pentecostalism. This paper argues that: 1) White Pentecostals self-consciously identified as White in a way that shaped their experience of the world, and 2) that this particularity included a spatial dynamic that was theologically important for mission efforts at the time. This paper draws from Assemblies of God General Council meetings and the *Pentecostal Evangel* in the 1950’s and 1960’s to demonstrate how concerns for suburban property and anti-Black perceptions of cities shaped White Pentecostal theology and practice. In doing so, this paper offers clarity on the relationship between race and Pentecostal theology and practice while modeling the value of Critical Race Theory for understanding Pentecostalism in the US.

• Seth Gaiters, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

*Blackpentecostalism in Black Religion: Spiritual Heterogeneity and Doxological Transcendence*

“In what ways does a consideration of histories of Black communities within the Pentecostal and Charismatic community create openings for analyzing anew Oneness/Trinitarian theologies and practices? How are theological considerations transfigured by a certain exploration of patterns of meaningfulness, modes, sensibilities, and behaviors of Black life that are exhibited particularly in doxological events homiletically provoked? I consider Black Pentecostal preachers who homiletically personify what Ashon Crawley calls “BlackPentecostalism”—a portmanteau marking rich combination and multiplicity—as a way of examining a spiritual heterogeneity at play in worship experiences and the openness this produces for Black life. Appreciating the comprehensiveness and religious plurality of the Black religious landscape and entering examinations of BlackPentecostalism through this vantage opens new horizons of knowing and possibilities of thought. I’m curious of the theological relief and transcendence liturgical practice affords intracommunally/intercommunally, even across deep lines of difference doctrinally construed.”

• Michael Kamenicky, Lee University

"You Will Not Surely Die": *The Aesthetics of Pentecostal Snake Handling*

This paper examines the practice of snake handling using Nimi Wariboko’s analysis of Pentecostal aesthetics. Wariboko has analyzed the Nigerian Pentecostal practice of “hot prayers” as a paradigmatic Pentecostal aesthetic practice. My paper draws on this analysis to argue that snake handling exhibits some of the dynamics of “real presence” and “pure means” by which divine power is made sensibly manifest and brought to bear in concrete situations. According to this logic, the practice serves as a space for the
practitioners, who are often socially marginal, to experience renewed possibilities for their lives. In grasping at creatures that represent the possibility of death, the practitioners may experience new possibilities for life.

A19-223
Philosophy of Religion Unit and Political Theology Unit
Theme: Specters of Marx, Theological and Political
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
David Newheiser, Australian Catholic University, Presiding

In April 1993, Jacques Derrida gave a lecture published later that year as Spectres de Marx, which quickly became one of his most celebrated texts. Thirty years later, how might a return to Specters challenge hegemonic culture and contribute to decolonization? This panel poses philosophical, theological, and political questions by attending to Marx and the specters of Marx. We begin by asking whether and how Derrida’s discourse in Specters might be understood to be “materialist.” Observing the uncanny appearance of Enrique Dussel’s Las metáforas teológicas de Marx in the same year as Derrida’s text, we reexamine the specters and theological metaphors of Marx, tracking his conjuration of the revenants of Christianity and asking what “unproductive labor” might accomplish “beyond man.” By returning to the theological and political specters of Marx, we aim to promote decolonization inside and outside of the philosophy of religions and the study of political theology today.

- Ryan Bingham, University of Chicago

A Materialism without Substance: Derrida’s Specters of Marx and Questions of Responsibility

On some of the most celebrated pages of his Specters of Marx, amid discussion of the messianic and khōra, Jacques Derrida discreetly advances the notion of a certain materialism, a “materialism without substance.” In view of Derrida's longstanding solicitation of the form/matter binary of metaphysics, what would the thought of such a materialism require? How should it be understood in relation to the messianic and khōra, and how would it relate to Derrida's notion of absolute hospitality? In short, attending to a certain specter of Marx, what is the theoretical and practical significance of Derrida's notion of a “materialism without substance”? I aim to approach this question through a close reading of Specters with select reference to other texts in Derrida's corpus. I conclude by attending to the implications of Derrida's theological and political specters of Marx for the philosophy of religions and the study of political theology today.

- Filipe Maia, Boston University

The Haunting of Liberation: Derrida and Dussel, Three Decades Later

This essay provides a reading that interweaves Derrida’s Specters of Marx and Dussel’s Las metáforas teológicas de Marx, both published in 1993. Each book supported new engagements with Marx: with Derrida, we witness the formalization of a deconstructive
account of Marxian texts and, in the case of Dussel, a decolonial approach to Marxism. Deconstruction and decolonization, though not coterminous traditions, are shown to share commitments for the formation of emancipatory political projects. Moreover, in marking the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of these books, this essay suggests that, read in tandem, *Specters of Marx* and *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx* might provoke a new encounter with Marx. To that effect, this essay centers its attention on the question of futurity as presented by Derrida’s references to the messianic and by Dussel’s sensitivity to eschatological motifs in Marx.

- Rafael Vizcaino, DePaul University

*A Postsecular Marx from Latin America*

In this paper, I articulate how liberation philosophy reinterprets the Marxist critique of religion to advance a postsecular account of religion as a source of criticism. I focus on Enrique Dussel’s *Las metáforas teológicas de Marx* to illustrate how liberation philosophy makes room to comprehend religion beyond the vulgar Marxist dismissal of it as “the opium of the people.” From this perspective, what is criticized by Marx turns out to be not “religion" *tout court*, but the inversion or fetishization of religion (Christianity, in this case) into an “inverted world-consciousness,” the critique of which presupposes an understanding of its prior un-invertedness. It is then the criticism of this fetishism that is the premise of all criticism. I end by arguing that the Marx of liberation philosophy is a postsecular Marx that can be useful to the process of epistemic decolonization.

- William Underwood, University of Chicago

*“The Flesh Profiteth Nothing”: Materialism and the Christian Question*

This paper examines Marx’s efforts to develop a critical materialism in the pivotal years 1843-1846, focusing on Marx’s reliance on figures of Jew and Christian as controlling metaphors through which he articulates his critique of “Christian-Germanic dogma” and broaches what we think of as historical materialism. In this period, Marx diagnoses a latent supersessionism animating philosophy and attempts to overcome it via a hyperbolic reversal of its Pauline conceptual hierarchies. For Marx, the possibility of materialism comes to turn on the answer to philosophy’s Christian question—whether it is possible to articulate a form of critique unencumbered by Christian forms, or whether, as Derrida suggests, every critique of Christianity justifies “a proto-Christianity to come.” In his struggle to exorcise materialism’s Christian specter, Marx poses questions of contemporary urgency: how do we conceptualize materiality? Can we dispense with philosophy’s opposition of spirit and matter, and the forms of domination it sustains?

- Rebekah Rosenfeld, University of Chicago

*Reading Specters of Marx on Unproductive Labor*

This paper examines Derrida’s transposition of Marx’s concept of productive labor into
the unproductive “work” of the “work of mourning,” which Derrida figures as absolute potential rather than mere activity or inactivity and which comes to stand for a new form of philosophical inquiry. How is the relationship between philosophy and theology negotiated at this site, where the productive and unproductive are delimited in relation to formations that circulate as religious, including commodity fetishism, prophetic visions of the end of history, and, for Derrida, ontotheology? I relate this guiding question to recent Black feminist scholarship on the labor of social reproduction, as well as studies of modality in the early modern European philosophy that Marx inherited, especially on the modal category of possibility, to inform a contemporary inheritance of Marx and Derrida and to offer new avenues for considering the political and theological dimensions of Derrida’s reflections on philosophical labor.

Responding

Eduardo Mendieta, State University of New York, Stony Brook

A19-224
Practical Theology Unit
Theme: Practical Theology and Aesthetics
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Marc Lavallee, Barry University, Presiding
Katherine Turpin, Iliff School of Theology, Presiding

Aesthetics and theopoetics continue to evoke imaginative intersections with practical theology for they have the power to change the way we understand and embody reality. The Practical Theology Unit invites proposals for presentations that engage any dimension of the intersection of aesthetics and/or theopoetics and practical theology. These can be regarding theological language, method, modes of knowing and knowledge creation, and social transformation, as well as any intersections with sub-disciplines of practical theology. We welcome proposals that not only advance the research and discourse on practical theology and aesthetics, but also--and especially--those that attend to presentational modalities that highlight the role that aesthetics play in practical theological construction.

- L. Patrick Burrows, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics

Diamond in a Rhinestone World: The Theological Aesthetics of Dazzlement at Dollywood

Dollywood—the largest attraction in the tourist towns of Pigeon Forge and Sevierville, a 150-acre amusement park co-owned and co-operated by Dolly Parton and Herschend Family Entertainment—concludes its mission statement with "All in a Manner Consistent with Christian Values and Ethics.” Examining the park as a work of practical theology, this paper argues that the theology of Dollywood is incapsulated in the aesthetics of a rhinestone, and that approaching theology from this perspective charts a course for reconceptualizing mystical and queer theologies as practical theologies. Placing Gregory of Nyssa and Pseudo-Dionysius in conversation with Susan Sontag and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, the park appears as a practical space of dazzled theology: of exclusion and
welcome, of reparative theology, and of utopian longing. Taken together, these provide the groundwork for Dolly's account of her mystical scene of conversion and concrete space of the imagination of queerer forms of Christian belonging.

- Jaco Dreyer, University of South Africa

*The aesthetic dimension of practical theology: Reflections on three defining IAPT conference papers*

The paper starts from the position that the role and place of aesthetics in all its nuances – wisdom, spirituality, materiality, creativity, expressivity – have not been adequately conceptualised and integrated in our practical theologies. The aim of this paper is to contribute to the important discussion regarding practical theology and aesthetics by describing and reflecting on different understanding of aesthetics as portrayed in three keynote conference papers of the International Academy of Practical Theology (IAPT). The papers by Friedrich Schweitzer (Quebec City 1999), David Tracy (Chicago 2009) and Heather Walton (Oslo 2017) offer distinct perspectives on practical theology and aesthetics and raise many interesting questions. The paper ends with a brief reflection on three questions: 1) why has aesthetics been marginalised in academic practical theology?; 2) how can we give aesthetics its proper place in practical theology?; and 3) what are the main challenges regarding the aesthetic dimension of practical theology?

- Jason Fallin, Fuller Theological Seminary

*The Story in Your Eyes: Aesthetics, Practices and Formation*

Notions of Christian identity in the United States have become increasingly contested over the past several years, with many endeavoring to answer questions of identity through theological, sociological or anthropological lenses. However, I argue that most endeavors to construct conceptual frameworks that adequately describe the shifts in both Christian identity and practices fail to account for a key component of Christian identity and its formation: the role played by aesthetics. I propose that any attempt to describe Christians and Christianity must include an aesthetic component. Therefore, I will argue that there exists a necessary relationship between aesthetic texts, practices and formation. Furthermore, this formation is accomplished through fundamentally aesthetic and dramatic, thus fundamentally affective, processes. Accordingly, I argue aesthetic texts and dramatic practices form dispositions through the bodies and imaginations of participants that are particular to and consistent with the aesthetic of the texts and practices.

**Responding**

Lakisha Lockhart, Chicago Theological Seminary

**Business Meeting**
A19-202
Sessions Honoring AAR Award Winners
Public Understanding of Religion Committee
Theme: 2022 AAR Journalism Awards
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Sara Kamali, Kamali Consulting, Presiding

This session will feature recipients of this year's AAR Journalism Awards, which for the first time includes two separate categories: Best In-Depth Newswriting and Best In-Depth Multimedia Journalism.

Panelists

Manya Brachear, Columbia University

A19-225
Qur'an Unit
Theme: Tafsīr Between Intersecting Genres and Disciplinary Boundaries
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Zareena Grewal, Yale University, Presiding

In recent years, tafsīr has increasingly been studied in its own right as an emerging area of research, rather than simply as an extension of Qurʾānic Studies. However, it has become evident that the relationship of tafsīr with other genres in pre-modern Muslim discourse is a complicated one. The papers in this session help reveal the ways in which the intersection of tafsīr with other genres was a central tool in the making of Islamic knowledge. We seek to analyze the relationship between tafsīr and law, ḥadīths and companion reports, history and historiography, grammar and rhetoric, and stories of the prophets (qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ) and the Israelite traditions (isrāʾīliyyāt). Our purpose is to underscore both the intersections and disciplinary boundaries between tafsīr and these genres in order to understand the legal, theological, and social genealogies that have authorized various beliefs as authentically Islamic and limited the formation of Muslim exegetical authority.

- Sara Omar, Georgetown University

Intersecting Genres: Tafsīr, Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ and the Isrāʾīliyyāt and the Making of the Lot Narrative

This paper surveys the earliest extant commentaries and works of qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ pertaining to the Prophet Lot up to the 10th century, both in manuscripts and in print. It adopts an intertextual approach to trace narrative details in qiṣaṣ, which map onto critical diachronic developments of the Lot narrative in tafsīr. I consider what can be gained from examining both the intersection and boundaries of tafsīr, qiṣaṣ al-
anbiyāʾ and the isrāʾ īlīyāt and illustrate the way their convergence enable us to understand the extent to which oral story-telling shaped early Muslim exegetes’ making of the Lot narrative. I contend that early Muslim exegetes appropriated the stories of the storytellers (qūṣāṣ) and imported them into their tafsīr. This resulted in Muslim exegetes producing a Lot narrative that was very much in line with the midrash aggadah and biblical tradition, a narrative about an inhospitable people who refused to host travelers and guests.

Mohammad Gharaiheb, Humboldt University, Berlin

*Intertwined History and Tafsīr - Ibn Kathīr’s Ḥadīth Approach to his Qurʾān Commentary and World History*

Within the Damascene scholarly community in the 13th and 14th century, the traditionalist Shāfiʿī scholars produced many writings that are characterized by the attempt to integrate hadith to a larger extent in almost all disciplines. This trend was part of the aim to reduce the influences foreign elements such as Greek philosophy and Aristotelian logic and to foster an inner Islamic discourse. Among the group of productive traditionalist Shāfiʿī scholars was Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373) whose Qurʾān commentary and historiographic work have reached great acceptance. Both works draw from similar sources, overlap in material and use Prophetic traditions when discussing theological questions. This paper will look into the intertextualities between Ibn Kathīr’s history work “al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya” and his Qurʾān commentary. It aims to demonstrate how Ibn Kathīr’s traditionalist approach and his particular historical thinking influenced both works and how he transcends the boundaries of genres.

Hadia Mubarak, Queens University, Charlotte

*Men’s Degree: Constricted to the Legal Context of Divorce or Unconditional?*

What considerations give rise to an exegete’s use of legal hermeneutics in Qurʾānic exegesis? As a case example, this paper analyzes medieval and modern Qurʾānic interpretations of Q. 2:228, a verse that establishes the legal process following a man’s unilateral pronouncement of divorce. While legal considerations primarily informed medieval exegetes’ interpretations of this verse, they did not consistently apply this methodology to the last part of the verse, “and men have a degree over them.” By highlighting a unique modern interpretation that restricts the meaning of men’s degree to the legal context of divorce, this paper identifies a significant shift in medieval and modern interpretations of men’s degree, illustrating the potential of law to expand or restrict the boundaries of tafsīr. This paper further identifies considerations that give rise to an exegetes’ choice to use or discard legal hermeneutics. In the case of men’s degree over women, exegetes’ legal-based hermeneutics appear to give way to the influence of cultural and social norms on gender.

Walid Saleh, University of Toronto
Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī (d. 745/1344) was engaged in debates about the scope and the subject matter of Tafsir. In the introduction of al-Bahr he binds the authority of the exegete to his expertise as a grammarian and rhetorician to the very subject matter of Qur'an commentary. Explication is not theology, it is not hadith, it is not legal reflections. A Qur’an commentary is not a rattlebag for various disciplinary fields, where one muses over ideas and themes generated by an encounter with the Qur’an. It is rather a philological exercise where expertise in the language is the measure and tool.

This defense of the authority of the exegete was directed at two camps, a radical Sunni camp that saw hadith as the measure of the Qur’an, and a batani camp that saw the Imams as the speakers of its meaning.

Responding

Ash (Aisha) Geissinger, Carleton University

Business Meeting

Lauren Osborne, Whitman College, Presiding
Samuel Ross, Texas Christian University, Presiding

A19-226
Books under Discussion
Reformed Theology and History Unit
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Christina Larsen, Grand Canyon University, Presiding

This panel engages with Katherine Sonderegger’s Systematic Theology, Volume 2: The Doctrine of the Holy Trinity: Processions and Persons (2020). After panelists’ critical analysis and reflection on the recent developments in her work, Sonderegger will respond, and a discussion will follow.

Panelists

Philip G. Ziegler, University of Aberdeen
Kirsten Heacock Sanders, Independent Scholar
Matthew Wilcoxen, Church of the Resurrection

Responding

Katherine Sonderegger, Virginia Theological Seminary
Bill of Rights protections of speech, religion, and gun ownership continue to shift in definition and applicability. This session explores the limits of and appeals to freedom by religious individuals in our politically fractured society. The first paper explores appeals to free exercise rights in attempts to claim exemption to Covid-19 vaccine, testing, and mask policies and the ways in which this debate broadens the boundaries of religious experience and expression. The second paper presents a theological approach to hate speech and the limits of free speech protections. The third paper explores women's religious perspectives on mass shootings, public violence, and gun rights. The last examines Conservative Christian appeals to the legacy of the Civil Rights era in contemporary debates over free exercise of religion.

- **Eric Stephen, Harvard University**

  *Claiming ‘Religion’ in the Age of COVID-19: An Examination into how Conservative Legal and Religious Groups Translate Political Objections to COVID-19 Policies into Free Exercise Arguments*

  As a result of the COVID pandemic, the number of free exercise case before US courts has increased markedly, with public health policies such as vaccination requirements and mask-wearing emerging as significant sites of legal controversy. Yet to seek an accommodation under American free exercise law, claimants must first demonstrate that their opposition is rooted in a “sincerely-held religious belief.” Given this, conservative legal and religious groups have begun publishing online advice and guidelines to assist claimants in articulating and expressing their objections as ‘religious’ in nature, even in instances where initial opposition derives primarily from non-devotional concerns of safety, trust, or libertarian conceptions of free choice. This paper analyzes these documents as a unique window into how conservative legal and religious actors are reconfiguring the meaning of “religion” as an intelligible legal category and the ways these projects are subtly but significantly transforming American free exercise jurisprudence more broadly.

- **Stewart Clem, Aquinas Institute of Theology**

  *Free Speech and Hate Speech in Christian Political Thought*
Must Christians support the political doctrine of free speech represented in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution? Should this support extend to the claim that even hate speech must be protected? Some theologians have argued that a Christian understanding of freedom demands nothing less. This claim comports with the absence of hate speech laws in the United States—the only Western democratic nation that does not make an exception for hate speech in its protection of free expression. But might there be other theological conceptions of freedom, namely one which recognizes that hate speech is opposed to the common good? This paper proposes an understanding of free speech that allows for the state’s regulation of utterances that may be deemed harmful by the community. Such an understanding calls for the exercise of political prudence while at the same time seeks to allow and encourage public expression.

Margaret Kelley, University of Kansas

Women Gun Owners, Religion, and Beliefs about Mass Shootings

My objective is to examine the intersection of religion and politics in American gun culture. In particular, I investigate how faith shapes attitudes toward gun violence, especially school and other mass shootings. Building on previous findings of the role of supernatural evil in gun ownership and attitudes toward gun control, I focus on evil and beliefs about public violence in the form of mass shootings. I extend existing work on this topic by identifying how civilian women connect faith, supernatural evil, and mass shootings in their own words. Using grounded theory, I find that women express strong feelings about school shootings, generally do not favor arming teachers, support the death penalty, and support stricter training requirements. Representing a wide range of opinions and attitudes about both guns and religion, the women in my sample provide a nuanced understanding of the association between them.

Gabriel Raeburn, University of Pennsylvania

‘Let’s give equal rights to the Christians’: Debates over Religious Freedom and Discrimination in the Post-Civil Rights Era

This paper explores how, in the final decades of the twentieth century, conservative evangelicals reframed debates on discrimination to focus on religious freedom and liberty. Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, evangelicals consciously crafted a narrative that claimed they were a discriminated minority and the natural heirs to the civil rights movement. This approach held implications for public policy as evangelicals used claims of religious discrimination, disseminated through their burgeoning religious television empires, to oppose new civil rights initiatives. The paper utilizes religious television transcripts, literature from evangelical political campaigns, and letters and correspondence sent by constituents to their congressional representatives and the Federal Communications Commission. In doing so, it helps scholars reckon with the place of memory in shaping public policy, the role of religious media in influencing debates over civil rights, and the roots of current disputes over religious freedom in the United States.
Midnight Mass is a Netflix mini-series that explores mystery, *mysterium* and the magisterium in an isolated island community. Both papers in this session dive deep into how this small community wrestles with faith, horror, and the sacred through the lenses of theology, secular studies, and cultural theory.

- Brian Bajzek, Molloy University

*Otherness, Horror, and the Holy: Discerning Authenticity through Ambiguity in Midnight Mass*

Mike Flanagan’s Netflix series, *Midnight Mass*, revels in ambiguity and liminality, engrossing viewers in a slow-burning story wherein the boundaries between faith and fanaticism, service and self-aggrandizement, even holiness and evil are often difficult to discern. In interviews, Flanagan has articulated the complex role his Catholic upbringing played in the formation of the series’ narrative, its presentation of faith, and its portrayal of conflicts within an historically Catholic community. This paper provides a theological-anthropological analysis of the series through a dialogue between the works of Julia Kristeva, Emmanuel Levinas, and Bernard Lonergan. Drawing from their accounts of abjection, otherness, and discernment, I argue that the series offers a nuanced and emotional portrayal of self-sacrificing cooperation with grace, which often expresses itself through the actions of those marginalized by reductive paradigms for religious devotion. In *Midnight Mass*, true holiness defies exclusion and expectation.

- Maryellen Davis Collett, Lewis University

*Rabid Rites and Rational Reversals: Secular Sacramentality in Midnight Mass*

In 2021, Netflix released the limited series *Midnight Mass*, created, written, and produced by Mike Flanagan. *Midnight Mass* portrays a world in which presumed polarities such as faith and reason, Catholicism and atheism, supernaturalism and materialism, good and evil, and life and death reverse as they become proximate. This paper explores the dynamic conditions of narrative in *Midnight Mass* that enable this positional exchange. Even as the series directly critiques the trappings of organized religion(s), I argue that *Midnight Mass* creates its own secular sacramental worldview, rooted in the same basic human needs attended to by traditional religion(s). The genre of Catholic horror is particularly ripe for the examination of such binary reversals. An investigation of cultural phenomena that exhibit forms of *secular spirituality* is necessary for the future of religion and popular culture studies. *Midnight Mass* is a reflection of and commentary
about our present cultural moment.

Responding

Matthew Cressler, College of Charleston

A19-229
Books under Discussion
Religion and the Social Sciences Unit
Theme: Roundtable on Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics Volume II (Bloomsbury, 2022)
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Aana Marie Vigen, Loyola University, Chicago, Presiding

When volume one of Ethnography as Christian Theology and Ethics was published in 2011, qualitative fieldwork was still a novel, sometimes suspect, idea in these disciplines. Just eleven years later, the incorporation of qualitative research is a popular and accepted method of inquiry for theology and ethics, and the methodologies employed have become more varied and sophisticated. Recent work expands modes of collaboration and draws out new questions through participatory action research, auto-ethnography, participant co-authorship, and virtual ethnography. Leading and emerging scholars have much to share about how they approach this kind of work, what they are learning, and what sorts of change is possible. This panel features several of these scholars, each who have contributed a chapter to the volume. Panelists will offer some comments about their chapters, followed by a moderated discussion on new directions for qualitative fieldwork in theology and religious ethics.

Panelists

Sara Williams, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Sunder John Boopalan, Princeton Theological Seminary
Rochhuathanga Jongte, Princeton Theological Seminary
Nikki Hoskins, Pacific School of Religion
Lailatul Fitriyah, University of Notre Dame
Nicole Symmonds, Emory University

A19-230
Religion in Southeast Asia Unit and Space, Place, and Religion Unit
Theme: Rethinking Center and Margin: Perspectives from Southeast Asia
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Brooke Schedneck, Rhodes College, Presiding

How do concepts of spatial thought and practice of Southeast Asian religious communities draw on meanings assigned to center and periphery? How do these communities consider their own positionality in relation to this binary? What are the theoretical implications of Southeast Asian place-making for how the study of religion is constituted? These are some of the compelling questions undertaken by five panelists, who analyze the interplay between the center and the margin from diverse perspectives within Southeast Asia. Two papers focus on Muslim
communities in island Southeast Asia, while two panelists highlight issues for Buddhist communities in mainland Southeast Asia, and the last illustrates unique features of centrality for a Cambodian Buddhist diaspora in America. Together, this panel reveals how Muslim and Buddhist communities have conceptualized their own positionality vis-à-vis the historical centers of their religions, complicating the center-periphery binary, and demonstrating their active and creative participation in global traditions.

- Verena Meyer, Columbia University

*Where is Mecca? Or, Space and Place: Reflections from Java*

What does Mecca as the historical and ritual center of the Muslim world mean to those on its geographic periphery? Two famous stories of Javanese Muslims correcting the prayer direction in a mosque show that the meaning of Mecca is not stable. In traditions around Sunan Kalijaga, the true Mecca is found by journeying within, whereas for the modernist Ahmad Dahlan, the Ka’bah’s position is determined by western scientific technologies. In different ways, each not only makes the center accessible from anywhere, but constructs the center from the periphery, thereby undermining the possibility of a clear differentiation between the two.

- Terenjit Sevea, University of Pennsylvania

*What is (Southeast Asian) Islam?: Unlearning Peripheralization from Regional Islamic Materials*

This paper examines select Islamic materials from Southeast Asia and pays attention to how these materials portray Islamic spaces and believers of the region and encourage us to unlearn the *peripheralization* of Muslims regions. These materials shift our attention instead towards intersecting networks and an oceanic ecumene of Islam, while emphasizing the sanctity of seemingly peripheral parts of the Islamic world, in Southeast Asia. In their elaboration on the region’s pilgrimage centers, saints, ‘ulama, and shrines, these materials tell a story of devotional cultures, social memories and sacral places that are often pushed to the margins of Islamic studies.

- Alexandra Kaloyanides, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

*Naturalizing Religious Domains*

Myanmar’s natural resources have long shaped its religious life. Gold mined from its rivers cover the country’s towering pagodas. Teak from its tropical forests built the last Buddhist royal capital, Mandalay, as well as countless spirit (nat) shrines. Rubies from upland regions adorn the most powerful Buddha statues. And the abundance of rare earth metals finances the contemporary military regime’s violent religious nationalism. This paper examines objects manufactured out of precious metals, gems, and teak to question the way they have mapped religious life in Myanmar. It focuses on objects from the British Museum exhibition “Myanmar in the World,” scheduled for 2023–2024, and
offers a preview of how that exhibition reveals connections between Myanmar’s rich land and complex religious history. It wagers that attention to natural resources and the labor that cultivates it sheds new light on how Burmese religions are structured.

- Napakadol Kittisenee, University of Wisconsin

*Reincarnation of Negara: Public Cremation in the Post-revolutionary States of Mainland Southeast Asia*

Cremation as a celebration of death renders significance for both the living and the deceased in a society. The public mortuary ritual therefore evokes the commemoration and the aspirations for the constructed or “imagined socio-political center.” Inspired by the state cremation in the nineteenth-century Bali of Geertz (1980)’s “Negara” as the state theatre in the Hindu-Buddhist galactic polity by Tambiah (1977), this paper explores the persistence and centrality of public cremation in creating the imagined center and theatre state particularly in the post-revolutionary states of mainland Southeast Asia. Drawing on my participant observation at the royal cremation of King Norodom Sihanouk (2013) and of Princess Norodom Buppha Devi (2019) in Cambodia together with looking at the visual and archival materials of the cremation of Ñāthan Sālī Kantasīlo in Laos (2013) as well as of Thich Nhat Hanh in Vietnam (2022), I argue that “Negara” is reincarnated in these post-revolutionary settings.

- Sophea Seng, California State University, Long Beach

*Making a Southeast Asian Religious Polity from the Margins: Cambodian American Buddhist Adaptations of Theravada Buddhist Practices*

For diasporic Cambodian Buddhist communities, the center of religious authority remains Cambodia. Most studies on Cambodian American Buddhists privilege interpretations of Buddhist practices as reactions to poverty following resettlement in the US. Ethnographic perspectives on these communities, however, highlight their political and religious power in their diasporic periphery as constituted through multiple activities such as communal chanting, and interactions with local authorities on zone laws during the construction of temples. Through ethnographic research at Wat Khmer, in Long Beach, California, this paper argues that the diasporic temple expands the politico-religious spatiality of Buddhism to meet the changing needs of the laity. Though Cambodia remains the center of Buddhism for Cambodian American practitioners, the construction of the periphery is also informed by the US context. Communities at Wat Khmer consistently reproduce Southeast Asia as central through changing understandings of what it means to be Cambodian Buddhist, Cambodian American, and Asian American.
This roundtable proposes to make visible a practice that scholars of Christianity across disciplines regularly employ – acquiring objects of study through eBay. Roundtable panelists will each speak briefly about their experiences of searching, bidding on and buying materials for research projects, as well as bring sourced objects for the audience’s sensory engagement. These short provocations will then turn to a broader conversation about the methodological implications of engaging the digital marketplace as a research source. This panel aims to reveal eBay searching, bidding, acquisition, and messaging as something of a phantom method in the critical study of religion, widely practiced but not systematically examined. We will also explore the intersections between eBay and other methodologies (e.g., ethnography, formal archives), its value in building teaching collections, and its potential as an online method in the context of a global pandemic.

Panelists

Alyssa Maldonado-Estrada, Kalamazoo College
Monica Mercado, Colgate University
Katherine Dugan, Springfield College
Susan Reynolds, Emory University

Business Meeting

Deborah Whitehead, University of Colorado, Presiding
Kathryn Reklis, Fordham University, Presiding

A19-232
Religions in the Latina/o Americas Unit
Theme: Migration, Creativity, and Labor: New Books in Religions in the Latina/o Americas
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Carlos Ruiz Martinez, University of Iowa, Presiding

This panel puts three recent works on the religious lives of Latinx migrants in conversation: Lloyd Barba’s 2022 Sowing the Sacred: Mexican Pentecostal Farmworkers in California, Tony Tian-Ren Lin’s 2020 Prosperity Gospel Latinos and Their American Dream, and João Chaves’s 2022 Migrational Religion: Context and Creativity in the Latinx Diaspora. These books center acts of architectural, theological, and ritual creativity and allow us to explore how migration and labor trajectories shape religious realities. From farmworkers, to business owners, to pastors and religious leaders, these authors illuminate how Latinx Christians manage the conditions and contingencies of labor, family, and politics and how they creatively work within these conditions to cultivate optimism, build new spaces of worship and ritual, and create hospitable institutions and theologies.

Panelists

Lloyd Barba, Amherst College
Joao Chaves, Baylor University
Tony Tian-Ren Lin, Trinity Church Wall Street

Responding

Dara Delgado, Allegheny College
Kristy Nabhan-Warren, University of Iowa

Business Meeting

Jessica Delgado, Ohio State University, Presiding
Daisy Vargas, University of Arizona, Presiding

A19-233
Full Papers Available

Ritual Studies Unit
Theme: Carrying, Marrying? And Not Burying
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Michael Houseman, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Presiding

This is a session of case studies about ritual practices. The session includes four short paper presentations and two respondents, in order to increase interactivity.

- Jenny Wiley Legath, Princeton University

  Woman's Concealed Carry of Firearms as Ritual Practice

  Analyzing women’s concealed carrying of firearms as religious ritual reveals a world-making project that idealizes armed personal protection as a learned embodied religious practice. Whether or not they use religious language to describe it, these women promote gun carry as a spiritual practice, one that they see as aligned with evangelical Protestant Christianity. These women concealed carry influencers present the practice, or ritual, of concealed carry as the cultivation of a “lifestyle” that includes the concealment of a firearm on-body with minimal adaptation of style or fashion, the adoption of a mindset ever attuned to the possibility of danger, and the regular simulated enactment of the response to a lethal threat through both target practice at the gun range and daily dry-firing of the weapon. The ultimate concern of this ritual practice is an affirmation of one’s right, willingness, and even obligation to use lethal force to protect life.

- Jordan Conley, Boston University

  Nuptials By Proxy: Embodiment and Ritual Space in the Age of Zoom

  Montana is the only US state that legally allows a double-proxy marriage ceremony wherein two individuals can “stand in” for the couple getting married. In such ceremonies, the proxies gather before an officiant and witnesses in order to exchange vows on behalf of the physically-absent couple. Since the beginning of the COVID-19
pandemic, demand for such services have increased considerably. Using a variety of sources and a two-pronged comparative approach, this paper unpacks the history and significance of double-proxy weddings from a ritual studies perspective, with attention to themes of agency, embodiment, instrumentality, and performance. In doing so, it questions the function of double-proxy weddings in the face of virtual realities and changing modalities of presence. Proxy ceremonies, the paper argues, both fundamentally destabilize and yet also reify the central narrative and theoretical underpinnings of the wedding ceremony.

- Courtney Applewhite, University of California, Santa Barbara

*From Dust to Compost: New Rituals for Body Disposition After Death*

Today in the United States there are more options than ever to dispose of a person after death. Beyond conventional burial and cremation, some states offer alkaline hydrolysis or natural organic reduction (body composting) as alternatives. People choose these options because they are perceived as more environmentally friendly, affordable, and potentially useful. A person can become soil or a nourishing effluent to contribute to the earth rather than taking up a designated cemetery plot. Using both ethnographic and survey data, I argue that as these options become more widely available and legally permissible, people construct ritual practices analogous to graveside and visitations rituals that are reflective of their and the deceased’s deeply held beliefs that center on being environmentally conscious, unique to the deceased, and, in some cases, nonreligious. Alkaline hydrolysis and natural organic reduction transform the deceased person from an embodied being to a representation of their lived values.

- Renee Cyr, University of Kansas

*Completing the Climb: The Creation of Cultural Memory and Collective Healing Through the Embodied Ritual of the 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb*

Every year on or around September 11, firefighter across the country (and even internationally) gather to participate in local Memorial Stair Climb events which memorializes the 343 firefighters who lost their lives evacuating civilians from the World Trade Center. Participants climb 110 flights of stairs, representing the height of the Twin Towers, wearing full protective gear. Each climber is assigned one of the fallen firefighters to represent. They carry a name badge and corresponding picture. After completing the climb a bell is struck and the name is read out. This allows the fallen firefighters to symbolically complete their final climb. This ritual shapes the way history is remembered. Creating an emphasis on sacrifice, valor, and the brotherhood of firefighting, encourages this ritual stays relevant. Thus, the Memorial Stair Climb will likely remain an important commemoration of 9/11 for years to come, embodying the message “Never forget.”
Joy Palacios, University of Calgary
Andrew Tebbutt, Trinity Christian College

A19-234
South Asian Religions Unit
Theme: New Directions in the South Asian Religions
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Jennifer Ortegren, Middlebury College, Presiding

The New Directions panel introduces new research in the study of language and religion in South Asia by recently-graduated Ph.D. students and doctoral candidates. From studies of devotional lyrics and performance genres to grammatical oddities and theories of translation, the papers in this panel show that the language of religion matters as much as its content. Panelists also demonstrate that religious concepts themselves can create new forms in both transregional and regional languages, from Sanskrit and Persian to Tamil and Telugu.

- Kristina Rogahn, university of toronto

"Building Word-Temples": Relating the Devotional Lyric in Modern Tamil

The reception of medieval devotional lyrics and their attendant hagiographical traditions in the twentieth century faced a double challenge from the leading intellectuals of Tamil modernity. On the one hand, the rationalist tradition of E.V. Ramasamy rendered devotion itself an ambiguous experience; on the other, a new regime of historicity increased scrutiny on the trustworthiness of these tales. In this paper, I analyze the short stories of three modern and contemporary Tamil writers who recovered the medieval Tamil lyric in their own literary output, negotiating these challenges in significant ways. Puthumaipitthan (1906 – 1948), Na. Parthasarathy (1932-1987), and Perumal Murugan (1966-) all inquire into how the poet's own experience is laid bare in verse, and how their own life experiences relate to those of the poet. Thus, while the hagiographies narrate lives, the modern writers "relate" experiences. The idea that modern Tamil literature is a "secular" tradition is significantly modified once we attend to the reception of Tamil premodern expressions of religiosity--notably the classic bhakti lyrics--in this oeuvre.

- Guy St Amant, Columbia University

God and Grammar: Śaiva Approaches to Non-Standard Sanskrit

Certain Śaiva scriptures are composed in a non-standard register of Sanskrit. These texts present themselves as the words of Śiva, and some commentators take their grammatical irregularity as indicative of divine speech. Yet many were linguistically “purified” during the course of their transmission, suggesting that their anonymous transmitters saw non-standard usage as something to be corrected, at least at times. This paper seeks to clarify how Śaivas (circa 7th to 13th c.) conceptualized and engaged with the words of God through a comparative study of several interconnected issues. First, how was scriptural language changed during the course of textual transmission? Second, what sorts of
presuppositions underpin the philological practices adopted by commentators? Third, can any specific conclusions be drawn from a comprehensive account of the grammatical irregularities that commentators explicitly identify as aiśa (“coming from the Lord”)? This paper also considers the non-standard language of Buddhist *tantras*.

- Aalekhya Malladi, Emory University

*Satyabhama, Vairagya, and Devotion in Telugu Performance Genres*

The story of the theft of the divine *pārijāta* tree by the Hindu deity Kṛṣṇa for his wife Satyabhāma has been retold many times in Telugu, a South Indian language. Through the central figure of Satyabhāma, the “True Woman,” these texts explore themes such as *śṛṅgāra* (eroticism) and femininity. This paper investigates one such text: the *Viṣṇu Pārijātamū*, composed by 18th century Telugu poet Veṅgamāmba. Veṅgamāmba’s adaptation stands out for three reasons: 1) despite the erotic conventions of Telugu performance literature, she imagines *bhakti* (devotion) as contemplative rather than affective; 2) she locates *bhakti* in a domestic sphere; and 3) she is a counterexample to the Nayaka court’s literary ethos of *bhoga* (enjoyment). Analyzing her juxtaposition of domestic troubles, devotion, and asceticism, this paper argues that Veṅgamāmba’s adaptation of the *pārijāta* story demonstrates her distinctive perspective on the role of *bhakti* in the everyday world.

- Shahid Khan, Independent Scholar

*Two Sufic Translations of the Bhagavadgītā*

Indo-Muslim thinkers produced several Urdu translations of Hindu texts, but this literature has received scant attention from scholars of South Asian Studies. Even fewer have explored these translations intellectually as interpretative, theological engagement with Hindu teachings. I intend to fill this lacuna by exploring how two different renditions of the *Bhagavadgītā* adopt theologizing strategies in the process of translation.

Dina Nath Madan and Muhammad Ajmal Khan are the two translators chosen for comparison—one Hindu and one Muslim. They denote merely two of the hundreds of translations available that had been published between 1863, when the very first had been issued, and the 1930’s, they time period in which their texts were published and what many consider the height of fervor for the Gita.

Hindus penned most Urdu translations of Indian religious texts even though during the Urdu came to be seen more and more as a Muslim language. Thus, on the one hand, Dina Nath exemplifies the literary culture of Hindus who worked with Urdu. Ajmal Khan, on the other hand, enters into this predominantly Hindu space by penning his own translation; in fact, with regards to the history of Gita translations in Urdu his is the first.
Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee
Theme: Minoritized Leaders Faithfully Guiding Grassroots Organizations in Catastrophic Times
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Angela Parker, Mercer University, Presiding

This conversational interview-style panel highlights a variety of issues tied to the religious complexities in catastrophic times. The first interview with members of the Soul to Soul Sister organization, conducted by CREM Chair Angela N. Parker, emphasizes the study of religion and the issue of abortion in a post-Roe world along with its effects on African American women. Soul to Soul Sister is a grassroots organization in the Denver area that is dealing with the many pandemics in which we find ourselves, particularly around reproductive rights and wellbeing. The second interview, conducted by CREM Committee Member, Arun Jones, is with Adrian Miller (or a representative) of the Colorado Council of Churches. They explore the huge problems and incredible opportunities that the multiple catastrophes have opened up for faith communities. Specifically, we learn how the Colorado Council of Churches are serving areas that are ignored in the context of our multiple health, racial, and economic catastrophes. What does it mean to go virtual when many areas of Colorado are rural and lack internet access? Finally, participants ponder next steps take forward in their own communities during these catastrophic times.

Panelists

Arun W. Jones, Emory University

A19-235
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Teaching Religion Unit
Theme: Pandemic Pedagogy
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Almeda Wright, Yale University, Presiding

Presenters in this session will analyze some of the core dilemmas that religion instructors have faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. How do we go about our work in ways that are compassionate to our students and ourselves? What new possibilities for immersive and experiential learning might we imagine due to remote teaching? And, what strategies might we use to center relationships in times of catastrophe and suffering? The last portion of this session will include the business meeting for the Teaching Religion Unit; all AAR members are welcome to attend the meeting.

- Lydia Willsky-Ciollo, Fairfield University

*Can Professors Have it All? Balancing “Self-Care” and “Student First” in the (post-)Covid Era*

*Can* professors have it all? Or rather, even if not, are they still expected to in the midst of
a pandemic and beyond? Faculty are often asked to walk a line that, one of the one side, avoids (re-)traumatizing struggling students, leads with grace and compassion for the student, and creates an inclusive and accommodating classroom space and, on the other, allows faculty to maintain their own pedagogical standards, strive for equity and fairness in engagement with students, and preserve their own sanity and time. This paper examine several methods and tools that I have adapted during the pandemic that have kept me (marginally) sane and in tune with my students, and which aim to be neither “faculty-first” nor “student-first,” but “both/and.” They are: the creation of clear boundaries for self and student; a system of flexible options for assignment submission; and a shared “database” among faculty.

• Kayko Driedger Hesslein, Lutheran Theological Seminary, Saskatoon

*Immersion and Experiential Learning When Stuck at Home: Adapted Assignments during COVID and After*

This presentation will summarize the pedagogical goals of decolonizing the classroom during a time of pandemic. It will review immersion and experiential assignments, including an on-the-land assignment and creative alternatives to essays, assessing their outcomes based on student feedback and whether students were judged to have broadened their epistemologies and could demonstrate an understanding and respect for Indigenous pedagogies. It will review the challenges of designing and assessing experiential courses, as well as creating other immersion assignments. It will conclude with some recommendations for immersion and experiential assignments when pre-pandemic learning opportunities can resume, based on past failures and successes.

• Jeffrey Carlson, Dominican University, Illinois

*The Conversation Book: Relationship-centeredness in the Context of Covid*

The presenter construes higher education as a kind of ongoing “conversation” and promotes relationship-centered pedagogies that seek to educate one student at a time in the company of others. However, the COVID-19 pandemic constituted a potential rupture of this model, and in response, a new tactic was developed to make this aspiration more concrete, more iterative, more intrinsic: a “Conversation Book.” Here, students would document, in writing, engagement with key concepts and in relation to their own, often harrowing, lived experiences amid Covid, and to do so in a community committed to being in supportive relationship with one another. The instructor, prior to each class session, would read all students’ entries for that day and then, during class, called on specific students to share. In this way the instructor “moneyballed” the class sessions, curating predetermined student-generated content to be surfaced during class discussions, also allowing for and encouraging spontaneous exchanges.

**Business Meeting**

Kate DeConinck, University of San Diego, Presiding
Almeda Wright, Yale University, Presiding

A19-236
Tibetan and Himalayan Religions Unit
Theme: Bodies, Material Culture, and Female Agency in Tibet
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Nicole Willock, Old Dominion University, Presiding

This panel’s six papers represent a diversity of approaches (material cultural, philosophical, ethnographic) to topics relevant to Tibetan religion and culture. Three papers explicitly address bodies and material culture: these concern the use of bone implements in Buddhist tantra, the tradition of mani-pills in Geluk Buddhism, and traditions surrounding Tsongkapa's body in the establishment of Ganden as a sacred site of pilgrimage. Contemporary Tibetan women's bodies come to the fore in a paper on nuns at Larung Gar and their attitudes toward women's health education. Women's agency is further explored in biographical context in a paper about Khandro Dechen Wangmo (c. 1868-1927), a Bon po treasure revealer from Eastern Tibet. A sixth paper takes a philosophical approach to explore Gampopa's views on Mahamudra.

- Fnu Xiraoxiangmao, Northwestern University

"Ocean of Dakinis:" Biography, Agency, and Gender in a treasure text of Khandro Dechen Wangmo (1868-1927?)

Khandro Dechen Wangmo (1868-1927?) was a female Bonpo treasure revealer in Kham Nyarong (Ch. Xinlong) in the current Ganzi prefecture in Sichuan Province. She was one of the few known female Bonpo treasure revealers active in Tibet. She revealed a treasure text titled Khandro Gyamtso Namthar, Biographies of Ocean of Dakinis, a collection of texts about sixteen women practitioners, in the holy mountain of Gyalmo Mudo in Gyalrong in 1918. This paper will draw on the scholarship of modernity to analyze the significance of the anthology of Tibetan women’s lives. While it makes the reader wonder how much agency these female figures are able to claim as the text also centers on the Padmasambhava and Tsewang Rigdzin’s activities in taking most of these female practitioners as consorts, I will argue that these women are able to turn the unfavorable circumstances into their use through their perseverance, determination, and diligence through analyzing the structure and content of the text.

- Tenzin Bhuchung, Emory University

Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā View: Approaching Philosophical Understanding Through Nonconceptual Meditative Experience

In Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā tradition, the ultimate truth refers to the union of nonconceptual clarity of the mind (gsal ba) and its emptiness (stong pa) referred to as the innate mind (gnug sems). This union is further regarded as beyond linguistic or conceptual description. The Mahāmudrā pith instructions are thus not conceptual descriptions of reality that can be sustained in meditation so that becomes direct,
nonconceptual realization. Rather, they are meant to circumvent subject/object dualism as well as conceptual thoughts so that the direct experience of the ultimate may dawn. After encountering the ultimate directly and non-conceptually in meditative state, the practitioner gains a clear conceptual understanding of the ultimate in the post-meditation state. This method of approaching philosophical understanding through non-conceptual meditative experience inverts the process that is generally followed in the Mahāyāna Sūtra. In the post-meditation state, all conventional phenomena are said to appear as mere manifestations of the mind and not distinct from it like the ocean and its waves.

• James Gentry, Stanford University

_The Bodhisattva’s Body in a Pill: Ritual Innovation and the Invention of Tradition in Tibetan Buddhist Material Religion_

This paper considers how flesh and other bodily remains of the Buddhist special dead serve as media for ritual innovation and socio-religious change by examining their role in the history of Tibet’s _mani_-pill tradition from the seventeenth century to the present. I argue that the _mani_-pill tradition was reinvented then by drawing inspiration from trans-sectarian precedents, and eliding and adding key liturgical and material elements, to craft a different set of associations, linked with select Indian Buddhist scriptural sources, for inducting consumers into an aesthetic sensibility premised on the identity of the figure of the Dalai Lama with the bodhisattva of compassion Avalokiteśvara, and with the land and people of Tibet. I further propose that its reimagined profile enabled the _mani_-pill to cross geopolitical boundaries as a unit of exchange in Tibetan-Mongolian-Chinese relations, and ask how this socio-political dimension of the _mani_ pill tradition functions differently in today’s Tibetan diaspora.

• Michael Ium, University of California, Santa Barbara

_The Making of a Tradition: Tsongkhapa’s Multiform and Miraculous Bodies at Ganden_

This paper focuses on the importance of the multiform and miraculous “bodies” of the prominent Buddhist master Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419) to the growth of his Geluk tradition. These include the physical remains of Tsongkhapa, as well as some of the “spontaneously arisen” (rang byung) images that surround Ganden Monastery and are one of its most famous features. It was the presence of Tsongkhapa’s body that drew pilgrims to Ganden in order to receive his blessing. Once there, the “spontaneously arisen” images reinscribed Gelukpa narratives into the hearts of devotees as they circumambulated Ganden. As such, the “bodies” of Tsongkhapa played a major role in the socio-economic growth of the tradition and in shaping Gelukpa views of patronage. Their miraculous nature also complicates existing depictions of the Geluk tradition, which tend to depict the Gelukpa as a purely clerical and rational tradition.

• Padma Baimacuo, Southwest University for Nationalities, Chengdu
The article will discuss how Tibetan women engage with society to improve women’s life quality and social status. Tibetan women have had less education, and voice in the traditional Tibetan culture. They lacked education and support for a healthy lifestyle, good hygiene, and maternity in the traditional villages due to their low social status. However, because Tibetan women, and especially nuns, are getting more education, their social status and roles are changing and progressing. Tibetan women are becoming more motivated and active, through writing and actions. Larong Gar Women’s Health Care Group is a prime example of Tibetan women’s activism. This article will be based on fieldwork and will focus on germane aspects. First, how and why did the group of nuns set up the health care action; secondly, what active work do the nuns engage in; and finally, what challenges and problems do the group of nuns face.

Wesleyan and Methodist Studies Unit
Theme: Christian Nationalism
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Cindy K. Wesley, University of Northern Colorado, Presiding

The Wesleyan and Methodist Studies Unit will explore historical and theological approaches to the issue of Christian Nationalism. The papers address the connections between Methodism and nationalism in Canada, Korea, and the United States. The session will also discuss:

- the role of individuals or institutions identifying with Wesleyan theological tradition in the development, propagation, or persistence of Christian Nationalism
- the role of the Wesleyan theological tradition in opposition to Christian Nationalism
- Wesleyan/Methodist theological positions on Christian Nationalism, the merging of religious and national identities, white supremacy, and related topics
- Samuel Needham, University of Toronto

The Ryerson Effect: Egerton Ryerson and the Methodist Relationship to Christian Nationalism

Eighteenth-century Canadian Methodist leader Egerton Ryerson is a crucial resource for understanding the complex Methodist relationship to Christian Nationalism, both historically and currently. Ryerson was a founder of independent schools, democracy advocate, counter-Anglican disestablishmentarian, and intellectual source for the Canadian Residential School system, a site of mass trauma and cultural genocide for Indigenous Canadians. In these roles, Ryerson demonstrates what I call the “Ryerson effect,” the result of a paradoxical relationship between Methodism and Christian Nationalism (CN). I argue that CN must be understood in both its established and disestablished forms. In the former, Ryerson demonstrates how Methodism can be a forceful critic of CN. In the latter, Ryerson shows that Methodism is often an aid to CN, through both experience-oriented faith practice and sanctification-minded institution building. The Ryerson effect is a way for today’s Methodists to understand and critique
their often-complex relationship to CN.

- Daniel Ostlund, Drew University

*The Opposite of Nationalism is Abolition: Political-Theological Questions for the Wesleyan-Methodist Theologian*

How can Wesleyan theologians disrupt Christian nationalism without taking seriously contemporary calls for the abolition of the police and other forms of state-sanctioned violence? This question serves as the starting point for this paper which intervenes between interdisciplinary conversations around political theology, Wesleyan-Methodist studies, and contemporary movements for abolition. By arguing that contemporary abolitionist movements offer tools for identifying and responding to Christian nationalist violence, I will propose an alternative (Wesleyan) methodological approach, grounded in black theology, which resists the apologetic urge, and instead, reads John Wesley alongside sources from historically marginalized communities who are most impacted by the carceral logic of the United States.

- Heejun Yang, Duke University

*Overcoming Nationalism in the Korean Methodist theology of inculturation: Towards the fourth-generation Korean Methodist theology*

The purpose of this presentation is to suggest a way to overcome nationalism in the Korean Methodist theology of inculturation. In the Korean Methodism tradition, theologians have developed a distinctive theological tradition—the theology of inculturation, examining the relationship between the gospel and Korean traditional religious cultures. This presentation introduces how Korean Methodist theology is rooted in nationalism through the works of the first Korean Methodist pastor, Choi Byung-Hun. Then, it shows how the nationalism of Korean Methodist theology continues in the first-generation Korean theologians such as Yun Sung-Bum, Pyun Sun-Hwan, and Ryu Dong-Sik. Lastly, it demonstrates the criticism of the third-generation (post-colonial) Korean Methodist theologians on nationalism in Methodist theology tradition, while suggesting a new way to overcome nationalism in Korean Methodist theology with the trinitarian theology of inculturation.

**Responding**

Jermaine Marshall, Saint John's University, New York
A19-238
Books under Discussion
Women and Religion Unit
Saturday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
K. Christine Pae, Denison University, Presiding

This roundtable discussion discusses the book Postcolonial Politics and Theology. This book employs postcolonial theory to challenge the Eurocentric preoccupation of political theology and advances a postcolonial and comparative approach that addresses the realities of the majority world. It points to the need to critique the alignment with empire in the study of religion/theology using a postcolonial lens and to reimagine political theology more broadly from a global perspective. A special focus of the book will be on the changing sociopolitical realities of the American Empire and Sino-American competition. The tensions between China and the U.S. are encapsulated in Donald Trump’s slogan of “Make America Great Again” and Xi Jinping’s hope for a “China Dream.” The shifting of U.S. and Asian relationships provides an exemplary case to look at political theology globally. The multiracial discussants come from African American, Latino, Asian, and Caucasian backgrounds, and they will expand the discussion on postcolonial and decolonial Christianity, White hegemony, U.S. militarism, and resistance movements from the disciplines of Christian social ethics, religious studies, and practical theology.

Panelists

Traci C. West, Drew University
Miguel De La Torre, Iliff School of Theology
Nami Kim, Spelman College
Melinda McGarrah Sharp, Columbia Theological Seminary

Responding

Kwok Pui Lan, Emory University

A19-239
Women’s Caucus
Theme: Emerging Scholars -Religion and Reproductive Liberation
Saturday, 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM (In Person)
Elaine Nogueira-Godsey, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Presiding

This session brings graduate and early career scholars sharing their research on the state of the religious dimensions of women’s reproductive rights in North America. Papers ask questions such as the role that faith-based movements play both in exacerbating women’s oppression and in bringing signs of hope for the future of reproductive justice. From the perspectives of ecofeminism, womanist ethics, feminist liberation theology and media studies, emerging scholars
will be engaging with the relationship between political power, culture and religious patriarchal ideologies and their treatment of women’s bodies. Papers are asking questions about pedagogical approaches within theological education, and are making connections between reproductive rights and environmental justice issues.

- Toni Bond, Claremont School of Theology

*Loosening Our Tongues: Creating a Womanist Theo-Ethic of Reproductive and Sexual Justice*

Black Protestant Christian women make reproductive and sexual health decisions that are sometimes in conflict with the theological teachings of the Black Protestant Christian churches where they hold memberships. Despite being shunned and told by some Black church leadership and members that they are not worthy and/or lack virtue, Black women have used their moral wisdom and agency as rational, self-autonomous individuals capable of making decisions about their reproductive and sexual lives. To better understand the impact of oppressive theological teachings within the Black church, a pilot qualitative study with eleven Black women between the ages of 42-62 across four cities was conducted from July 2019 to December 2019.

- Tara Baldrick-Morrone, Wake Forest University

*The Ancient Foundations of Current Challenges to Reproductive Justice in America*

This presentation focuses on the use of ancient Christian texts to legitimize proposed constitutional amendments to overturn *Roe v. Wade* in the 1970s and 1980s. Such interpretations, put forth by scholars like John T. Noonan, Jr., contributed in part to the current crisis of restrictions on reproductive justice in America. Drawing on these examples elucidates the myriad ways that reliance on traditional models of theological interpretation contributes to the denial of reproductive justice, including by privileging the life of the fetus, engaging in hyperbolic arguments about America’s moral decline, and minimizing the realities of environmental crises. As this presentation argues, these efforts to cast abortion as immoral are predicated on conservative theological principles of Christian moral supremacy in the ancient Mediterranean world as much as in modern America. In an effort to move past these arguments, I close this presentation by offering more nuanced paths forward.

- Margaret Hamm, Boston University

Kate Hoeting, Harvard University

*TikTok on the Sidewalk: Christianity and Abortion through Clinic Escorts’ Social Media*

Every day, escorts at abortion clinics witness firsthand the complex dynamic between Christianity and abortion in America as they guide patients past crowds of religious anti-abortion protesters. Now, clinic escorts are taking these experiences to TikTok for
thousands of young users to see. This paper analyzes clinic escorts’ TikTok accounts to explore how their content impacts Generation Z’s definition of Christianity, particularly in its relationship to abortion. Both scholarship and popular media continue to reinforce an artificial inherent binary between Christianity and abortion, and clinic escorts’ TikToks follow suit, to an extent. However, the conversations that take place in the comment sections among creators and users also complicate, expand, and question this binary. Ultimately, this conversation among TikTokers creates space for new, broader ways of understanding how Christianity and abortion function together in American public life.

- Mary Nickel, Princeton University

*The theological conception of voluntary motherhood*

In what does freedom consist? This has been a subject of theological reflection for centuries. This paper considers the concept of freedom anew, in the context of the development of medical contraception. It focuses on the advocacy of women of that period for what they called “voluntary motherhood.” Women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman insisted that reproduction never be forced upon a human being, but rather be each woman’s prerogative. Freedom, for these women, was not confined to the realm of abstraction, but instead meant not being forced to gestate, nurse, and rear children. Crucially, these arguments were substantiated with both political and theological reasoning. Stanton, for example, wrote that each woman has the “sovereign right to her own person”—and that such a right was “sacred.” The paper insists that the tradition of theologically infused advocacy for voluntary motherhood merits—indeed, perhaps demands—retrieval today.

- Haley Feuerbacher, Southern Methodist University

*Can Our Water Speak? A Cry for the Subjectivity of Water and Womb in Progressive Religious Communities and Academia*

The intersectionality of women’s access to clean water and reproductive rights are being championed by progressive academic and religious centers – yet the voices and stories of women and those who have or can become pregnant are systemically excluded from these spaces, in large part due to the continued operation of a patriarchal colonialist logic of dualistic subjectivity-objectivity that also creates the devastation of the earth’s water. Inspired by Ivone Gebara’s earth as Sacred Body, this paper exposes the problematic material realities and underlying ideologies that impede the thriving leadership of wombed and maternal humans in spaces of cultural influence, spiritual formation, justice-seeking, and knowledge-creation, then proposes a transformative shift to decolonizing both water and women through an ideology of panexperientialism and a practical/relational embodiment of compassion as opposed to empathy.

- Elizabeth Freese, Auburn Seminary
Eve’s Exodus: A Pedagogy and Practical Theology Toolkit for Abortion Morality Transformation

This paper describes the contents of, and reports field experience with, an educational and practical theological toolkit entitled Abortion Morality: Tools for Cultural and Narrative Transformation Among Christians (2022). Based on a socio-narratological interrogation of the Christian Right’s moral framing of abortion, it reveals their patriarchal, male-centric, authoritarian paradigm of procreation relations and facilitates comparison with an Exodus-based, fully inclusive, liberation paradigm of pro/creation and sabbath relations. “Eve’s Exodus” – the liberation of female gestation labor from patriarchal dominance – is also linked with racial, worker, and immigrant justice struggles. This focus on biblical narratives and resonances with other social justice endeavors opens a way into, heretofore, largely taboo conversation and pedagogy in relation to abortion.

Responding

Margaret D. Kamitsuka, Oberlin College and Conservatory

A19-240
Tours

Tours
Theme: Denver City Tour
Saturday, 1:00 PM-3:30 PM (In Person)

Experience two sides of Denver—historic western town and thriving modern city—all on the same tour! From the hotel, head through some of Denver’s historic residential areas like City Park, Capitol Hill and LoDo (Lower Downtown), and some of Denver's up and coming neighborhoods like LoHi (Lower Highland) and RiNo (River North). Attendees can take pictures from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, overlooking City Park and the Denver Skyline and the Rocky Mountains.
Cost: $45

A19-302
Professional Development - Employment

Applied Religious Studies Committee
Theme: Preparing Scholars of Religion for Non-Academic Careers: What’s a Faculty Member to Do?
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Mary Beth Yount, Neumann University, Presiding

In recent years as the job market for tenure-track academic positions has tightened and the use of contingent faculty has exploded, increasing numbers of graduate degree seekers who are intending to pursue careers off the tenure track and outside of the academy. While some areas of study present obvious career options, for scholars in the humanities, nonacademic career
opportunities and the best preparation for them may not be obvious and religious studies faculty are exploring how graduate programs can — and should — prepare all alumni for diverse employment outcomes. This panel brings together faculty members from a variety of institutions to discuss some of the problems confronting their students and their programs as more people turn — by necessity and by choice — to diverse career paths.

**Panelists**

Monya Stubbs, Chicago Theological Seminary  
Kate DeConinck, University of San Diego  
Joshua Bartholomew, Saint Paul School of Theology

**A19-329**  
**Artificial Intelligence and Religion Seminar**  
**Theme:** AI and Religion in 2041  
**Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)**  
Michael Paulus, Seattle Pacific University, Presiding  
Philip Butler, Iliff School of Theology, Presiding

This roundtable explores the book *AI 2041: Ten Visions for Our Future* (Currency, 2021), a work of technical forecasting and speculative fiction by AI expert Kai-Fu Lee and science fiction writer Chen Qiufan. Focusing on religious language, images, practices, and beliefs that are conspicuous in the book’s narratives, roundtable participants will discuss the interrelationship between religion and technology, possible futures for religion and spirituality with artificial intelligence, and the role of speculative narratives in shaping faith.

**Panelists**

Rachel A. R. Bundang, Santa Clara University  
James McGrath, Butler University  
Beth Singler, University of Cambridge  
Bob Johansen, Institute for the Future

**A19-303**  
**Arts, Literature, and Religion Unit**  
**Theme:** Ruins in Arts and Literature  
**Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)**  
Gloria Hernández, West Chester University, Presiding

Whether metaphorical or physical, ruins have inspired poets, theologians, philosophers, and artists. Images of ruins capture at once the reality of impermanence and the perseverance of life. From the ruins of religious sites to the descriptions of entire ruined cities in primary religious texts, ruins evoke humans’ and divines’ capacity to destroy and reconstruct. This panel includes papers that examine the ruins from various religious/theological and literary/artistic perspectives showcasing the works of three contemporary British lettering artists whose work engages material ruins and human decay, to the works of Wordsworth, Du Bois, and Silko, and finally, by...
means of the Iconoclastic Controversy and related ancient and medieval Christian theological polemics, gesturing to the Anthropocene ruins to come.

- Jonathan Homrighausen, Duke University

*Lettering in the Ruins: Calligraphy on Decay and Inspired by Death in the Lettering Arts of Martin Wenham, Susan Hufton, and Hazel Dolby*

This paper engages three contemporary British lettering artists whose work engages material ruins and human decay: Martin Wenham, who carves words in wood, and Susan Hufton and Hazel Dolby, whose *Remembrance of People Past* is a years-long ongoing collaboration meditating on memorial stones to early Roman Christians. Wenham is known for his carved lettering on found and discarded wood. He resurrects these dead wood pieces by making them into art, often with Christian sacred texts inscribed upon such as the *Magnificat* and the *Benedicite*, creating wooden sculptures which suggest Christ’s cross. Hufton and Dolby, on the other hand, respond to the ruins of ancient Rome, especially the presence of names of long-dead early Christians. In memorial books and fabric panels, they rewrite these names into their own Book of Life, imagining the people who once went by them and those who loved those people.

- Mark S. Cladis, Brown University


It is productive to reflect on the pain and hope posed by the imagery of ruins in the writings of W.E.B. Du Bois and Leslie Silko against the backdrop of Romanticism. Du Bois (who writes of the ruined slave plantation) and Silko (who writes of the ruined, abandoned uranium mine) employ the trope of the ruin that is continuous with, but also transformative of, Romantic notions of “the ruin.” I depict two Romantic conceptions of ruins: 1) the picturesque ruin as a visible image of a bygone age of simplicity and spiritual wholeness; and 2) the hidden ruin as a trace of past oppression but also spiritual hope. Against these two contrasting employments of the ruin, I then limn the ways that Du Bois and Silko radically extend and transform the second notion of the ruin—the concealed ruin that, when discerned, discloses past oppression as well as current resilience.

- Wendy Wiseman, University of California, Santa Barbara

*The Shattered Image: Reflections on the Oblivion of Empress Irene’s Convent of the Theotokos (Mother of God)*

The wholesale destruction of the ruin of the 8th century Convent of the Theotokos (Mother of God) on Prinkipo Island (Buyukada) off the coast of Istanbul offers the occasion for reflection, by means of the Iconoclastic Controversy and related ancient and medieval Christian theological polemics, on the significance of the materiality of--or
versus--the divine, gesturing to the Anthropocenic ruins to come. I suggest that the 8th-9th century Byzantine iconomachy (battle over images), via a subverted theology of the Theotokos, offers an a/theological window on the significance of earth, wood, flesh, and stone in light of the reduction to ruin, or effacement of the image, of natural life under the sign of the Anthropocene.

A19-304
Bioethics and Religion Unit
Theme: Bioethics and Religion: Vaccine Religious Exemptions and Pandemic Ethics
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Terri Laws, University of Michigan, Dearborn, Presiding

Panelists in this session will discuss personal preferences and institutional policies and practices related to religious requests for exemption from vaccine mandates, with a focus on the Covid-19 vaccine.

Panelists
Hajung Lee, University of Puget Sound
Deepak Sarma, Case Western Reserve University

Business Meeting
Terri Laws, University of Michigan, Dearborn, Presiding
Hajung Lee, University of Puget Sound, Presiding

A19-305
Books under Discussion
Black Theology Unit
Theme: Method and Sources in Black Theology: A Tribute to the 50th Anniversary of James H. Cone's The Spirituals and the Blues (University of Michigan Press, 1972)
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Eboni Marshall Turman, Yale University, Presiding

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of James H. Cone's The Spirituals and the Blues, this session will consider methodological and source interventions in Black theologies. What are the sources for doing Black theology today? Ought Black theology rely on sources that derive solely from the “Black experience?” Each paper promises to offer a critical challenge to traditional Protestant theological method. Consideration of Christian tradition, Black music, African diasporan religion, and visual arts, presenters invite a fresh examination of theological method in the development of contemporary Black theology.

- Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, Colby College

Troubles in Mind that Nobody Knows: James Cone's Enduring Witness Through the
Spirituals and the Blues

The 1972 publication of James Cone’s *The Spirituals and the Blues* occurred at one of the most propitious moments in the history of African American studies, especially regarding the study of history, music, and African American cultural capital. Cone’s work not only generated new opportunities for the exploration of the spirituals but offered a new conceptualization of the blues, calling them “secular spirituals,” placing them alongside late nineteenth and twentieth century sacred music traditions, and pointing to the way these music traditions all spoke to the issues of suffering and dislocation. This paper will explore the ways that *The Spirituals and the Blues* made possible a revival of relevance for the spirituals in both classrooms and contemporary scholarship. It will also explore the continuing importance, as demonstrated by Cone, of the spirituals and blues as insights into African American personal and collective spiritual agency within and beyond the Black Church.

- Grant Kaplan, Saint Louis University

**Resurrecting Tradition? The Challenge From and Towards Kelly Brown Douglas’ Resurrection Hope**

This paper considers the import of Kelly Brown Douglas’ most recent book, *Resurrection Hope: A Future Where Black Lives Matter* (Orbis Books, 2021). Douglas’ groundbreaking work not only builds on earlier Black liberation theologians, but also opens new avenues of discourse by addressing the implication of a Christian tradition intertwined, perhaps inextricably, with patterns and habits of whiteness. Implicit in this project lies perhaps the most pressing question for Christian theology today, a question largely generated and piqued by Black theology: what to do with a “tainted tradition”? By engaging the work of Douglas, this paper seeks to interrogate the problem of tainted tradition—raised by the leading voices of Black theology—and also bring it into conversation with the most canonically influential Catholic theologians of tradition.

- Taurean Webb, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

**Sacred Stories and Folded Futures: Marking Time within the African Diasporic and Palestinian Exilic Visual Arts**

This presentation’s scholarship emerges out of the visual arts exhibition, “Ye Shall Inherit the Earth & Faces of the Divine,” originally imagined through Harvard’s Religion, Conflict and Peace Initiative, centering visual artists from the African diaspora and Palestinian exilic migrations. The presentation is a two-part journey. The first component—a 3-minute short film that chronicles the exhibit’s trajectory—anticipates the second, an excerpt from the larger scholarly project: an interrogation of the role of the visual arts in helping communities reformulate notions of futurity in ways that are politically transformative and affectively useful. The paper argues that Black and Palestinian visual arts can be read as sties by which an incipient transnational futurist imagination invites us into new ways of envisioning the possibilities of political
transformation, especially bringing to bear questions of time, embodiment, and the untethering of subjects from utopian visions.

Responding

Kelly Brown Douglas, Episcopal Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary

A19-306
Buddhism in the West Unit
Theme: Don't Ignore Class: Material relationships, Economic conditions, and Buddhism in the West
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Scott Mitchell, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Presiding

The aim of this roundtable is to open out a rigorous conversation about social class and economic conditions in relation to contemporary transnational Buddhism. In much of the scholarly literature, convert Buddhism in the West is presented as catering primarily to the needs of the middle and upper middle classes, at the conscious or unconscious exclusion of others. Whilst issues relating to gender, race and ethnicity in contemporary Buddhism have begun to be explored by scholars, class remains an under theorised nexus which has fallen out of fashion within the academy. Yet, as Diana Reay (1998: 259, 260) argues, ‘discourses of classlessness act in the interests of the privileged in society by denying their social advantage’ (Reay, 1998: 261). The first part of the roundtable will include three short papers, exploring class in varied case studies: PoC teachers in American Insight, Tibetan Buddhism in Britain, and the use of Buddhist-adjacent moderate asceticism amongst the American Business classes and corporations. A facilitated discussion will follow, and will address why class has been overlooked, its contemporary significance, and the role of an academic's own class consciousness and positionality.

Panelists

Caroline Starkey, University of Leeds
Nalika Gajaweera, University of Southern California
Matthew Milligan, Trinity University

A19-307
Books under Discussion
Catholic Studies Unit
Theme: Book Panel: Ekklesia of the Dead: The Theopolitics of Churchstateness in the Americas
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
J. Michelle Molina, Northwestern University, Presiding

This moderated panel celebrates and explores the way in which Jennifer Scheper Hughes, Paul Christopher Johnson, Carlota McAllister, and Valentina Napolitano are pushing Catholic Studies in the Americas in new directions. Pointing to the limitations of religious politics configured
solely within a “Church/State” frame, their recent publications shift scholarly attention to the way that theologies of incarnation inform "churchstateness" in Latin America. The panel will generate some light and maybe a little heat about what is at stake in the emergent concepts of "Ekklesia" and "theopolitics" and what it means to configure Catholicism as an ekklesia founded upon death.

Panelists

Jennifer Scheper Hughes, University of California, Riverside  
Valentina Napolitano, University of Toronto  
Paul Christopher Johnson, University of Michigan  
Carlota McAllister, York University

Business Meeting

John Seitz, Fordham University, Presiding  
J. Michelle Molina, Northwestern University, Presiding

A19-308  
Comparative Studies in Religion Unit  
Theme: Reconsidering Empathy in the Comparative Study of Religions  
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)  
Catherine Cornille, Boston College, Presiding

The notion of empathy has a checkered history in the comparative study of religion. While early phenomenologists such as Gerardus van der Leeuw considered it an essential element of comparative methodology, it has all but become taboo in more recent scholarship. It is often seen to merely lead to projection or generalization, and considered to presuppose an outdated notion of walking in the other’s moccasins. However, empathy – or its lack – does play an implicit or explicit role in all comparative studies. This panel reflects both critically and constructively on the role of empathy in the comparative study of religions. It looks at the limitations of avoiding any consideration of empathy, while also proposing new ways in which empathy might be used in more discrete ways.

- Steven G. Smith, Millsaps College

Empathy for Efforts as a Factor in Religious Studies

Discussion of empathy has largely focused on emotion: the empathizer “feels in” to the emotional state of another subject and thereby attains a significant understanding of the other’s position. In empathy for efforts, we pursue curiosity about the possibilities of action while rising to the occasion of another agent’s sharing the theater of action with us. Spontaneously, we tend to be supportive of any effort that is not threatening, not objectionable, and not of a kind that we take for granted; reflectively, we tend to accept the implication that we and our fellow agents belong to an inclusive fellowship of triers.

The complexities of empathy in relation to religious effort can be illustrated by recent
controversies over building mosques in historically Christian areas. In countries legally committed to religious freedom, the politically positive meaning of religious freedom requires the support of empathy for efforts.

- David P. Lawrence, University of North Dakota

*Empathy in Jonathan Z. Smith's Approach to Religion*

In this examination of the method Jonathan Z. Smith brought to religious studies, there is some appreciation, combined with a strong critique of empathy. I believe that there is an implicit empathy in Smith’s refutations of the imperialistic imposition of some theological categories to indigenous cultures. Smith also evinced a lot of empathetic concern for the education and well-being of students. However, I believe that there is in effect a lack of empathy in Smith’s assumed primacy of difference and correlated understanding of similarities as only family resemblances, as well as in his social scientific reductionism-cum-constructionism. He severely criticizes nearly any theological and philosophical interpretation of religion, as evinced in his engagement with Eliade. In that way, I don’t think that he treats fairly the views and behaviors of indigenous cultures, or of scholars who attempt to take seriously or dialogically engage their claims.

- Andrew Taylor, College of St. Scholastica

*I Know I Don’t Know How You Feel: Empathy as a Gateway to Epistemic Humility in Comparative Studies*

Recent feminist, disability, and postcolonial critics have compellingly demonstrated the potential harms of “empathy” as a guiding orientation for the study of religion. An acute sense of empathy can lead scholars to imagine they are encountering the religious experiences and categories of another when they are merely conversing with apparitions conjured of their own theorizing, leading to epistemic and political harm for their subjects. After conceding the justice of such critiques, this paper argues that empathy can nevertheless benefit comparative studies insofar as it contributes to generating affective virtues like epistemic and relational humility. Specifically, this paper suggests that “care-knowing,” a virtue of mechanism and character theorized by philosopher Vrinda Dalmiya, might prove especially useful for comparativists who wish to avoid the harms wrought by an overconfident sense of empathy, but do not believe that all forms of life are so incommensurate as to be beyond imagination or comparison.

**Responding**

Charles Hallisey, Harvard University
Driven both by the internal contradictions and limitations of anthropocentric theories of religion and by the challenges of a world increasingly beset by mass extinction, climate change, and other ecological disruptions, many religious studies scholars have sought to reimage the field in a non-anthropocentric or posthuman manner. What might this look like from the standpoint of Contemplative Studies and how might the latter contribute to the effort to rethink our scholarship beyond dualistic or bifurcated accounts a world divided between nature and culture or the human and the nonhuman? How can such reimagining better equip us to address ecological and environmental challenges both in the world and in our classrooms? In this session, panelists will consider such questions from a variety of angles: from the practical aid that contemplative approaches may give to engaged environmental action, to the theoretical challenges that contemplative traditions pose for the new posthumanities, to the pedagogical salience of critical first-person reflection on contemplative practices within classrooms engaging the various crises and metacrises of our time.

- Jessica Beaudette, Arizona State University

*Transcending Disciplines: Contemplative Approaches to Biodiversity and Climate Science*

> In a time of climate upheaval, biodiversity loss, and fractured human communities, scholars in science and religion are examining methods of sustaining both human and natural environs. Yet despite clear scientific evidence and concomitant religious engagement, meaningful climate action has not occurred on a global scale. Further, climate scientists and conservation ecologists are often first to witness ecological losses, experiencing grief, exhaustion, and despair. To address these challenges, scientists are considering new methodologies in environmental science, including those found in religious contemplative traditions. Empathy, deep listening and mindfulness are a few examples. This paper explores the emergence of contemplative approaches to the practice of environmental science. Drawing from religious scholarship and scientific studies, research suggests that contemplative practices may enrich cross-cultural dialogue, improve the practice of science, and support climate adaptation strategies. Contemplative approaches may also foster in scientists a greater sense of meaning and purpose in their scientific endeavors.

- Sam Mickey, University of San Francisco

*Contemplative Posthuman Design: Reclaiming Attention and Re-Placing the Human*

This paper draws on two contemporary authors, the German philosopher and cultural
theorist Peter Sloterdijk and the Asian-American multidisciplinary artist Jenny Odell, juxtaposing their work to introduce a concept of contemplative posthuman design, whereby contemplative practices open up possibilities for designing inhabitable places of mutually enhancing relations between humans and their environing conditions. Sloterdijk and Odell do not seem to be aware of one another’s work, yet they converge in their advocacy for contemplative practice as a means to reclaim attention from the exploitative machinations of our technological society and thus re-place the human: replacing the alienated, lonely individual by placing the human back into intimate interrelations with the environment. Furthermore, this contemplative posthumanism is a matter of critical and ecological design, as contemplative practices afford perspectives capable of unmasking the designs at work in our technological society and redesigning spaces for peaceful and sustainable forms of ecological coexistence.

- Daan Oostveen, Utrecht University

*Posthuman Religion*

Since Nietzsche has declared the “death of God”, the study of religion has shunned away from discussing supernatural actors. In its place, the “human” has taken centre stage: the scientific study of religion has been concerned with religion as a sociological phenomenon. This has obfuscated the many non- and posthuman actors in religion. The question how to imagine the future of the study of religion, is an ongoing theme for the discipline. This paper will study the intersection of the posthumanities and religion. To what extent is a posthuman religion emerging? What impact does religion have in the time of the convergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Sixth Mass Extinction? What role does imagination play in our future practices of religious studies? How can methodologies such as critical posthumanism and new materialism be adjusted to be applied to the discipline of the study of religion and spirituality?

- Wendy Petersen-Boring, Willamette University
  Andrew Dreitcer, Claremont School of Theology

*The Inner Life of Activism and The Conversation Project: Alternative Contemplative Pedagogies to Revitalize Higher Education*

A reflection on alternative contemplative pedagogies in two linked courses, *The Inner Life of Activism*, and *The Conversation Project*, opening up to remarks about ways in which contemplative studies, broadly construed, have a unique role to play at this particular historical moment in higher education. Systemic crises in climate, inequity, and racism and a political landscape of polarization brings an urgency to student’s experience and a need for us to teach to their existential experience. Infusing contemplative studies in the curriculum creates a space for students to cultivate the inner resources they need to be able to address these crises. In turn, the university becomes a place not just to learn and do research about these issues, but also a place where students integrate their learning and their personal responses, to learn the skills and inner
dispositions necessary for resilience in their work over a lifetime.

Responding

Jacob Sherman, California Institute of Integral Studies

A19-310
Professional Development - Mentoring
Contemporary Islam Unit and Islam, Gender, Women Unit and Islamic Mysticism Unit and Qur'an Unit and Study of Islam Unit
Theme: Mentoring Session
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Elliott Bazzano, Le Moyne College, Presiding
Zaid Adhami, Williams College, Presiding

This interactive session will give participants, especially graduate students and early-career scholars, a chance to have facilitated discussions on topics of broad interest in Islamic studies, including publishing, teaching, and job market preparation.

A19-311
Books under Discussion
Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit
Theme: Book Panel on Kristina Stoeckl and Dmitry Uzlaner's The Moralist International: Russia and the Global Culture Wars (Fordham University Press, 2022)
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Ashley Purpura, Purdue University, Presiding

This session will feature a book panel on Kristina Stoeckl and Dmitry Uzlaner's forthcoming book, The Moralist International: Russia and the Global Culture Wars (Fordham University Press, 2022). Moralist International analyzes the role of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state in the global culture wars over gender- and reproductive rights and religious freedom. It shows how the Russian Orthodox Church in the last thirty years first acquired knowledge about the dynamics, issues, and strategies of Western Christian Right groups; how the Moscow Patriarchate has shaped its traditionalist agenda accordingly; and how the close alliance between church and state has turned Russia into a norm entrepreneur for international moral conservativism. Discussants will share perspectives on the book, its timeliness, and its impact by bringing it into conversation with scholarship and other international developments.

Panelists

Vera Shevzov, Smith College
Catherine Wanner, Pennsylvania State University
Elizabeth Prodromou, Tufts University

Responding
Kristina Stoeckl, University of Innsbruck
Dimitry Uzlaner, University of Innsbruck

Business Meeting

Philip Dorroll, Wofford College, Presiding

A19-312
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Ecclesial Practices Unit
Theme: Practicing Hope in Catastrophic Times
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Rebecca Spurrier, Columbia Theological Seminary, Presiding

This panel addresses variations on the question: what is the role of ecclesial bodies in the midst of catastrophes, crises, and/or traumatic events? How is hope articulated in practice that is cognizant of these material realities? Faith communities embody implicit and explicit practices that point towards an understanding of hope or a theology of hope. Hope as a theological category can be expressed by theologians within generalizing claims. However, these presenters engage ethnography/qualitative research to address the contextuality and awareness of hope in global, local, and/or regional contexts. The papers investigate varying frameworks and methodologies that specific communities employ to manage catastrophes, and ask the following: What is the theology of hope at work in these communities, and how is it practiced or not practiced? What are the nuances of these practices in combination with or contrast to their respective theologies of hope?

- Marie-Claire Klassen, University of Notre Dame

The Political Praxis of Lament in the Palestinian Christian Community

During the 1948 Nakba (catastrophe in Arabic), many Palestinian Christians were forced to flee their homes and became refugees. In the aftermath, many found that the church was not boldly acting for justice but was rather maintain the status quo. In response, Christians from various denominations founded Sabeel, a liberation theology center in East Jerusalem. This paper explores the way prayer, action and lament cultivate a response to Israeli-Palestinian conflict rooted in hope, while also challenging church leaders to be more faithfully committed to addressing injustice.

- Hector Varela Rios, University of Chicago

No hope like decolonial hope: assessing RehaCE's promise to Puerto Rican identity

Soon after Hurricane María in 2017, the Iglesia Metodista de Puerto Rico re-tasked their faith-based organization Rehaciendo Comunidades con Esperanza (RehaCE) toward helping those impacted, especially in at-risk communities, and has ‘made good’ on its promise of “providing relief and hope.” Under Wesleyan social holiness and the popular
saying “haz el bien sin mirar a quien,” ReHaCE has impacted thousands of families after María and other ongoing island catastrophes either exacerbated by or due to the island’s colonial status. I will use ethnography and decolonial Puerto Rican theology to search for hope in RehaCE and its stakeholders. I ask: how does RehaCE fulfill its promise of ‘remaking communities through hope’?

- Matthew Robinson, University of Bonn
  Johannes Fröh, University of Bonn

Facilitating Hope Amidst Crisis: Twitter Activity of Christian Groups as a Factor for Social Resilience

The paper reports on a research project in digital theology that is bringing three research areas into conversation with one another, as these have overlapped during the course of the Covid-19 pandemic: (1) research on social media, (2) research on ecclesial practices and (3) research on social resilience. We summarize recent research on how "digital expressions" have become important aspects of the ecclesial practices of so many Christian groups. The paper presents a quantitative analysis of twitter activity during the pandemic in relation to the topic of hope as an articulation of visions of a better future, focusing on prayers or calls for prayer shared by Christian ecumenical and diaconic groups during the first 1.5 years of the pandemic. We describe thus one direct way in which digital religious communications convey concrete ideas for what future transformation might and resilient function might look like post pandemic.

Business Meeting

Theodore Hickman-Maynard, Harvard University, Presiding

A19-330
New Program Unit
Energy, Extraction, and Religion Seminar
Theme: Constructing Religion and Race in Extractive Zones
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Christiana Zenner, Fordham University, Presiding

This session includes four papers that consider the complex interaction of religion, race, and extractive modes of economic and energy production. Across distinct geographical and methodological frames, each considers a specific case in which extractive industries produce, require, or rely on entanglements of race and religion. Desmond Coleman’s paper on alchemy unearths the metaphorical conditions through which bodies were ascribed character with reference to their surfaces, and traces how this paradigm informs the logics of colonialism. Mario Orospe’s paper on lithium mining in Bolivia invokes indigenous ritual practice as a means by which to scrutinize the ostensibly secular character of the clean-energy technology boom. Amanda Nichols’ paper on uranium mining on Native lands in North America looks not only to the moment of extraction, but to the radioactive afterlives of resource exploitation in order to track the ongoing processes of colonialization. Matthew Smith’s paper describes the
entanglement of energy science and Christian missionary activity in the late 19th and early 20th century, showing how these forces were conjoined in the biopolitical governance of petroleum extraction in the so-called Muslim World.

- Desmond Coleman, Drew University

*Black, White, and Red: Extraction in the Alchemical Imagination*

In this paper, I interpret the Byzantine alchemical ideas of *melanosis* (blackening), *leukosis* (whiteneing), and *ekstrophe* (extraction/transmutation) as ideological affirmations of extractive modes of production and forms of exploitation related to agriculture, mining, labor, commerce, and sovereignty emergent within the deep history of Byzantium. I also propose that the coincidence of the “color line” implicated in these ideas can be used as a paradigm through which to analyze the entwined extractive projects of Modern colonialism, racialization, and exploitation. More specifically, I suggest the concepts of racial-epidermal *melanosis* (blackening) and racial-epidermal *leukosis* (whitening), alchemical qualifications of Frantz Fanon’s concept of the racial-epidermal body schema, as ways to conceptualize the above-mentioned projects. Such a conceptualization is pertinent for how it might more precisely elucidate the entanglement of colonialism, racialization, and exploitation in the context of the Americas and Africa.

- Mario Orospe, Arizona State University

*Mining Rituals: from the colonial invention of raw materials to high-tech industry's lithium extraction*

This paper will explore the transformation of mining ritual practices in Bolivia as a site of interaction between ongoing high-tech extractive regimes originating in early colonial times and the destruction of communal forms of relationality to nature. Building upon an extensive body of Anthropological scholarly work that has investigated rituals inside Bolivian silver and tin mines, such as the uncanny offerings to a demonic figure called "El Tío," this paper will present ethnographic fieldwork notes concerning the impact of secularization in high-skilled workers' ritualistic practices in industrial lithium plants. Therefore, this analysis will use concept tools from critical secular studies and the ontological turn to illuminate the unseen connections between high-tech industries' imaginaries of incessant innovation, the forthcoming massive extraction of lithium necessary to supply its batteries, and the menace of an ecological catastrophe threatening the fragile arrangements necessary to cultivate life in Andean worlds.

- Amanda Nichols, University of Florida

*Legacies of Power: The Transgenerational Effects of Uranium Extraction for Nuclear Technologies*

This paper will focus on the transgenerational legacies of Uranium mining and its bi-products and scrutinize it as an example of ‘radioactive colonialism’ (Churchill and
LaDuke 1985, 1992). From inception, the potential of nuclear technologies has been framed in overtly nationalistic and religious terms. Now, in the face of anthropogenic climate change, scientists argue that nuclear power is the best solution for salvation from a carbon-dependent future. However, indigenous populations continue to bear the brunt of our radioactive legacies. Historically, uranium extraction and nuclear waste storage have disproportionately been enacted on indigenous lands, despite resistance from affected communities. These injustices have been met with social and religious resistance movements from communities and allies. The interplay of extraction, religion, energy, and catastrophe raises one of the most complicated questions of our time: ‘What are the transgenerational implications of nuclear technologies when we consider the effects on both human and non-human species?’.

Matthew Smith, College of the Holy Cross

*The Changing Muslim World: Biopolitics, Energy, and the Racialization of Islam in Protestant Missions*

This paper examines the role of white Protestant missionaries in inventing the racial form of the “Muslim World” in the early 20th century. In the aftermath of the changes wrought by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the “Scramble for Africa” at the turn of the century, Protestant Missionaries became increasingly invested in Christianizing a land previously seen as “rigid” and “incapable of change.” When oil was discovered in Persia in 1908, the aspirational projects of Protestant missionaries were matched only by the energetic impulses of a British-led world economy that was transforming from coal steam to fuel oil. In these same years of oil extraction, new imperial sciences of energy also became models of biopolitical governance. Now understood to be “plastic,” or undergoing “disintegration” or “ferment,” I show how missionaries mobilized energetic grammars of change to racialize Islam as incompatible with Christian capitalist modernity.

A19-331
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching

**Hagiology Seminar**
Theme: *Teaching the “Saints:” Pedagogical Innovations in Hagiology*
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Todd French, Rollins College, Presiding

Hagiographical media (broadly conceived) offer a rich array of resources for teachers and students to explore the complexity of religion. Studying such media (and its production) exposes key aspects of religious life – power, community, bodies, etc. – for focused analysis and critique. Doing this in the classroom, however, requires the labor of a skilled pedagogue. This roundtable brings together teacher-scholars across different traditions, histories, and geographies to discuss “best practices” for introducing hagiographical material and questions into the classroom. To facilitate our conversation, each panelist will present a syllabi, assignment, or lesson plan that they have designed with feedback from another panelist. This session will be exploratory and collaborative in nature, as it seeks to practice a style of conference preparation and presentation
that utilizes comparative practices and innovates along those lines.

Panelists

Susan Andrews, Mount Allison University
Patton Burchett, College of William and Mary
Susan Ashbrook Harvey, Brown University
Jon Keune, Michigan State University
Nauman Faizi, Lahore University of Management Sciences
Stephanie Yep, Appalachian State University

Business Meeting

R. Brian Siebeking, Gonzaga University, Presiding

A19-313
Hindu Philosophy Unit
Theme: Topics in Indian Philosophy: Perception, Logic, and Embodiment
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Lynna Dhanani, University of California, Davis, Presiding

This session brings together three papers on diverse topics from across a millennium of Indian philosophy. The first paper discusses the relationship between philosophy of language and philosophy of perception in the works of Maṇḍana Miśra (8th c.), focusing on his distinctive claim that error leads to truth. The second offers an analysis of Śrīharṣa’s (12th c.) view of tarka (“suppositional reasoning”) and its relevance to theory choice, arguing that Śrīharṣa should not be read as a skeptic. The third paper draws attention to the epics as sites for theological discourse, focusing on early modern (17th and 18th c.) Vedāntic commentaries on the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata and their treatment of divine embodiment.

- Eliot Davenport, University of Virginia

*When Elephants Become Trees: Perception in the Brahmasiddhi and Sphoṭasiddhi of Maṇḍana Miśra*

In the *Brahmasiddhi* and *Sphoṭasiddhi*, Maṇḍana Miśra advances a theory of sense perception according to which knowledge is grounded in error. For him, perception is a process of cognitive refinement that requires not just the contact of the senses with the object of perception but continuity of attention over time. Maṇḍana’s advancement of this theory in the *Brahmasiddhi* and *Sphoṭasiddhi* is evidenced in his use of his elephant-tree example in both texts. Although this example is used to defend somewhat different claims in each text, both passages are philosophically identical. In addition to unpacking Maṇḍana’s theory of perception as it is reflected in the elephant-tree example, this paper considers why Maṇḍana might understand time and attention to be perceptually efficacious. Additionally, this paper argues that these philosophically identical passages suggest that Maṇḍana’s theories of perception in the *Sphoṭasiddhi* and *Brahmasiddhi* are...
constrained by the same metaphysical assumptions.

- Nilanjan Das, University College London

Śrīharṣa on Tarka and Theory Choice

In Sanskrit epistemology, tarka—sometimes, called suppositional reasoning—occupies a special place. A cursory reading of early Nyāya thinkers suggests that, in Nyāya, tarka is a method of theory choice. When a subject is uncertain about two or more theories, a tarka is the kind of reasoning that resolves the uncertainty by revealing—using the knowledge available to the subject—which of these theories is true. Since it merely makes explicit what follows from the knowledge already in possession of the subject, it isn’t an independent source of knowledge (pramāṇa) but enables a source of knowledge to function freely. Here, I examine an influential critique of this theory about theory choice in Sanskrit epistemology. In Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakhādya, the 12th century philosopher Śrīharṣa devotes a lengthy section to tarka. I show how Śrīharṣa’s treatment of tarka sheds light on the approaches that he and his Nyāya interlocutors took to philosophical theorizing.

- Vishal Sharma, University of Oxford

'As if Embodied': Reading the Sanskrit Epics in the Age of Vedanta

This paper looks at how commentators on the Sanskrit epic Ramayana and Mahabharata articulated theologies of divine embodiment from Advaita Vedanta through their readings of these two texts. Specifically, how are Rama and Kṛṣṇa embodied, if at all, and how can Advaita notions of the divine body be reconciled with the narrative of both epics? Reference will be made to 17th and 18th century commentators, Tryambaka Makhin on the Ramayana, and Nilakantha Caturdhara on the Mahabharata, as well as earlier works of Advaita Vedanta with which they engage. These exegetes, commenting on different points of each narrative, seek out concepts of embodiment to understand how Rama can be ignorant of his divine nature and how Kṛṣṇa’s body can be cremated.

A19-314
Hinduism Unit and North American Hinduism Unit
Theme: Feminist Critical Hindu Studies
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Harshita Kamath, Emory University, Presiding

In their recent article, “Feminist Critical Hindu Studies in formation,” the Feminist Critical Hindu Studies (FCHS) Collective interrogates the structures of knowledge and power in the construction of the field of Hindu studies. FCHS envisions the intersections of white supremacy, caste supremacy, and brahminical patriarchy as foundational to the shaping of the field. Drawing on the work of the FCHS Collective, this roundtable examines the contours of Feminist Critical Hindu Studies, a field that critically examines the categories of “Hinduism” and “Hindu” by engaging the work of queer, critical race, and feminist theories. The participants of this
roundtable are scholars of queer, critical race, and feminist theories, and research Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities in South Asia and the diaspora. The roundtable participants will examine, engage, and even interrogate Feminist Critical Hindu Studies and the work of the FCHS Collective.

Panelists
Sonja Thomas, Colby College
Rupa Pillai, University of Pennsylvania
Prea Persaud, University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Nishant Upadhyay, University of Colorado

Responding
Sailaja Krishnamurti, Queen’s University, Kingston
Shreena Gandhi, Michigan State University
Harshita Kamath, Emory University
Shana Sippy, Centre College

A19-315
Human Enhancement and Transhumanism Unit
Theme: Technological (R)evolutions: Historical and Non-Western Approaches to Human Enhancement
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Stephen Garner, Laidlaw College, Presiding

This session will explore the varied technological imaginations and lifeworlds coming from historic and contemporary spiritual movements across the world. From medieval Islamic reflection to the spiritualist movements of 19th century America, the presenters will reflect on innovations such as radical life extension and mental enhancement.

- Jeremy F. Cohen, McMaster University

The Fountain of Perpetual Youth is Within: The Metaphysical Origins of Contemporary Immortality Narratives

The history of transhumanism and adjacent techno-cultures is typically situated in the computer sciences and the realm of science-fiction. I trace contemporary techno-cultural imaginaries, narratives and emergent practices to 19th and early 20th century Christian metaphysical traditions in North America and Europe. I argue that the goal of engineered transcendence through human reason that defines transhumanism belongs to much older traditions than is recognized by scholars. Scientific and technological progress, alongside the growth of social and health reform movements, fuelled a nascent physical immortality culture. This genealogy of immortality focuses on the emerging understanding of the mind as an information-processing machine, arguments for the moral necessity of human progress, and the effects of new materialist foci. Through an ethnographic and primary
source comparison, I trace various continuities from metaphysical traditions, through to my research communities and the Silicon Valley start-ups focused on vitality and aging.

- Faezeh Izadi, University of Calgary

*Wish To Live Forever: Radical Life Extension through the Lens of the Qur'an and the Shia Tradition*

Addressing the issue of Radical Life Extension (RLE) through the lens of Shia Islam, this paper shows an example of the modern challenges related to technological advances, the Shia intra-religious approach to respond to it, and the multivocality of Shia Ulama to the issue. To this end, after briefly introducing Shia concepts of human, life, and death, I examine the possibility of longevity in Shia rational discourse as well as the legitimacy of using technology to this end. Then, I touch on the belief of Mahdism (the Shias believe that the last Imam, Mahdi, lives in “occultation” and will reappear as the promised savior) and its relation to the topic. Finally, I outline the views of four contemporary Shia Mujtahids whom I contacted by email regarding the issue. Interestingly, contrary to the prevailing stereotype, the traditional group, arguing on intra-religious roots, takes a more open approach to the issue.

- Joseph Vignone, Harvard University

*“A Clear and Obvious Augmentation”: Ziyāda as Medical Enhancement in Medieval Islamic Scholarly Ethics*

Expected to commit numerous texts to memory throughout their education, the medieval Islamic intellectual elite (ulema) viewed accurate recollection as an essential skill. Pressure to perfect this skill mounted in the eleventh century as ulema vied with one another for academic promotion. Hoping to gain a competitive edge, junior ulema consumed drugs to improve their retention of knowledge. In this paper, I propose a theoretical framework for investigating this practice as a form of enhancement medicine. This framework proceeds from the ulema’s use of the term ziyāda when discussing this matter in treatises of scholarly ethics, a word connoting the augmentation of underlying physiological abilities. I will show how the ulema’s use of this term arose from an often controversial understanding of the physical functions underlying memory, noting how this understanding came to bear on their beliefs about scholarly aptitude and the propriety of manipulating one’s body to achieve it.

P19-339
**Karl Barth Society of North America**
Theme: **God and Non-Human Creatures**
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Keith Johnson, Wheaton College, Illinois, Presiding

The Karl Barth Society of North America will host a session featuring papers on the relationship
between God and non-human creatures.

- David Clough, University of Aberdeen

*Peace between Creatures: The Barthian Case for Christian Veganism*

Karl Barth objected to Christian vegetarianism on the basis that it represents a wanton anticipation of the new creation and that it is inconsistent, sentimental, and fanatical. These claims make him an unpromising ally for a Christian argument for veganism. But his theology of animals is remarkable in its insistence that to kill an animal is different from killing plants because it is annihilation and a threat to the peace of creation. He states that humans can kill animals only on God’s authority. They ‘obviously cannot do this except under the pressure of necessity’ (CD III/4). Barth judged that humans were under this pressure of necessity, but most humans today can obtain a nutritionally adequate diet without the need to kill animals for food. This paper argues that in this context, Barth’s account of the ethics of the doctrine of creation becomes a compelling argument for Christian veganism.

- Hannah Scanlon, University of Toronto

*The non-human Creature as teacher in CD III/1*

This paper argues that non-human Creatures serve the role of teacher for human creatures in Barth’s CD III:1. The method is to follow several strands of thought supporting the idea that although Barth’s explicit position on human-Creatures is that they serve a superior function to their non-human animal counterparts, there exists a quieter thread running through this section that supports non-human Creatures as teachers and models who show human-Creatures how to be Creatures. I support this idea by examining the following threads: Barth’s view of Creation history as salvation history, Barth’s expansive category of “Creature” which encompasses all God has made, and the specific ways that non-human Creatures model what it means to exercise the dignity of being made as Creature. My hope is to illuminate an underexplored thread in Barthian analysis, subverting the dominant notion that the human Creature is unilaterally privileged above the rest of Creatures.

- Morgan Bell, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

*The Lying Objectivity of the Lordless Powers: Ecological Economics and Barth's Account of Chthonic Forces*

Karl Barth’s account of the chthonic forces in *The Christian Life* offers incisive critical resources for theological inquiry into economics and eco-justice. Extending Barth’s treatment of chthonius, this paper argues that the prevailing economic order seeks to usurp God’s lordship – no longer serving humanity, but demanding humanity’s service as it assails God’s good creation. Drawing on Mark Fisher’s account of ‘capitalist realism’ to clarify Barth’s assertion that these forces are “pseudo-objective,” this paper examines
how neoliberalism’s supposed indispensability is an economic and theological mirage. Throughout, it is argued that Barth’s account of the chthonic forces offers theological resources for denouncing environmentally degradative economics as well as animates Christian imagination and action for alternative and ecologically-just economics which witness to the kingdom of God.

A19-316
Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Unit
Theme: Kierkegaard on Preferential Attachments and Love for Strangers and Enemies
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Jennifer Veninga, Saint Edward's University, Presiding

This session explores the relation of ordinary human affiliative dispositions, such as friendship, romance, familial affection, patriotism, partisanship, and other loyalties to particular communities, to the more extraordinary forms of Christian love, such as loving strangers and enemies, in Kierkegaard’s literature. The problem, for Kierkegaard, is that ordinary forms of attachment presuppose a preference for some people over others, while the exhortation to love all neighbors seems to have a universal scope and therefore non-preferential. For generations many interpreters of Kierkegaard have highlighted his frequent dichotomization of the preferential loves and non-preferential neighbor love. However, in more recent decades some have sought to find significant continuities between the two types of love. The current rise of public debate about organic forms of human sociability, including nationalism and ethnic solidarity, and the valorization of romance and family cohesion, suggests that a reconsideration of Kierkegaard’s writings about these matters is extraordinarily timely.

- Lee Barrett, Lancaster Theological Seminary

  *Kierkegaard on Romance, Civil Bonds, and Christian Love*

  Kierkegaard’s writings contain seemingly divergent pictures of the relation of human beings’ natural loving capacities, including romance and civil bonds, to the expansiveness of Christian love. What is the relation of human affiliative dispositions, such as attachment to romantic partners, regional culture, and nation to the more extraordinary forms of Christian love, such as loving strangers and enemies? Kierkegaard sometimes stressed the continuity of natural loves and Christian love and sometimes their discontinuity because in different contexts he was pursuing different edifying purposes. On the one hand, he emphasized the continuity of the two when he was attempting to stimulate the appropriate yearning and earnestness that are preconditions for striving to enact Christian love. On the other hand, elsewhere he stressed the difference of the natural loves and Christian love in order to foster an appreciation for the uniqueness and daunting character of Christian self-giving.

- Natalia Marandiuc, Southern Methodist University

  *Multi-Stream Loves and a Divine Middle Term Queering Human Relations*
I argue in this paper for a Kierkegaardian possibility of envisioning a multi-stream notion of love that resists binary classifications, with a divine middle term indwelling and queering human relations. Neighbor love is not simply one category of love relations in contradistinction from preferential loves, but a love stream that conveys the transformative power of God’s queer love in all complexities of multi-stream loves and attachments that are part of human life.

- Cassandra Swick, Church of the Epiphany, Tempe

Rescuing Special Relationships from The Crowd

This paper will elaborate on the model of the “God filter” posited by John Lippitt in a 2012 paper by contextualizing it within Kierkegaard’s discussion of the crowd in The Point of View. Lippitt argues that, for Kierkegaard, it is necessary that preferential and neighbor love pass through this filter in order to be worthy. This paper will argue that, for Kierkegaard, this “God filter” can redeem relationships which have lost themselves in the crowd, including a “crowd” of preferential love with as few as two people. The crowd acts for Kierkegaard as a barrier to performing Christian love by separating the lover and the one loved from God. Relationships can be redeemed when individual selfhood before God is recovered and love is then passed through the “God filter.” This has implications in a variety of contemporary contexts, including the apparent prevalence of the crowd mentality in digital relationships.

A19-332
New Program Unit
Language, Poiesis, and Buddhist Experiments with the Possible Seminar
Theme: First session of "Rethinking the Conceptual Toolkit"
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Nancy Lin, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Presiding

This seminar is concerned with poiesis, the bringing into being and shaping of worlds and selves, through language and its religious and literary contexts. In this inaugural year of the seminar, we begin by rethinking our conceptual toolkit, focusing especially on how foundational categories such as genre, style, and taste relate to poiesis and how this question is entangled with legacies of power.

In this first session, three short papers will be presented, followed by responses by seminar participants and open discussion.

- Davey Tomlinson, Villanova University
  Nabanan Maitra, University of Texas

Poetic Play as Spiritual Practice

How can a tantric text most effectively transform its audience’s world? Our project
explores a distinctive answer developed by Yoginī Cintā in her *Accomplishment of Reality in Accordance With Manifest Entities* (*Vyaktabhāvānugatā Tattvasiddhiḥ*). Framing the sexual encounter at its center as a play (*nāṭaka*), Yoginī Cintā avails herself of familiar yet beguiling tropes of courtship and love-making taken from love-poetry. As a *campū*, a literary composition that combines sections in verse (*padya*) and highly ornamented poetic prose (*gadya*), the work invokes the singular capacity of poetic speech to create recursively and signify multiply—all in a world that is mind only (*cittamātra*), as Yoginī Cintā argues in one of the work’s more scholastic sections. In terms of diction, form, and genre, the work pushes the boundaries of what is expected of practical tantric texts, demonstrating the transformative possibilities of saturated experience effected through linguistic excess.

- Meghan Hartman, University of Virginia

*How to Realize We are River-Minded*

In this paper, I turn to the 20th century Urdu poet Miraji and his prose poem entitled *The Caves of Ajanta*. I tend to the different ways Miraji describes experiences of temporality by imagining himself into the context of the jataka tales depicted at Ajanta. My argument is twofold: first, I argue that by relying on Buddhist conceptions of temporality, especially through various descriptions of samsara, Miraji harnesses Buddhist technologies of self to break down reliance upon a coherent and continuous individual through his poetry. Secondly, I argue that the poem becomes a way to experience various temporal flows through language, underlining its distinctively poietic nature. The result is that poems become methods of experiencing and experimenting with various forms of life, beyond the human particular.

- Wendi Adamek, University of Calgary

*The Poiesis of Edge Conditions*

A key permaculture principle is that attempting too much control runs a system into stasis, and that the often turbulent “edge” between chaos and control is where we find the most abundant and diverse living systems. I explore permaculture principles and Buddhist modes of practice that deliberately cultivate the edges between chaos and control. Yet as I study the principles involved, I also wonder if this endeavor is really like Heidegger’s *Poiesis*, “bringing-forth” the concealed patterns of energy inherent in systems, or if it is just a more sophisticated version of technological acting or *Gestell*, “challenging forth.” This has led me to think about how to articulate principles for a Buddhist-inflected “co-poiesis,” a dynamics of working with/as complex systems that is carried forth not as if one is an autonomous agent in a system but with/as the messy and mucky agency of relations -- diversity, death, birth, entanglement, uncertainty.

**Responding**

Laurie Louise Patton, Middlebury College
This session is composed of three papers. In the first, the author highlights key episodes to examine whether The Mahabharata can fairly be called a stri-sudra text, as it is stated to be in the Bhagavata Purana. In the second, the author relates The Mahabharata to the experience of contemporary warriors/veterans. It uses the aesthetic frame of the narrative to stimulate discussion of military experiences, including the fraught nexus between military and civilian life. In the third paper, the author examines whether The Mahabharata can provide a model for moral practice in a context of religious and cultural pluralism. As a text that promotes ongoing reflection on one's moral deliberations, how might it address the challenge posed by pluralism to contemporary moral philosophy?

- Sushumna Kannan, San Diego State University

*Reading strategies for the Mahabharata through the methodology of ‘stri-shudra’ness*

This paper shows how the Mahabharata could be read through a methodology of ‘stri-shudras’ness. I suggest that this method and interpretive mode suits the text best and renders it consistent where other readings prove inadequate. According to the Bhagavata Purana, stri-shudras are a category of people for whom the Mahabharata was composed. I take this traditional claim about the Mahabharata’s agenda seriously and turn into a methodological apparatus to read the stories of Shakuntala, Draupadi, Madhavi and a few others from the Mahabharata. I also suggest that the methodology of stri-shudraness demands an additional reading strategy: that of viewing the Mahabharata as a dharmaśāstra. I show that this helps us understand why the text layers dharma through changes to it as per changing times, situations, and places, rather than overthrow the very edifice of dharma.

- Rodney Sebastian, Manhattan College

*Relating Mahābhārata to Veteran Experiences*

This paper is a reflection of a course I taught in Summer 2022 entitled "Dialogues on Veteran experiences and Indian War Epics." It was a veteran friendly course designed with the objective of promoting education, empathy, and understanding about veterans’ experiences. It was meant for students interested in themes of war, military service, and transition to civilian life to understand and empathize with veteran’s experiences. I used the narrative of the Indian epic, the Mahābhārata, as my primary source material to
provide thematic and aesthetic structures to stimulate discussions of military experiences. During the course, students traversed from 1) topics from the Mahābhārata 2) veterans’ stories, and 3) art pieces representing both Mahābhārata and veteran experiences. In my paper, I present the course design, students' responses to episodes and characters of the Mahābhārata, and they used them as tools to present their own stories.

- Brian Black, Lancaster University

*After Dharma: Dialogue and Pluralism in the Mahābhārata*

In this paper I will argue that the dharma-based ethics of the Mahābhārata offers innovative ways of confronting and navigating the philosophical challenges of pluralism. Rather than attempting to prescribe a neutral or objective way of evaluating competing moral claims, the Mahābhārata – I will argue – promotes ongoing reflection on one’s own moral deliberations. As such, it addresses the challenges of pluralism by modelling introspective and social practices for confronting and negotiating a plurality of philosophical views. In order to make this argument, I will focus my attention on three particular dialogues about dharma. I will argue that these dialogues, which are representative of countless similar episodes throughout the text, not only genuinely confront plurality, but also gesture towards a pluralistic ethics based on a dialogical understanding of dharma.

**A19-317**  
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe  
**Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit**  
Theme: **Sin, Grace, and Climate Catastrophe**  
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)  
Jacob Erickson, Trinity College, Dublin, Presiding

This roundtable session of the Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit takes as its inspiration this year’s Presidential Theme on “Religion and Catastrophe.” Contemporary theologies influenced by diverse global Lutheran traditions find themselves challenged by a litany of intersecting climate catastrophes–extractivism, gender injustice, environmental racism, settler colonialism, species extinction, and other entangled violences. What value is theology in the wake of climate change? How is theological imagination culpable in environmental devastation? How might theology re-imagine itself in the wake of catastrophe, motivate or be transformed by climate action, or harness resilience and resistance for an uncertain future? Is theology too curved in on itself to matter? Participants in this roundtable will engage a number of theological emphases (e.g., the cross, sin, grace, justification) to ask what those themes might contribute to ongoing responses to and framings of climate catastrophe.

**Panelists**  
Hilda Koster, University of Toronto  
Stephen G. Ray, Chicago Theological Seminary  
Mary Philip, Wilfrid Laurier University  
Jan-Olav Henriksen, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society
Men, Masculinities, and Religions Unit
Theme: Divine and Human Selves: Masculine Renunciation, Attachment, and Transformation
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Kimberly Diaz, University of California, Riverside, Presiding

These papers take up questions about masculine bodies and relationships with an eye to religious texts. They take us through a wild landscape of bodies and affect: ideal and deviant, moral and objectionable, and happiness and bad feelings. Affect, intimacy, abuse, asceticism, dysphoria, and materiality shape some of the theoretical concerns. The papers variously analyze the ideal of moral perfection in the Buddha’s body, trans “gender becoming” that refuses happiness as a necessary outcome, and a divine penchant for sadistic erotic relationships. Together these papers explore the messy terrain of desire—desire renounced, divine desire for domination, and desire for “like-able” joy.

Barbara Thiede, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

*Can’t Help Falling in Love With You: Yhwh and David’s Queer, Passionate, Abusive Love Affair*

Biblical hegemonic masculinity in the Books of Samuel reveals that a man’s closest bonds are with other men. The Israelite deity, Yhwh, models homoerotic, abusive, gender-bending intimacy. A complex emotional tapestry among divine and human men forms the backdrop for Yhwh’s turbulent and emotionally fraught affair with David, his beloved. Yhwh dominates and abuses the beautiful men he desires. He chooses Saul, then rejects his reluctant lover. David becomes his favorite and engages in erotic and public displays of devotion. Their relationship is co-dependent, and queer. Heights of emotional and sexual intimacy give way to bouts of depression. David must attempt to appease his divine lover and demonstrate that his love affair with Yhwh is the only love that matters. In so doing, David sacrifices his human relationships—even if that means surrendering his own wives and children to rape, violence, and even death.

Ray Buckner, Northwestern University

*#TransJoy and the Limits of a Teleology of Transition: Imagining Gender Transition Anew*

In this paper, I put forward a transgender Buddhist model of gender transition that I call "gender becoming." Through the method of critical auto-ethnography and a rich engagement with online representations of trans-masculine gender transition within the United States, I argue that gender transition should not be viewed as teleological but rather as a process of becoming. Here, time and transition are felt within an always impermanent present moment. By turning toward Buddhist philosophy, affect theory, and transgender studies, I will re-orient our collective understandings of gender transition for
transgender men, including expectations of embodiment, affect, and bodily transformation. Against a teleology of transition, “gender becoming” dwells in the emptiness of time, where time is always already changing, and our trans bodies reside in these forever times of transition.

- Dessislava Vendova, Graduate Theological Union

**Unequaled Manliness: Bodily Representations of the Bodhisattva Siddhārtha as a Renunciant in Early Buddhist Texts and Art**

Buddhist texts describe the Buddha as “the ultimate man” and extoll his extraordinary, manly body. The idea that people were transformed merely by gazing upon the Buddha’s body has shaped the creation and worship of Bodhisattva/Buddha images. Just as textual narratives emphasize the transformative effects of looking at the Buddha’s body, so too do images of the Bodhisattva/Buddha aim to reproduce his physical presence in his absence. This paper draws on early textual and visual sources from South and East Asia focusing on the earliest anthropomorphic representations of Siddhārtha Gautama which I suggest represent him as a renunciant prior to his enlightenment and becoming the Buddha. Images of the Renunciant Gautama encompass two different iconographical types that express multiple and contradictory attitudes toward the masculine body as conveyed in the Buddha’s biography.

**A19-319**

**Moral Injury and Recovery in Religion, Society, and Culture Unit**

*Theme: Moral Injury, Political Resistance, and Collective Trauma*

*Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)*

Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon, Guilford College, Presiding

- Yoshua Harahap, Chicago Theological Seminary

**Moral Injury and Political Grief: Case from Indonesia's Political Genocide**

The political Genocide in Indonesia has lost one crucial thing: the moment of grief and lament. After the 1965-1966 killings of members of the Indonesia Communist Party (PKI), as a country (and as the Church embedded within it), Indonesia made a rush-leap to justify the killings by positing the devil-slash-atheist-slash-communist idea. This absence is embodied in a public monument, legal documents, and a propaganda film about a "failed coup" by the September 30 Movement. Two prison bars kept Indonesia from free: the 1965-1966 victorious public monument and the constitution concerning restriction of communism. Reflecting on the Indonesian case as the primary locus, this paper tries to deploy an interdisciplinary dimension by infusing grief and vulnerability into the political discourse based on reading the history through moral injury as the optical guidance. A theological constructive called political grief will be my offer to fill the void.
Alina Jabbari, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani

Trauma & Resilience: Kurdish Islamic identities between oppression and resistance

Kurdish populations, both in the Kurdish regions and the diaspora, find themselves within a complex relationship with Islam as a religion. Historically their oppression was justified in the name of Islam, which was merged with violent nationalisms of the recently formed nation-states. Examples are Hussein’s Al-Anfal campaign of the 80s, the Dersim massacre of the 1930s in Turkey, or the more recent Operation Olivebranch by Erdogan. At the same time, Islam remains the majority religion amongst most Kurdish communities. Taking such collective traumatic events as a departure point, this paper explores the intersection between Kurdish national and religious identity in Iraqi-Kurdistan, and investigates the role of collective trauma, resilience and personal agency in navigating religious identity and religious experience. How does this history and ongoing reality of violence, as well as oppression, play a role in today’s lived experience and practice of Islam among the Iraqi-Kurdish population?

Business Meeting

Michael Yandell, Emory University, Presiding

A19-334
New Directions in the Study of Religion, Monsters, and the Monstrous Seminar
Theme: Tibetan and Japanese Monsters in Discursive Placemaking
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Alison Melnick Dyer, Bates College, Presiding

What role do monsters play in cosmology? This panel features three studies—of the Ino Mononoke Roku monster scrolls, sky dancers in auto/biographies of the Tibetan lama Adzom Drukpa, and stories of Tibetan mtsho glang—to interrogate the function of monsters and the monstrous in discursive placemaking. Together, the papers reveal how the monstrous intersects with the creation of meaningful reality, including the formation of identities across political, religious, and social spheres.

- Drew Richardson, University of California, Santa Cruz

Raising the National Spirits(s): The Ino Mononoke Roku, Place-Making, and Monsters in Miyoshi, Japan

This paper discusses the importance of the Ino Mononoke Roku monster scrolls in formulations of regional and national identity in Japan. It focuses on two key moments: (1) the adoption and re-publication of the text by Hirata Atsutane in 1821 as evidence for religious kokugaku -- Japan’s purported separation from and spiritual superiority over China; and (2) the use of the Ino Mononoke Roku in local development from the early 1990s following the collapse of the Japanese bubble economy, where the regional identity of Miyoshi as monster-town marks it as a unique site for domestic tourism. By
comparing Hirata kokugaku and contemporary monster culture through interviews with local curators, priests, and manga artists, this paper demonstrates how a single record of haunting can assemble and deconstruct local and national identities.

- Learned Foote, Rice University

*Sky Dancers and Delusions: Tibetan Gods and Monsters*

My proposal examines the auto/biographies of the Tibetan lama Adzom Drukpa (1842-1924) by paying particular attention to the texts' treatment of *sky dancers*—Tibetan mkha' 'gro ma, Sanskrit ḍākinī. The distance between contemporary scholars and the people who composed the text invites an opportunity for methodological reflection I apply Rachel H. Pang's method for reading Tibetan auto/biography to ask questions in particular about English terms like *monster, deity, god, demon*, and *spirit*. I argue encounters with sky dancers and questions about whether they may be demonic, delusive, or awakened are vital social, political, and religious concerns in Adzom Drukpa's own contexts. Foregrounding these debates and interpretive difficulties in Tibetan contexts provides a way to meaningfully address the texts' understanding of the terms while also engaging controversies and questions about how *gods, spirits, and monsters* have been constructed in contemporary discourses.

- Eric D. Mortensen, Guilford College

*The Lake Bull Monster: Dechen Tibetan Folktales about mtsho glang and the Issue of Skepticism*

Tales are told of *mtsho glang* (“lake bulls”) that live by Gunya, down by the Mekong River, near the Tibetan town of Dechen. Rather than a cryptid in search of a naturalist’s identification, the *mtsho glang* glows with mysterious charisma in a set of folkloric story performances specific to the local landscape. How, why, and when do tradition-bearers tell these tales, and what monstrous information do the stories convey? In the stories, the dangerous *mtsho glang* has lights on its body and a single magical horn. Based on stories collected on several fieldwork trips in 2017 and 2019, in this paper I assess the cultural significance of this river monster to the Tibetan communities of Dechen and interrogate the scholarly problem of skepticism about the “reality” of monsters. Why, in so-called “Monster Theory,” are religious truth claims of storytellers so regularly devalued?

**Responding**

Amelia Hall, Naropa University

A19-320
Philosophy of Religion Unit
Theme: *Modes of Selfhood in Islam: A Panel on Muhammad Faruque's Sculpting the Self: Islam, Selfhood, and Human Flourishing*
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
This panel examines Muhammad Faruque’s recent book entitled Sculpting the Self Islam, Selfhood, and Human Flourishing (2021). Faruque offers a new theory of the self through engaging with numerous non-western thinkers such as Avicenna (d. 1037), Suhrawardî (d. 1192), and Mullâ Ṣadrā (d. 1640), to western thinkers such as Augustine (d. 430) and Nietzsche (d. 1900). Faruque’s work is timely and original in its approach and its philosophical contributions. Faruque’s approach aims to bring western and non-western thinkers into conversations. Scholars of western thought and history barely specialize in non-western traditions and they do not often engage with Muslim thinkers. Scholars of Islam also do not often bring western and Islamic thinkers into conversations. Faruque's technique goes beyond these divisions and puts thinkers of different traditions in constructive conversations throughout his work to provide a multidimensional theory of self.

- Mohammad Amin Mansouri, University of Toronto

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Responding

Oludamini Ogunnaike, University of Virginia
Shankar Nair, University of Virginia
Nora Jacobsen Ben Hammed, Bard College
Muhammad Faruque, University of Cincinnati

A19-321
Political Theology Unit
Theme: Political Theologies of Unruly Subjectivity
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Michelle Sanchez, Harvard University, Presiding

This panel focuses on modes of subjectivity that do not fit or behave according to the common
norms and assumptions of political theology. Two papers examine the relationship between subjectivity and the body: the fat body as refusing historical erasure and revealing existing power dynamics, and the implicit distributive value perceived in different kinds of bodies for the purpose of ventilator allocation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two other papers examine the excessive subjectivity of the secular, liberal self: interrogating the "needs" and "desires" of Blumenberg’s secular rationality and, with Adorno, the modes of social connection underwriting conspiratorial thinking. What must political theologies learn from bodies that do not behave—about power, about social life, and about the origin of value?

- **Lisa Gasson-Gardner, University of Tennessee**

  **Getting Fat: Power and Possibility in a Fat Political Theology**

  Bodies are squeezed through an ideal form and pressed into an ever-changing image of perfection. Now, contemporary diet culture inherits colonial, misogynist, and racist fat-phobia. We begin with a reading of literature on the role of Christianities and wellness culture in upholding bodily control that fixes white, male, heterosexual, cisgendered, able-bodied individuals as the ideal, made in the image of God. Fat justice requires more than an analysis of the structures that uphold fatphobia--fat justice labors to have fat people heard and believed rather than merely tolerated. Moving from critical analysis to constructive theological encounters with those taking fatness and flesh as crucial for holiness, we seek to see fat bodies, to listen to fat people, to recover fat in historical archives, and then to explore the theological mattering of such flesh. We explore a fat subjectivity that spills out, interrogating existing power dynamics, and offering alternate worlds.

- **John-Harmen Valk, Leiden University**

  **Political Theology and Desire: Revisiting Blumenberg’s Reoccupation Thesis**

  Political theological explorations often unfold at the level of the history of ideas. This singular focus on ideas is problematic to the extent that it reinforces a reductive notion of the political theological problematic as pertaining to the level of belief. Attention to the level of desire can open up new avenues for political theological investigation. In that regard, this paper explores Hans Blumenberg’s notion of “residual needs” which he incorporates into his revised “re-occupation” thesis about the emergence of modernity. It argues that while Blumenberg’s notion of residual needs has important merits in drawing attention to the level of desire rather than focusing merely on the cognitive level, this notion embroils his account in more problems than he acknowledges. Recognition of the place of a residually needful desire suggests an uptake of the theological even within the version of modernity the legitimacy of which Blumenberg seeks to defend.

- **Christopher C. Brittain, Trinity College, Toronto**

  **Conspiracy Theory and the Stigmata of the Social Order: Towards a Practical response**
by Political Theology

Several scholars suggest that the rise of contemporary right-wing populist movements do not fit “received categories of political analysis.” While political theology provides resources for describing the Us/Them contestations of such movements, it struggles to explain the root motivations of those involved. This paper draws from the work of Adorno, and sociological and psychological studies of conspiracy theory movements like QAnon and Anti-vax activism, to better equip political theology to develop practical strategies that respond to these challenges. Focusing on the “Freedom Convoy” in particular, the analysis demonstrates that when conspiracy theory is understood to emerge out of a generalized account of the self as fully sovereign to itself, which is frustrated by social conditions among certain demographics and contexts, then strategies that interrupt the individualistic concept of the sovereign self should be considered. This suggests that successful interventions will involve an alternative political spirituality of the self.

• Cassie Houtz, Harvard University

The Place of Perception in Political Theology: Social Value and Allocation

This paper aims to think the political – and then the political-theological – outside of Carl Schmitt’s thematics of sovereignty, law, and the “state of exception.” Focusing on debates about how to allocate scarce ventilators during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the paper argues that the “biopolitics” of healthcare relies upon socially mediated assumptions about what constitutes a “good” or “worthwhile” life. The “political” distribution of life and death is dependent upon unexamined judgments concerning the relative value of human lives. In turn, these evaluations are inseparable from processes of perception and emotion that are often excluded from theorizations of the “political.” Drawing on scholarship in critical disability studies, I foreground a conception of the “political” that centers the political importance of how we perceive and how we feel, and then consider what questions might be relevant for political theology given this notion of the political.

Business Meeting

David Newheiser, Australian Catholic University, Presiding

A19-322
Pragmatism and Empiricism in American Religious Thought Unit
Theme: Directions in Pragmatism and Political Thought
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Karen-Louise Rucks-Walker, Quinsigamond Community College, Presiding

Our mission is to foster the advancement and understanding of the pragmatic and empiricist traditions in American religious thought, as well as the intersections of those traditions with other methodologies, intellectual figures, artistic movements, communities, and issues. This Unit is concerned with critically interrogating, evaluating, and developing the insights and relevance
of the pragmatic and empiricist traditions of American thought, broadly construed, for the study
of religion and theology, with attention both to the historical interpretation of ideas and
contemporary developments within this critical sphere of philosophical and theological
reflection. Recent areas of interest include pragmatism and democracy, the continued relevance
of empiricism to the revival of pragmatism, multidisciplinary aspects of the tradition
(intersections with other fields of inquiry), overlaps with cultural criticism and analyses of
gender and race, and the application of pragmatic and empiricist analyses to contemporary
problems.

- Nathan Garcia, Oblate School of Theology

*Christian Sentiments of Time: A Pragmatic Reimagining of Theological Time*

The logical pragmatism of Charles S. Peirce provides a dynamic reimagining of
theological time, not as an *a priori* reality but as *a posteriori* sentiments of faith. Peirce’s
metaphysical categories (*Firstness*, *Secondness*, *Thirdness*) work interconnectedly in a
continual process of growth. These categories, I argue, correspond to theological
dimensions of time in the Christian tradition and can unfold in Christian sentimentality.

*Firstness* corresponds to Creation time, a sentiment of time rooted in limitless creativity
and possibilities. *Secondness* corresponds to Incarnational time, a sentiment of time that
is momentous and spiritually fulfilling. *Thirdness* corresponds to prophetic time, a
sentiment of time directing our anticipation toward a clear future. As per Peirce’s
schema, *Thirdness* never concludes but rather impacts and mediates firstness, renewing
the process. Hence, prophetic time is conceived less as apocalyptic divinations and more
how Christian prophecy of God’s Kingdom impact and renew our given Christian
creativity and openness.

- Dwight Welch, Montana State University, Billings

*Eternal Life, A Reappraisal for Liberal Protestant Communities*

Eternal Life, A Reappraisal for Liberal Protestant Communities argues that William
Ernest Hocking and Charles Hartshorne provide a basis for relating to the idea of eternal
life in a way that keeps faith with the idea of eternity in the Christian tradition and yet is
empirically grounded in human experience. It removes the division between this life and
another one by showing how both this life and eternal life provides content and meaning
to each other.

- Amanda Brown, Lehigh University

*Howard Thurman's Fellowship Church and the Tradition of American Pragmatism*

This paper locates the mid-century African American intellectual theologian, Howard
Thurman, and the physical embodiment of his thought, the Fellowship Church –
America’s first interracial, intercultural, and interfaith church -- within the modern
pragmatist tradition. Thurman inherited pragmatism from William James by way of W.E.B. Du Bois and Rufus Jones. Through close readings of James, Du Bois, Jones, and Thurman, the paper argues that Thurman’s pragmatist heritage both establishes him as a distinctly modern American thinker and sets the Fellowship Church as a distinctly modern American institution.

- Mary Friedline, Austin College

*Incrementalism and the climate crisis: an assessment of pragmatist social and political thought*

Pragmatist philosophy often advances an incrementalist theory of social and political change. It posits that progress is more like to happen by piecemeal advances and small reforms that accumulate over time, rather than through a revolutionary overthrow of existing systems. However, this approach feels inadequate for addressing the climate crisis. There is an urgent need for decisive action that may not be achievable through incremental reforms. In this paper will explore this possible shortcoming of pragmatist thought while also assessing the insights and resources pragmatist political thought can offer for our moment of climate crisis.

**A19-337**

**Reading Religion**

Theme: *Reading Religion Editorial Board Annual Meeting*

Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)

Kimberly Davis, American Academy of Religion, Presiding

The annual meeting of the Reading Religion Editorial Board.

**Panelists**

Evan Sandsmark, University of Virginia

**A19-323**

**Religion and Food Unit**

Theme: *Current Research in Religion and Food*

Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)

Sarah Robinson, Pacific Lutheran University, Presiding

- Leah Sarat, Arizona State University

*Where the Institution Becomes Flesh: Food Practices, Healing, and Resistance in Arizona's For-Profit Immigrant Detention Regime*

When asked about the challenges encountered within a private, for-profit immigrant detention center in Arizona, newly released individuals speak of food. Meals mark the point where the institution becomes flesh, where the cost-cutting measures enacted by the
facility’s managing company, CoreCivic, transform the cells of those detained. As such, food serves as a powerful entry point for examining how those in detention experience both experience their commoditization within the for-profit detention industry, and how they resist it. Whereas CoreCivic's national leadership promotes a chaplaincy model focused on individualized, other-worldly salvation, ritualized food practices among those detained--including fasting, hunger strikes, and impromptu feasts-- reveal a relational ethic centered on collective healing and survival. By contrasting food-related ritual practices generated by and for detainees with the official chaplaincy model, we gain a window onto broader questions about personhood and relationality as they unfold within the U.S. immigration and carceral landscape.

- Juan E. Campo, University of California, Santa Barbara

*Teaching about Religion and the Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*

This paper is focuses on how religion and culinary culture are approached in an undergraduate course on religion and the culinary cultures of the Middle East. It shows how this course is organized, assesses key primary and secondary sources, and reflects on the different ways the topics can be approached. Particular attention is given to comparative approaches to understanding the ways food is incorporated into religious life of Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities and how cuisine has been used to both shape and express their religious, cultural, and personal identities. In addition to comparison, the paper also highlights the importance of considering the contexts within which these culinary cultures are situated through the use of the concept of “foodscape,” related aspects: alimentary diversity and sustainability, memory, resilience in the face of migrations, urbanization, globalization, and food security.

- Rosa Huotari, University of Helsinki

*Doing theology through commensality: Critical encounters in urban food assistance, Finland*

This paper investigates the space and place of doing theology in charitable, communal food assistance in urban Finland through ethnographic data collected in 2020–2021. The existence of food assistance provided by Christian communities, churches, and FBOs in an institutionally secularized welfare state is itself problematic, albeit, in recent years, food assistance has been framed to combat not just poverty but social exclusion, unemployment, and wastage too. Further, food assistance is advertised to respect everyone’s freedom of religion despite its Christian background. By analyzing the place and space of doing theology within communal food assistance, the results of this paper address that theology is done in everyday encounters that are interpreted and acted out differently from the perspectives of the employees, volunteers, and recipients. The question of (doing) theology culminates in the debate of what counts as religion in urban food assistance.
How have new technological developments spelled the end of humanity as we have experienced it? The papers in this panel consider the ways that technological developments (robots in the 1920s and YouTube algorithms now) have changed the ways that people have experienced their humanity in light of massive new technological upheavals that demonstrate the ongoing challenges and creativity new technologies inspire in religious life.

- Bryan Ellrod, Emory University

"The Soul of Soulless Conditions:" Utopian Aspirations & the Dangers of Messianism in Rossum’s Universal Robots

Now commonplace in science fiction, the term “robot,” and the trope of “robot takeovers,” were first introduced in Karel Čapek’s 1920 play, “Rossum’s Universal Robots” (R.U.R.). Considered by its first critics to be a reflection of popular anxieties about modern industrial life, scholars have largely overlooked its overt religious references to the creation’s revolt against the creator, the confusion of languages at Babel, and failed messianic figures. Drawing on Marx’s remarks on religion, I propose a conception of theological discourse as at once alien and vital to material history. With this conception in mind, I interpret R.U.R.’s epilogue as a simultaneous warning against technological messianism and an expression of hope for a redemption that outstrips our own imaginings. Thus, in Čapek’s play, I contend, we are reminded of theology’s value as a critical discourse for interrogating seeming messianic figures and the shadows of dystopia in our utopian aspirations.

- Kaitlyn Ugoretz, University of California, Santa Barbara

“Blessed by the YouTube Gods”: Theorizing the Deification of the YouTube algorithm and Sacred Economy of Attention

“Follow the Ten YouTube Commandments and the YouTube gods will bless you. Violate them, and you will not have great success... Our goal here is to not get cast out of the YouTube kingdom.” This Christianity-inflected pronouncement delivered by Sean Cannell of Think Media is just one striking example of the religious imaginaries growing
around artificial intelligence and algorithms (Bucher 2017; Harari 2017; Reed 2018; Singler 2020). Based upon two years of autoethnographic research in the YouTube content creator community, this paper explores the implications of theistic conceptions of the YouTube algorithm promoted by YouTube employees, professional YouTube strategists, and enterprising YouTubers. I argue that the discursive deification of the ‘YouTube gods’ in turn implicitly, and yet recently more explicitly, sacralizes influence and attention as a form of spiritual capital. Finally, I suggest the rise of what I call the “YouTube prosperity gospel,” which promises freedom, fulfilment, and financial success for contributing content to the social media platform’s “kingdom.”

Responding

Gabriel Levy, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Business Meeting

Elijah Siegler, College of Charleston, Presiding
David Feltmate, Auburn University, Montgomery, Presiding

A19-335
Religions, Borders, and Immigration Seminar
Theme: Racialized Borders and Forced Migration: Histories and Contemporary Challenges
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Kristine Suna-Koro, Xavier University, Presiding

This session will explore the histories and present challenges of forced migration and the impact of racialized borders as we look for avenues toward reconciliation and healing from religious/spiritual perspectives.

• Silas Allard, Emory University

A Constellation of Foundings: Chae Chan Ping, Chinese Exclusion, and the Making of America

This paper engages in a genealogy of national founding to pluralize and interrogate the founding moments of the United States. In the paper, I examine the case of Chae Chan Ping v. United States, in which the Supreme Court established the sovereign power to exclude non-citizens, as a founding moment that constructs the nation-state as a confluence of people and territory. Placing Chae Chan Ping in its context of the late-nineteenth century, the end of Reconstruction, and the triumph of manifest destiny reveals how this founding is religiously and racially inflected. Chae Chan Ping—not solely but significantly—constructs a white Christian nation through the sovereign power of exclusion, a power that remains central to the exercise of immigration law today. The genealogical interrogation reveals, however, the contingency of this founding moment and the possibility of its otherwise.
• Ernesto Fiocchetto, Florida International University

Christanity and Forced Migration in Latin America: Ambivalent Roles and Challenges

This paper explores the multidimensional intersection between Christianity and forced migration in Latin America by answering the following questions. What is the role of Christianity in the crises that provoke the displacement of the Latin American population? What is the role of Christianity in the process of reception and integration of Latin Americans forcibly displaced in the host societies? The paper draws from qualitative analysis of study cases of Central American asylum claimants to argue that Christianity in its multiple forms plays a fundamental, albeit contradictory, role throughout the process of forced migration of Salvadorans, Guatemalans, and Hondurans, in their countries of origin, on the way to the border of Mexico and the United States, and once they have arrived in the host societies. This role is shaped by the history of Christianity in the region and the various Christian discourses on migrants.

• Aimee Hein, Boston College

Racialized Borders: The Development of U.S. Mythology and the Weaponization of U.S. Borders

As a fledgling nation, the United States formed some of its earliest practices of expulsion and exclusion through the forced removal of Indigenous nations from their lands and through controlling the movement of Black people, free or enslaved. In both cases, Anglo-American settlers fought to uphold and protect a particularly racialized understanding of civilization against a dark-skinned other. Emboldened by Manifest Destiny and the myth of the frontier, the United States expanded westward, developing practices and a sense of self rooted both implicitly and explicitly in white supremacy. The U.S. practices and identities formed during this period have shaped U.S. borders in such a way that they function as the front lines in the battle to protect Anglo Civilization. Understanding how and why borders function in these racialized ways is necessary for the promotion of more just and humane immigration policies in the United States.

• Xiaodi Wu, Boston University

Healing is Not Linear, Neither are Migration Stories: Existential Considerations of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Experiences in Psychotherapy

At the heart of migration experiences live multifold tensions of leaving and arriving, of homelands and host countries, of grief and loss as well as strength and resilience, of identities, traditions, belongings as well as growth, potentials, and adventures. The stories of migration are, in essence, stories of constantly negotiating being and becoming. Healing in psychotherapy with refugee and asylum seeker individuals and families involves entering a deeper existential terrain and constructing transformed meaning. In this article, I characterize the existential themes in migration stories through Christian philosophical theologian Paul Tillich’s framework of the polar structure of reality along
with Chinese dialectical thinking in Daoism. Addressing these spiritual, existential, religious, and theological quests in the refugee and asylum seeker community, I employ the Relational Spirituality Model (RSM) to re-vision an empowering therapeutic approach where each refugee and asylum seeker individual’s unique story is centered, their relational dynamics are tended, and diverse cultural contexts are respected.

A19-325
Science, Technology, and Religion Unit
Theme: Science, Human Flourishing, and Human Nature
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Gerald P. McKenny, University of Notre Dame, Presiding

Science as a social activity can diminish human flourishing by embodying socially-entrenched biases and conferring scientific authority on them. This has occurred in multiple contexts since what is now meant by the term ‘science’ gained the status of authoritative knowledge in the nineteenth century. Science can also enhance human flourishing, and it does so in part by identifying biological, social, and psychological factors that (1) bear positively or negatively on human flourishing but (2) are not typically accounted for in the dominant philosophical and theological accounts of human flourishing. John Bowlin (Princeton Theological Seminary), Elizabeth Cochran (Duquesne University), Jennifer Herdt (Yale University), and Patrick T. Smith (Duke University), will discuss, respectively, how recent scientific research diminishes and enhances human flourishing in the areas of moral judgment, the virtues of autistic persons, moral agency, and health in a racialized society.

Panelists
Patrick Smith, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
John R. Bowlin, Princeton Theological Seminary
Jennifer A. Herdt, Yale University
Elizabeth Agnew Cochran, Duquesne University

A19-338
Teaching and Learning Committee
Theme: Committee Meeting
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Jessica Tinklenberg, Claremont Colleges, Presiding

The committee will meet to talk about the sessions, upcoming programming and work for the year.

Panelists
Nichole Phillips, Emory University
Rudy V. Busto, University of California, Santa Barbara
Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, Iliff School of Theology
Christophe D. Ringer, Chicago Theological Seminary
In response to our nation’s changing laws around the right to an abortion and the lack of services and structures for reproductive justice, this session will examine the role of religion/theology in teaching and engaging students in thinking critically about abortion and reproductive justice, including making broader connections to supporting democracy and addressing gender, race, and class oppression.

- Sandra Sullivan-Dunbar, Loyola University, Chicago

*Religion, Reproductive Justice, and Democracy: Making the Connections in a Catholic University Classroom*

This paper will argue that in a Catholic university context, a taboo on engaging the ethical complexities of abortion in the classroom setting functions to constrain discussion and understanding of many interlocking structures of oppression as well as current, dire threats to our democracy. This silence can be broken by inviting students to study the reproductive justice framework in relation to diverse religious approaches to reproductive ethics and social justice. Once the silence is broken, transformative new understandings of reproductive ethics, religion, structures of injustice and racial oppression can emerge. Students also begin to comprehend the connections between threats to reproductive freedom and threats to democracy. These arguments will be made through a case study of a course entitled “Religion and Reproductive Justice” taught at a Catholic university in the Spring of 2021 (to be taught again in Fall of 2022).

- Jeremy Posadas, Austin College

*Teaching about Abortion without Talking about Abortion: A Case-Study*

This paper explicates a pedagogical approach to teaching about abortion that I have applied for the past 10 years teaching in Texas (the state that now has the most severe abortion restrictions in the country). This pedagogical approach combines three different elements: confronting what I tell students is the first moral issue in abortion — who gets to decide the rules about it?; creating a new cognitive space for cisgender men to think about abortion; and finding a way for students holding diverse moral convictions regarding abortion to civilly talk with and authentically hear one another as they converse about it. These elements are woven together in a simulation that is the centerpiece of the unit within the course. After describing how this simulation is structured and plays out in the classroom, I will explain how it implements these elements and relates to broader
issues in feminist pedagogy.

- Terry Hawley Reeder, College of Wooster

Teaching from the Belly of the Beast: Abortion Pedagogy and Patriarchal Christianities

In the American public sphere abortion is debated as an unproductive binary of “life” vs. “choice.” Missing is the consideration of structural patriarchy, particularly patriarchal Christianity. I have taught from the belly of the beast of patriarchal Christianity since abortion has been legal, and I will share numerous pedagogical methods and materials that interrogate the connections between patriarchy, religion, and abortion rights. Patriarchy often has catastrophic results, most recently as Church and State unite to severely curtail abortion rights and criminally prosecute health care providers. Collaborating on anti-racist feminist pedagogy can mitigate this catastrophe.

Responding

Grace Kao, Claremont School of Theology

A19-336
Transnational Religious Expression: Between Asia and North America Seminar
Theme: Transnational Religious Expression: Between Asia and North America - Special Issue Workshop
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Holly Gayley, University of Colorado, Presiding

In 2022, we will be using our final year of our five-year seminar to workshop contributions to journal special issue that will result from the seminar. We already have a number of presenters from the first five years who have indicated their interest in contributing articles to this special issue and we will ask them to circulate drafts of their papers (many of which are revised and expanded versions of the presentations from previous meetings) several weeks before the 2022 annual meeting, to provide attendees time to prepare comments for this workshop. Please contact the seminar chairs, Holly Gayley (gayley@colorado.edu) and Justin Stein (justin.stein@kpu.ca) if you would like to participate in this workshop.

Panelists

Minjung Noh, Drew University
Anandi Silva Knuppel, Lawrence University
Kin Cheung, Moravian University
Jesse Lee, Florida State University
Younghwa Kim, Emory University

Business Meeting

Justin Stein, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, Presiding
This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council. The events of 1962, including world events, the work of preparatory commissions, the orientations laid out in the opening discourse (Gaudet Mater Ecclesia) and other interventions of Pope John XXIII, as well as interventions by other protagonists – bishops, theologians, ecumenical observers – would determine the path of the council as it embarked upon a substantial program of renewal and reform. These papers seek to contribute to a deeper appreciation of these momentous events in historical and theological perspective and reflect on their significance for the interpretation of the council’s teaching in our time. Themes in this session include the contested authority of the council, silence or competing narratives concerning its meaning, ongoing battles for liturgical reform, and their implications for the self-understanding of the church, ecumenical and interreligious relations, questions of faith and diverse cultures, or of mission in a post-colonial context.

- Mary Kate Holman, Benedictine University

*Periti and Pariahs: Ecclesial Structures and Access to Dialogue at Vatican II*

This paper examines the experiences of three French thinkers at Vatican II to understand how ecclesial structures can both facilitate and hinder true dialogue in the church. Comparing the theologies and experiences of Henri de Lubac (Jesuit and official peritus at the council), Marie-Dominique Chenu (Dominican and unofficial theological consultant), and Marie-Thérèse Lacaze (laywoman and assistant to the secretary of the Church of the Poor Working Group) illuminates the institutional dynamics of ecclesial dialogue and consensus-building. All three thinkers encountered tension with the Catholic hierarchy in their eventful lives prior to the council (either ignored, condemned, or both), but were received with vastly different attitudes when they brought their perspectives to the council. This paper particularly attends to the tension between institutional access and the prophetic perspectives of the marginalized, which, although sometimes mutually exclusive, are both necessary for authentic ecclesial dialogue.

- Claire Maligot, École Pratique des Hautes Études

*The editorial successes of a counter-narrative, counter-memory, counter-legacy. "The Plot Against the Church", a challenge to Vatican II (1950s-1980s)*

Investigates the history behind the antisemite libel "the Plot against the Church", dispatched at Vatican II. The libel then had a world-wide editorial career, promoting a counter-narrative, counter-memory and anti-Vatican II legacy.
Vatican II and World War II: Reckoning and Historical Memory

Vatican II was in many respects the Catholic response to World War II, both in terms of the issues it dealt with and the personalities involved. This paper examines this narrative surrounding Vatican II and the dangers of forgetting it as the generations that remember these events pass. Through a detailed discussion of the influences of the war’s legacies particularly on Nostra Aetate and Dignitatis Humanae, it considers the relationship of opposition to these developments at the time and now to historical and contemporary fascisms. It concludes by considering questions of Eurocentrism and memory, arguing that even in a far more global church the connection between the war and the Council remains relevant and ought to be emphasized in no small part due to its value in understanding how Catholic thought applies to contemporary political concerns.

Business Meeting

Dries Bosschaert, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Presiding
Kristin Colberg, College of Saint Benedict, Saint John's University, Presiding

A19-328
Yogācāra Studies Unit
Theme: What is Yogacara?
Saturday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Joy Brennan, Kenyon College, Presiding

Recent years of scholarship on Yogacara have seen a considerable expansion beyond the binary question of whether Yogacara is or is not a form of idealism, into new questions, including: what is the relationship between Yogacara Buddhist ideas and other texts and practices at the inception of early Yogacara?; what is a Yogacara theory of language and how does it relate to other major Yogacara teachings?; what is a Yogacara theory of knowledge and how does it relate to other Buddhist schools’ theories of knowledge? This roundtable brings together six scholars working on varied topics in Yogacara thought to approach the broad question What is Yogacara? from the perspectives of these questions and more.

Panelists

Karen O'Brien-Kop, University of Roehampton
Jonathan Gold, Princeton University
Jingjing Li, Leiden University
Ching Keng, National Chengchi University
Jay Garfield, Smith College
John Dunne, University of Wisconsin

Reviewers
Gereon Kopf, Luther College

**Business Meeting**

Douglas S. Duckworth, Temple University, Presiding

**A19-340**

**Western Esotericism Unit and SBL Mysticism, Esotericism, and Gnosticism in Antiquity Unit**

Theme: **New Approaches and Neglected Topics in Esotericism**

Saturday, 4:00 PM-6:30 PM (In Person)

Christa Shusko, Linnaeus University, Presiding

Commentary-style panel engaging with the volume New Approaches to the Study of Esotericism (eds. Egil Asprem and Julian Strube; Brill, 2020) as well as with neglected topics in the field.

**Panelists**

Dylan Burns, University of Amsterdam
April D. DeConick, Rice University
Rebecca Lesses, Ithaca College
Marla Segol, State University of New York, Buffalo

**Responding**

Egil Asprem, Stockholm University

**A19-400**

Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons

**American Academy of Religion**

Theme: **Friends of the Academy Reception**

Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Mayra Rivera, Harvard University, Presiding

Alice Hunt, American Academy of Religion, Presiding

Individuals who have been members of the AAR for 40 years or more and those whose generosity allows us to continue many of our special programs are invited to a reception hosted by the AAR Board of Directors.

**A19-407**

**Animals and Religion Unit and Comparative Studies in Religion Unit**

Theme: **Poison & Poisoners in Religion**

Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

David Mozina, Boston College, Presiding

This panel seeks to compare the religious valences of poison and poisoners, as variously
manifest, via various methodologies, and across diverse religio-cultural contexts and communities. This panel aims to be a “round two,” following a 2021 panel on the same topic. Our panel presents two studies: Buddhist uses of poison as medicine through employment of the figures of garudā and nāga in ritual practices, and the spiritual significance of rattlesnakes and the monstrous Uktenas in Cherokee worldviews. The panel seeks a dialectic engagement with issues surrounding illness and healing, and the embodiment of spiritual power and medicine. The roles of the poisons and venoms addressed by the panel, in conversation, broaden and interrogate binaries such as medicine/poison, community/body, and agency/victim. This collective panel surrounds a central holistic query: in what ways can poison and poisoners be best understood as comparative categories in the study of religion?

- Ivette Vargas-O'Bryan, Austin College

*The Spectrum of Potency: Poisons as Medicine in Buddhist Traditions*

In this paper, I explore the concept of poisons as medicine in order to better understand Buddhism as a healing tradition in Indian and Tibetan contexts. Using the narratives of the garudā and nāga as a template, this paper explores the spectrum of potency of both poisons and the carrier of poisons to cure or harm practitioners of rituals. In Buddhism, in particular, the administration by toxin-embodied enlightened beings and the appeasement or protection by either Buddhas or so-called demons provide a distinct opportunity to examine skillful means for healing purposes. Poisons as antidotes provide further complexity to the non-dual nature of the figures and their poisons. By exploring Buddhist scriptures in conjunction with Tibetan medical texts and ritual formulas, poisons are as medicine necessary for healing in a physical and spiritual sense. This study will also reveal the complex intersections between Buddhist and other local traditions.

- David Aftandilian, Texas Christian University

*Poison, Snakes and the Sacred in Traditional Cherokee Worldviews*

This paper will explore connections between poison, snakes, and the sacred in Cherokee worldviews. We will focus especially on the spiritual meanings of rattlesnakes and Uktenas. For example, their powers are invoked for hunting, war, the ball game, and courtship. Within the Cherokees’ Three World cosmology, rattlesnakes are seen as leaders of all the snakes, as well as the epitome of an Under World creature. Yet they also have close ties to rain and the Thunders, Upper World powers. Returning to poison, I will argue that from traditional Cherokee perspectives, just as a human’s saliva is seen as the seat of their primary soul, so too is the rattlesnake’s venom the focal point for their spiritual powers. Indeed, their venom, having aspects of both water and fire, may help explain rattlesnakes’ power to cross between the Worlds, serving as a kind of axis mundi upon which they can travel.

**Responding**

Eric D. Mortensen, Guilford College
This panel elucidates how Daoist practices and their corresponding discourses have shaped how artists and viewers have understood the production and the reception of landscape paintings. Literally “paintings of mountains and water” (shanshui hua 山水画), these paintings comprise what is arguably the most well-known genre of Chinese painting. Given the sacred status awarded to the natural world in the Daoist tradition, one might expect the relationship between Daoism and landscape painting to be well understood. Yet, previous scholarship has largely overlooked the role of Daoist thought and practice in the formation and development of the genre. Daoism emphasizes the perception and experience of a shared ontology between human beings and the natural world, a shared ontology that we maintain also lies at the heart of landscape painting. Throughout their interwoven histories, Daoism and landscape painting both engage in practices and discourses aimed toward transcendence of the individual.

- Aaron Reich, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia

*Painting Outside the Lines: Daoism, Spontaneity, and the Formation of the “Untrammeled Class” of Painters in Ninth Century China*

In China’s sixth century, painters and connoisseurs started to compile and circulate texts that classified painters according to a traditional ranking system. This system divided painters into three primary classes (pin 品) and further divided these classes into three grades (deng 等). In the ninth century, a certain art theorist, Zhu Jingxuan 朱景玄, established an entirely new class of painters. He called this the yipin 逸品, conventionally translated as the “untrammeled class,” and he placed into this category three painters from the Tang period (618–907). These artists, he asserted, “did not adhere to the usual methods” and lie “outside the standard” of ordinary painters. By studying the biographies of the first yipin painters, this paper argues that Zhu Jingxuan and his contemporaries recognized these painters as having especial proficiency in Daoist techniques for entering into and producing images from a state of union with the Dao.

- Anna Hennessey, University of California, Berkeley

*Mountains as Humans and Humans as Mountains: Song Period Landscape Paintings and Daoist Alchemical Body Charts*

This paper examines how mountain-body representations emerged in a variety of contexts during the Song period (960–1279 CE), especially in landscape painting and Daoist alchemical diagrams (tu 图) of the human body. Daoists had long understood a relationship of correspondence between the human body and the natural world. In early
Daoist texts, such as the *Taiping jing* 太平經 (*Scripture of Great Peace*), for example, the human body and natural world or cosmos are depicted as corresponding to one another. A reverence for nature is also found in early Chinese literary traditions. By the Song period, the merging of body and nature reached unprecedented expression. This paper argues that forms of representing humans as mountains and mountains as humans during the Song period contributed to an externalization of Daoist ideology and religious experience through the material means of painting.

- Ziyun Liu, University of Wisconsin

*The True Realm of Vision: The Visualization of Inner Alchemy in Yuan Shanshui Painting*

This paper examines the relationship between Daoist inner alchemical visuality and landscape painting by focusing on the Daoist painter Huang Gongwang 黃公望 (1269–1354) and his circle of fellow Daoist literati. This paper argues that Huang’s later paintings can be read as different stages of the inner alchemical transformative process. Huang has transformed his inner alchemical vision into landscape painting and used these paintings as a vehicle to access the truth and reality of the Dao. Consequently, his inner alchemical visual expression set a new paradigm for his protégés and the following generations. By examining the often-overlooked alchemical connotation of landscape paintings, this study will add to our understanding of *zhēn* 真 (True and Real) as it relates to landscape and bodily representation. Inner alchemical landscape images exhibit the true realm through the agency of mountains and waters, creating a unified image of the macrocosm and microcosm.

- Mark Meulenbeld, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

*Ritual Perspectives on (Images of) Landscape*

The term “mountains and water” (*shanshui* 山水), which we usually gloss as “landscape,” is found in many contexts. Though mostly associated with ‘landscape painting,’ it is not reserved uniquely for artistic creations alone. To the contrary, it more often occurs as a designation for the complex web of interrelated natural landmarks, such as mountain ranges, water sources, and other elements of landscape. This paper will present an integrated vision of what “mountains and water” has meant in the late imperial context. Using Ming and Qing dynasty sources, it argues that the term “mountains and water,” and cognate terms such as “mountains and rivers” (*shanchuan* 山川) or the more narrow “Five Peaks and Four Ducts” (*Wuyue Sidu* 五嶽四瀆), need to be understood in tandem with two other repertoires of knowledge: (1) *fengshui* and (2) ritual.

**Responding**

Raoul Birnbaum, University of California, Santa Cruz
Business Meeting

Jessey Choo, Rutgers University, Presiding
Jonathan Pettit, University of Hawai'i, Presiding

A19-409
Books under Discussion
**Buddhist Philosophy Unit and the Religion and Ecology Unit**
Theme: Daniel Capper's Roaming Free Like Deer (Cornell University Press, 2022),
**Roundtable on Buddhist Ecological Ethics**
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Constance Kassor, Lawrence University, Presiding

Daniel Capper’s new book, *Roaming Free Like Deer: Buddhism and the Natural World* (2022) addresses the gap between Buddhist metaphysical ideas and ethical ideals touted as environmentally friendly (e.g., dependent arising, universal compassion), their selective application, and real-world impacts in specific cultural and ecological contexts. The book focuses, in particular, on the topic of relational animism in three practical contexts (vegetarianism, practice of religion by non-human beings, and nature mysticism) across a variety of cultural and historical contexts (India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, China, Japan, Tibet and the West). Panelists will draw on various areas of specialization and disciplinary focus to frame a comparative and constructive conversation about the philosophical and practical implications of these forms of Buddhist relational animism and their potential to contribute to a more robust Buddhist ecological ethics in this critical moment of climate and ecological emergency.

**Panelists**

William Edelglass, Barre Center for Buddhist Studies and Marlboro College
Colin Simonds, Queen's University, Kingston
David Fiordalis, Linfield College
Leah Kalmanson, University of North Texas
Karin Meyers, Mangalam Research Center
Oriane Lavole, Stanford University

**Responding**

Daniel Capper, University of Southern Mississippi

A19-410
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
**Comparative Approaches to Religion and Violence Unit, Religion and Human Rights Unit, Religion, Media, and Culture Unit and Religions, Social Conflict, and Peace Unit**
Theme: Religious Violence Amid Global Confusion, Conspiracy, and Catastrophe
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Chase L. Way, Other, Presiding
Heidi Ippolito, Iliff School of Theology and University of Denver

QAnon, Memes, and Morality: How Pop Culture Fandom and Apocalypse Narratives Lay the Groundwork for Conspiratorial Communities

A glimpse into QAnon’s participatory meme storytelling reveals the dynamic contours of conspiracy theories, religious contestations, and the technological tools that allow us to encounter and create communal narratives in online spaces. Religious communities and pop culture fandoms share a desire to connect, create community, and discover purpose, but what happens when these groups begin to share ideologies and beliefs that perpetuate conspiracy theories, falsehoods, hateful rhetoric, and catastrophic apocalyptic narratives? This paper explores how QAnon creates these narratives through a religious lens, a (pop culture) storytelling lens, and a participatory lens, and their community beliefs and practices are influenced by all three. Ultimately, it is not enough to merely recognize and regulate conspiratorial information online; we must also be cognizant of the way conspiratorial and apocalyptic stories are crafted and spread, and what makes them so compelling.

Ruslan Yusupov, Chinese University of Hong Kong

Regarding the Difference of Others: Interethnic Family Space and Surveillance in Contemporary Xinjiang, China

Working in the background of the so-called “People’s War on Terror” initiated by China in the Turkic Muslim region of Xinjiang, this paper examines the state initiative called “pairing up” according to which Chinese Han majority cadres are required to become “family” (live together) within Turkic Muslim households. It is based on an analysis of the online diaries in which Han cadres evidence how they spent time, cook, eat, have fun and share beds in homes of Uyghur families in order to surveil them. Bringing Susan Sontag in conversation with the political theology of Carl Schmitt, the paper shows how this surveillance works not by distinguishing friends from enemies but yokes these distinctions into relations across ethnoreligious difference that may paradoxically be called “hostile friendships.” It thus elaborates on catastrophic forms of violence that are inflicted on Turkic Muslims’ notions of self, home, belonging, and religion.

Emma Thompson, Princeton University

Fighting Hindu Nationalism on Social Media: Indian Queer Activists and the Languages of Secularism

In the face of rising Hindu nationalism in India, this paper examines how two Indian queer activist groups, one Muslim and one religiously non-affiliated, navigate the place of religion in their activism through their deployment of languages of secularism. Both groups use social media extensively in their activism, and, because of that, face challenges navigating the simultaneously public and private nature of social media.
spaces. These challenges impact the success of their deployment of languages of secularism against Hindu nationalists.

- Jay Givens, Wayland Baptist University

*When All Hell Breaks Loose: Christian Nationalism in Washington and Moscow*

This paper will look at the theme of Christian nationalism as a motivating factor for the insurrection in Washington, D.C., on January 6, 2021, and the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In what ways are both motivated by the religious imagination of an earlier time of spiritual purity? How are both motivated by a belief in national exceptionalism and/or the holiness of a specific land? The Capitol insurrection viewed the government as wicked and sought to reclaim these institutions for Christianity. Donald Trump was their champion. He had to remain in power. The Ukrainian war was an attempt to rescue Holy Rus or the “Russian world” from the corrupt, liberal West. The Russian Orthodox Church and Moscow Patriarch viewed Vladimir Putin as the protector of the faith. The paper will explore religious, political, and historical dimensions underlying these two events.

- Oscar Guana Osorio, Boston University

*The Growth of Latin American Pentecostalism as a Decisive Political Conservative Minority and the Rise of Christ-Neofascism*

A global trend in Christianity to support authoritarian political projects seeking to impose the conservative Christian morality and to counter the alleged advance of Communism has been identified and labeled “Christ-NeoFascism” by Spanish Catholic theologian Juan José Tamayo. In Latin America, this religio-political movement is advanced by the ever-increasingly significant Evangelical Pentecostal minorities, in most cases children of the US and European missionary movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries and still directly or indirectly influenced by the US Religious Right and Evangelicalism, in alliance with ultraconservative Latin American Catholic sectors. Christ-NeoFascism is reversing the civil liberties and rights of Latin American societies, it is detrimental for Latin American democracies and serves the interests of international powers.

A19-411

**Death, Dying, and Beyond Unit**

*Theme: Before Your Eyes: A Virtual Reality Life and Death Experience*

Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Candi K. Cann, Baylor University, Presiding

In this session, the Death, Dying and Beyond Unit collaborates with a new virtual reality game, Before Your Eyes, which is a short story game that allows the player to think about the themes of dying, death and the afterlife through an interactive Virtual Reality format. We will offer virtual reality headsets in which the player is asked to blink as a means of controlling the storyline; each time they blink, they will move through a time in their life, and conduct a life review as they move towards their final moment of judgement and the afterlife. The game asks important
religious questions about life, death, afterlife, and the role of memory.

Panelists

Amy Defibaugh, Temple University

A19-428
New Program Unit
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Energy, Extraction, and Religion Seminar
Theme: Religion, Extractivism, and Ongoing Catastrophe
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Terra Schwerin Rowe, University of North Texas, Presiding

In its inaugural session, the “Energy, Extraction, and Religion” seminar aims to spark an interdisciplinary discussion on the intersections of religion, extraction, and ongoing catastrophe by inviting leading scholars of Extraction Humanities, Energy Humanities, and religion to reflect on these themes in their research as well as the work left to be done. Across diverse methodologies and disciplinary interests, these panelists have been theorizing the logics, effects, affects, and influences of extractivisms. Cara New Daggett is a leading scholar of the Energy Humanities who has written on the "geo-theology" of modern energy science as well as the amplification of authoritarian desires in petro-extractive cultures. As a geographer, Farhana Sultana is a leading scholar analyzing extractive logics, affects, and modes of academic research. A leading religion scholar, Willie James Jennings has perceptively analyzed the theologics of space/place in the racial extractive colonial project. Seminar attendees are encouraged to bring questions and comments to share after panelists have made opening remarks.

Panelists

Willie J. Jennings, Yale University
Farhana Sultana, Syracuse University
Cara New Daggett, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Business Meeting

Evan Berry, Arizona State University, Presiding

A19-433
Exploratory Session
Theme: Drugs & Religion roundtable
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Joseph Christian Greer, Harvard University, Presiding

This exploratory panel will focus on the imbrication of drugs, religion, and art. More specifically, attention will be trained on the most recognizable figures in the world of contemporary psychedelic art, Alex and Allyson Grey. Ever innovating the way in which the
phenomenology of “mystical experiences” are portrayed, these artists have shifted their attention from painting to sculpture and finally to architecture. First opened to the public in 2004, their Chapel of Sacred Mirrors is a temple complex adorned with talismanic artworks designed to evoke religious experiences within its visitors. This roundtable discussion will establish a critical discussion of Alex and Allyson Grey’s artistic oeuvre. Guests will include the artists, as well as a panel of top tier religious studies including Gary Laderman (Emory), Wouter Hanegraaff (University of Amsterdam), J. Christian Greer (Harvard Divinity School), and Tanya Luhrmann (Stanford).

Panelists

Gary M. Laderman, Emory University
Tanya Luhrmann, Stanford University
Wouter Hanegraaff, University of Amsterdam
Erik Davis, San Francisco, CA

A19-401
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
Graduate Student Committee
Theme: AAR and SBL Graduate Student Happy Hour
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Free drinks anyone? Graduate student members of the AAR and SBL are invited to a low-key gathering where you can meet with other graduate students, connect with your AAR/SBL student reps, and get a free drink on us! Sponsored by the AAR Graduate Student Committee and the SBL Student Advisory Board.

A19-429
Hagiology Seminar
Theme: Decentering the "Saint" in Comparative Hagiology: Terminology and Translation from Diverse Traditions
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
R. Brian Siebeking, Gonzaga University, Presiding

Scholarship written in European languages often uses the word “saint” to refer to people that religious traditions around the world have deemed special, exemplary, holy, extraordinary, or worthy of reverence. Especially when used outside of Christian and European contexts, “saint” serves a translational purpose, either literally or conceptually. Although the word enables nonspecialist audiences to quickly grasp that a religious figure is distinctive, it doesn’t always convey a rich sense of how and why, on its own terms. This roundtable is a culmination of work that has been done on a document of keywords, bibliographies, and resources, which brings together specialists to critically explore the "saint" across traditions. This session will be exploratory and collaborative in nature, as it seeks to practice a style of conference preparation and presentation that utilizes comparative practices and innovates along those lines.
Panelists

Nikolas Hoel, Northeastern Illinois University
William Sherman, University of North Carolina, Charlotte
Itohan Idumwonyi, Rice University
Brooke Schedneck, Rhodes College
Gregory Adam Scott, University of Manchester
Gil Ben-Herut, University of South Florida

A19-412
History of Christianity Unit
Theme: The Uses of Persecution Narratives in the Christian Tradition
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Petra Kuivala, University of Helsinki, Presiding

This panel examines the appropriation and deployment of persecution narratives.

- Elissa Cutter, Georgian Court University

  *A Feminine Rhetoric of Persecution: The Strategic Historiography of the Nuns of Port-Royal*

  This paper examines how the nuns of the French convent of Port-Royal in the seventeenth century mobilized the rhetoric of persecution to defend the orthodoxy of their convent and of Mother Angélique’s reform through the historiographical process of collecting texts later published as *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de Port-Royal* (Utrecht, 1742–4). The nuns began collecting records of the convent’s history when they became the focus of attack for their association with Jansenism. Focusing on texts related to the convent’s reform by Mother Angélique Arnauld (1591–1661), and employing methods from history, theology, and feminist scholarship, this paper analyzes the rhetorical strategies employed by the different nuns in this context of persecution. From the strategic use of the rhetoric of femininity to the purposeful use of apologetics in their historical narratives, this paper demonstrates how the Port-Royal nuns deliberately structured the historiography of the convent in response to persecution.

- Neulsaem Ha, Calvin Theological Seminary

  *“Necessary and Sweet”: the Rhetoric of Persecution among the Missionaries in Korea during the Japanese Colonization*

  Although many have highlighted the unparalleled growth of the Korean church, little attention has been given to the persecution and martyrdom that Korean Christians had to endure during the early stages of their history. In my presentation, I will discuss the persecutions that they had to face and the religious and political rhetoric the missionaries in Korea deployed during those difficult years. While the missionaries tried to console Korean Christians with theology of suffering, they also deployed political rhetoric to help
the war between Korea and Japan.

- Darren Duerksen, Fresno Pacific University

*The Narratives and Foes that Shape Us: American Evangelical Uses (and Abuses?) of Persecution Narratives*

Persecution narratives – the stories of Christians being oppressed, persecuted, or killed – have a long tradition in Christianity. In this paper I analyze the ways in which American Evangelicals have produced and disseminated persecution narratives as an integral part of their identity formation. And though they have identified various “enemies” throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, the foes of Communism and Islam have held a particularly important place in the Evangelical imaginary. An analysis of the processes by which Evangelicals have shaped and used persecution narratives regarding Communism and Islam, and a brief contrast with the conflict such uses present for other groups, provide a window into the ways in which such narratives and their control become contested points for the identity formation of various groups.

**A19-413**

**Human Enhancement and Transhumanism Unit**

Theme: *Imagination and Entanglement: Envisioning New Technological Worlds*

Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Seth Villegas, Boston University, Presiding

This session will explore envisioned, possible futures that upend currently-normative views on law and kinship, worlds that are unmade and remade anew. The papers will examine jurispathic and non-anthropocentric possibilities within contemporary technological and transhumanist movements, and the possibilities for radical displacement of current norms to create better futures.

- Mark Larrimore, New School

*Human enhancement in the service of “making kin”: Donna Haraway’s “Camille Stories” and posthuman religious futures*

Donna Haraway’s feminist challenges to naturalism and essentialism have long offered a more complex political frame for exploring questions and realities of human enhancement than the alarmist, denialist and celebratory ones which tend to dominate discussion. If we have always been cyborgs and symbions, should we not be more ambitious in our enhancements, thinking beyond the human to the companion “critters” with whom our lives are entangled? Does the anthropogenic climate catastrophe indeed not demand as much? These concerns are brilliantly brought together in “The Camille Stories,” the piece of co-written “speculative fabulation” which serves as coda and consummation to Haraway’s Staying With The Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene. This presentation explores the new forms of religiosity to which Haraway imagines such radical kin-making might give rise, bringing them into conversation with other thinkers.
concerned with human enhancement and with the religious demands of the Anthropocene.

- Jacob Boss, Indiana University

_Kill the Law, Save the World_

Are there political theologies in transhumanism? Using mixed methods, I draw on ethnographic and critical studies of religion and transhumanism, anthropology of law and political theology, to argue that we can identify jurispathic (law-killing) and transcendent (law-renouncing) political theologies in grassroots and elite transhumanisms. The jurispathic orientation, according to jurist Robert Cover, kills law to make new law, and law expresses and reinforces or contests the normative reality we inhabit, our nomos. This normative world is scaffolded by law and religion and attempts to judicially force the two apart only further their entanglement. Thus understood, law-killing is world-building. The transcendent, law-renouncing, approach is world-destroying in that it does not seek to make new law for a collective to dwell within and hold in common, but to banish law, conceived of as one more limiting factor of the human condition, like age or disability.

**Business Meeting**

Amy Michelle DeBaets, Hackensack University Medical Center, Presiding

_A19-430_  
**Intersectional Hindu Studies: Feminist and Critical Race Approaches to Research and Teaching Seminar**  
Theme: _Interrogating Critical Hindu Studies: Interdisciplinary Perspectives_  
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)  
Shreena Gandhi, Michigan State University, Presiding

This panel brings together a group of interdisciplinary scholars to engage with Feminist Critical Hindu Studies. Panelists will discuss the implications of teaching and researching about caste and South Asian religions from the perspective of their fields of study and their political commitments. The group includes specialists across disciplines, including Political Science, Gender Studies, Anthropology, and Communication, and fields including Critical Muslim Studies, Dalit Studies, Feminist Sikh Studies, and South Asian Christianity. Questions that animate this session include: (1) Is a “Critical Hindu Studies possible?” (2) What are some challenges and potential obstacles to this approach in teaching and researching South Asian religions? 3.) Beginning with an anti-caste commitment, what directions should those employing Feminist Critical Hindu Studies take in our teaching and scholarship?

**Panelists**

Santhosh Chandrashekar, University of Denver  
Sonja Thomas, Colby College
Jains have always strategically negotiated rapid change and disorienting transformations in domains as varied as culture, philosophy, religion, commerce and war. This numerically small community simultaneously embraced and resisted change, showing both the desire for innovation and the counterdesire for continuity and stability. Our panel explores how contemporary Jains represent and adapt themselves in new local and global conditions. Our first paper will consider how Jain discourses shape literary imaginaries in recent Hindi novels of two Jain women and how this work confronts the new political and cultural coordinates of India. The second paper discusses the neoliberal market logic of the Shrimad Rajchandra Mission of Dharampur and its social media campaign that is manufacturing a “globalized Jainism” primarily through “mass self-communication.” Our final paper will examine several recently built temples in Maharashtra that express modern Jainism and how these new temples are described as manifesting modern Jain masculinity.

- Rahul Parson, University of California, Berkeley

**Novelistic Anekāntavāda and Jains in Contemporary Hindi Literature**

In both literary studies and Jain studies, there has been comparatively scant research exploring contemporary literary expression by Jain writers or works with Jain characters. This talk explores Jain sensibilities and perspectives in recent Hindi novels by Madhu Kankaria and Alka Saraogi. I will discuss three novels: *Khule Gagan ke Lāl Sitāre* (Red Stars in the Open Sky, 2000) and *Sej par Sanskrit* (Sanskrit on the Couch, 2010) both by Kankaria, and *Kulbhūṣaṇ kā nām darj kījie* (Please Enter the Name Kulbhushan, 2020), by Saraogi. Jain social, philosophical and epistemological discourses shape the literary imaginaries in these works, emboldening a pluralistic consciousness in these novels that includes the perspectives of religious minorities, revolutionaries and renunciants. The writers and their works highlight the performance of a mutable Jain identity in the contemporary moment, speaking to issues of narrative scarcity and representation in modern South Asia.

- Steven Vose, Colorado College
**Mass Self-Representation and the Making of Global Jain Publics Online: Theorizing the Shrimad Rajchandra Mission’s Social Media Strategies**

The Shrimad Rajchandra Mission of Dharampur, Gujarat (SRMD), founded in 2001, has the largest social media presence of any Jain organization. It offers a Jainism rooted in contemporary spirituality discourses and practices, blending yoga, meditation, self-help wisdom, and charitable service, with an especially strong appeal among young Shvetambar Jains in India, the US, UK, and Canada. This paper examines the SRMD’s social media strategy to argue that it is manufacturing a “globalized Jainism” through “mass self-communication,” premised on neoliberal market logic, especially hyper-individualism, that circumvents the caste-based authority of traditional mendicant orders (gacchhs). More than creating a new sect, the SRMD is creating a new kind of transnational “Jain public,” a discourse community for economically advantaged Jains who are inspired by the triumphalist narratives of neoliberal India and desire a spirituality centering on personal freedom rather than liberation. In effect, this new Jain public bifurcates Jain communities along class lines.

- M. Whitney Kelting, Northeastern University

**The Modern is Masculine, the Modern is Jain**

Svetambar Jain laymen in Maharashtra embrace the modern as the arena of their claims to masculine power and prestige. Despite Jainism’s long tradition of focusing on “ancient” tirthas as the sites of donation through building and restoration, Gujarati and Marwadi Svetambar Jains in Maharashtra, have developed a self-presentation that centers the modern as uniquely Jain and as an expression of masculine creativity and power. The surplus capital of neo-liberal economics provides middle-class Jains with the opportunity to direct substantial donations towards projects that uplift their view of themselves as modern Jains. These laymen distinguish themselves from the longstanding wealth and power of Jain families long associated with the renovation and management of Jain tirthas—roles they are socially and, often, economically excluded from taking on. This paper will examine recently built temples in Maharashtra that express modern Jainism and are described as manifesting modern Jain masculinity.

**Responding**

John E. Cort, Denison University

**Business Meeting**

Gregory Clines, Trinity University, Presiding
M. Whitney Kelting, Northeastern University, Presiding
A19-431
New Program Unit

Language, Poiesis, and Buddhist Experiments with the Possible Seminar
Theme: Second session of "Rethinking the Conceptual Toolkit"
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Roy Tzohar, Tel-Aviv University, Presiding

This seminar is concerned with poiesis, the bringing into being and shaping of worlds and selves, through language and its religious and literary contexts. In this inaugural year of the seminar, we begin by rethinking our conceptual toolkit, focusing especially on how foundational categories such as genre, style, and taste relate to poiesis and how this question is entangled with legacies of power.

In this second session, two short papers will be presented, followed by responses by seminar participants and open discussion.

- Jed Forman, University of California, Berkeley

  *How to Develop a Taste for Words: Jñānaśrīmitra’s Theory of Poiesis*

  There are two elements that have been consistent themes of Buddhist thought: (1) language is metaphor and (2) insight is seeing. These interrelate. Because reality is in excess of language, words can only metaphorically indicate the real. Insight into reality, therefore, can only be seen, not said. But even the claim that insight is seeing is itself only metaphoric. To say reality is seen is still ensconced in language. Is there, then, any cogent sense of reality outside of metaphor? This presentation focuses on how Jñānaśrīmitra (975-1025 CE) pushes the implications of language as metaphor toward this doubt. In the absence of any cogent extra-linguistic reality, metaphor becomes a tool to create worlds rather than passively and partially describe them. I illustrate how Jñānaśrīmitra’s metaphoric use of taste over seeing captures this poietic capacity of language. We create worlds through language in the same way that we develop our tastes.

- Alexander Hsu, University of Notre Dame

  *That’s Edutainment! Medieval Buddhist Anthologies in a Chinese Generic System*

  Medieval Chinese Buddhist anthologies disassemble both Buddhist and Chinese generic systems in order to reassemble their contents for new aims. As works like the *Lotus Sutra* teach, words chosen well could entertain and educate at once depending on the audience’s interest and capacity, and the breadth of the anthology encouraged its users to craft their selections thereby. My paper considers Chinese Buddhist anthologies as models of and for developing a bodhisattva’s characteristic skill-in-means. By providing textual extracts from both Indic and Chinese provenance, anthologies like *A Grove of Pearls from the Garden of Dharma* (668) incited readers to draw their own connections and make their own rhetorical interventions. I examine three pairs of writings from the
“Suffering” chapter to puzzle through how binaries like Chinese/Indic, myth/history, literary/didactic, proliferate/economical, and means/ends come to tutor the reader of an anthology in the art of liberative, sermonic poesis.

Responding

Natalie Gummer, Beloit College
Thomas Mazanec, University of California, Santa Barbara
Charles Hallisey, Harvard University

Business Meeting

Roy Tzohar, Tel-Aviv University, Presiding
Nancy Lin, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley, Presiding

A19-415
Men, Masculinities, and Religions Unit and Religion Film, and Visual Culture Unit
Theme: Muslim Masculinities on Screen
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Ermin Sinanovic, Shenandoah University, Presiding

In the American popular imagination the Muslim man is coded as violent, misogynistic, and hyper-sexual. The circulation of this public image is most commonly found on screen, either on continuous broadcast news cycles or in popular television programs and film. In recent years, Muslim mediamakers have produced their own models of Muslim masculinity that disrupt and expand these static and stereotypical representations. We see television and film as a productive “building site” where notions of Muslim masculinity are being constructed and contested by both Muslim and non-Muslim subjects. Our analysis of three case studies, the production of a “Muslim comedian” through the public image of standup comic Hasan Minhaj, gendered experiences of sex, dating, and marriage in the comedy-drama series Ramy, and expressions of queer and trans Muslim identities on screen, serve as initial steps in exploring the social production of manhood on screen.

- Samah Choudhury, Ithaca College

“New Brown America”: Religious Caricature and Black Aesthetics in the Comedy of Hasan Minhaj

The American Muslim standup comic Hasan Minhaj remains among the most visible Muslims in American pop culture today, with accolades especially for his 2017 Netflix production Homecoming King. This paper maps how the Muslim comedian embodies a persona on the basis of gendered and racialized articulations of Islam – creating a self that is a passive and ideal foil to the otherwise hyper/hypo-masculine Muslim man of yore and distance. A corporate consensus on diversity provides a language for Minhaj to identify as Muslim over strictly racial and religious nomenclature. Yet this performance maintains a caricature of Islam that is subjugating and incorrectly masculine by limiting
its articulation to normative Sunni ideals, injunctions, and class politics. For Minhaj, there is an inconsistent stepping in and out of language that names him as Muslim, Indian, or simply “brown” and relies on an added approximation of Blackness to register opposition to white secularity.

- Tazeen Ali, Washington University, Saint Louis

*Sex, Masculinity, and American Islam in Hulu’s Ramy*

This paper investigates how recent American Muslim-produced entertainment media disrupt dominant representations of Muslims as racial and religious outsiders in the U.S, focusing on Egyptian-American comedian Ramy Youssef’s comedy-drama series *Ramy*. *Ramy*, set in New Jersey and Cairo, explores the first-generation experiences of its titular character, navigating his relationships to faith, community, and sexuality. I argue that *Ramy* disrupts Muslims’ construction as religious and political outsiders in U.S. media, rejecting Muslims’ status as political others who can only be viewed through a national security lens, that is, as terrorists or assets to counterterrorism. I analyze the pilot episode of *Ramy* in conversation with scholarship on Islam in the media to suggest that *Ramy* generates nuanced narratives on American Muslim identity in popular culture, particularly around gendered experiences of sex, dating, and marriage that offer insight into the place of Islam and Muslims in the U.S.

- Kristian Petersen, Old Dominion University

*Queer Constructions of Muslim Masculinity*

In this presentation, I examine how contemporary mediamakers are queering constructions of Muslim masculinity. Portrayals of homosexual and trans Muslims unsettle stereotypical representations of violent and hyper-sexualized Muslim men and reestablish a spectrum of Muslim masculinity. I concentrate on recent North American productions, *Naz & Maalik* (2015), *Signature Move* (2017), *The Wedding* (2018), *Breaking Fast* (2020), as well as the first television series to depict trans Muslim life, *Sort Of* (2021). This grouping of screen productions narrate queer masculinity across racial, ethnic, and class lines, giving us a broad swath of potentialarticulations of queer manhood. These films point to social networks that shape norms of masculinity, reveal how queer Muslim subjects affirm or reject communal ideals, and provide strategies to resist the reification of a hegemonic Muslim heteronormativity. These mediamakers critique and question sexuality and gender identities within Muslim cultures by diverging from widely held understandings of religiously sanctioned interpretations.

**Responding**

Nabil Echchaibi, University of Colorado
Popular music has long been a repository for the working out of theological ideas in the public sphere. This panel brings together examinations of Bruce Springsteen, Leonard Cohen, and Thomas Aquinas to explore the generative possibilities represented by popular song and the role it might play in shaping theological imagination.

- W. Glenn Jonas, Campbell University

*Mary and the Boss: Scenes from the Life of the Virgin Mary in the Music of Bruce Springsteen.*

This paper explores the use of the name “Mary” in several of Bruce Springsteen’s songs. According to one web site, Bruce Springsteen has recorded 357 songs throughout his career. Twenty-four of those songs (7%) contain a character named “Mary,” “Maria,” “Mary Lou,” “Mary Beth,” or “Mary Ann.” This paper suggests that the use of “Mary” in some of Springsteen’s music reflects his Catholic religious training and presents allusions to the Virgin Mary. Specifically, this paper examines the character of “Mary” in the songs “Thunder Road,” “The River,” and “Mary’s Place.”

- Stephen Martin, Azusa Pacific University

*Creatio Generativa: Music in Conversation with ‘Theologies of Creation’*

God’s initial act of creation has often been interpreted and distilled by way of summative phrases such as creatio ex nihilo, and creatio ex Deo. Thomas Aquinas further suggested that in addition to creatio ex nihilo, we might understand God’s sustaining power in creation, utilizing creatio continua to summarize this paradigm. Here I seek to bring the creatio continua of Aquinas, as well as Patristic formulations of creatio ex nihilo/ex Deo into conversation with music. Are there musical-theological corollaries to be found in antecedent/consequent and theoretical framework/improvisatory relationships? Does the attempt to move from fact-to-value in music, serve as a type of parallel, particularly when considering the ways in which humans engage in liturgical development or theological reformation? I seek to use musical vocabulary and the notion of creatio generativa, not to replace, but rather to enrich and enliven various conversations involving ‘theologies of creation.’

- Marcia Pally, New York University

*The Theology and Theodicy of Leonard Cohen: God, Sex, and Politics*
This paper explores the songs of Leonard Cohen as a theodicy of the covenant. Drawing from the Jewish, Christian, and Buddhist traditions, Cohen understood persons as flourishing in reciprocal commitment with God and with each other—importantly for Cohen, with women. Cohen saw women sexually and, in the kabbalist tradition, as a portal to spiritual oneness with God. And yet, we fail our commitments daily in our spiritual, personal, and political lives. The theodical question thus arises: why has God created us so prone to fail them? Created for covenant, we run pursue independence, control, and intactness, yielding loss, abandonment, and violence—what Cohen called “divisions of every sort.” Cohen knew he was a covenant fail-er par excellence. “I made a date in Heaven,” he sang in “Got a Little Secret,” but “Oh Lord but I’ve been keepin’ it in Hell.” By exposing his “secret,” he illuminated universal struggles. As Lou Reed said, “If we could all write songs like Leonard Cohen, we would.” This paper explores Cohen’s imagery as it illuminates bonds with God and among persons and the tragic spiritual, personal, and political consequences of its breach.

A19-417
Platonism and Neoplatonism Unit
Theme: Nature and the Platonic Tradition
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Willemien Otten, University of Chicago, Presiding

The Platonic tradition has, throughout history, offered a radically alternative understanding of the relationship between humans and nature, and between humans and non-human animals. This panel explores historical and contemporary instances of the Platonic conceptualisation of nature.

- Jennifer Rycenga, San José State University

*The Minutest of Things: Regarding Lichens in Light of the Enneads*

There are surprising connections between the study of lichens – plant-like symbiotic associations of fungi, algae, and cyanobacteria – and Neo-Platonism, specifically Plotinus’s contemplation and appreciation of the natural world. This exploratory foray will weave together the two disparate discourses of Plotinus and lichenology by first explaining the current state of scientific study, particularly how it is raising new questions about symbiosis, internal diversity, the species-concept, and biological longevity. These studies will be brought into conversation with concepts from across the *Enneads*, such as the compatibility of unity and plurality, coexistence as a modality for contemplation, creativity as a part of perfection, and the effulgence of the natural world as key to understanding immanence in Plotinian dynamics of emanation and contemplation.

- Matthew Eaton, King's College, Pennsylvania

*Cusanus, Bruno, and Deep Incarnation: An Ecofeminist Assessment of Potential Neoplatonic Resources for Contemporary Ecotheology*

Contemporary “deep incarnation” ecotheologians expand the doctrine of incarnation so
that divine identity with the physical transcends Jesus and extends to all things. The essence of this identity varies among theologians, with some arguing that incarnation in the fullest sense is restricted to Jesus and others eschewing humanist limits for cruciform bodies. These debates parallel various historical approaches to the God-One/World-Many relationship, illustrated by the similar but contrasting theologies of Nicolas Cusanus and Giordano Bruno. Exploring the relationship between Cusanus and Bruno helps makes sense of the God-One/World-Many relationship in ecotheology and draws out potential Neoplatonic resources for dealing with the debate on the essence and extent of divine embodiment. I suggest that Bruno’s philosophy, especially his proto-ecofeminist logic, is preferable as it overcomes the androcentrism and anthropocentrism found in Cusanus and some deep incarnation theologies, which conflate divine identity with a problematic gender normative anthropology.

- Jonathan Lyonhart, Lincoln Christian University

*In Nature but not of Nature: Henry More on Divine Space*

According to a tradition that includes Henry More, Isaac Newton, Samuel Clarke, and (more recently) Robert Oakes, divine space is immaterial, allowing God to be genuinely immanent and omnipresent throughout nature without becoming synonymous with nature. This paper will defend this assertion from a number of potential philosophical and theological defeaters, concluding that Henry More provides the Platonist and the Christian with a way to affirm God’s genuine presence in nature and the environment, while remaining within the respective orthodoxies of those traditions.

- Annalea Thiessen, University of Chicago

*Waking Up in Walden: The Platonic Sun in Thoreau*

In *Walden*, Thoreau writes that he went to the woods “to live deliberately”, which involves learning to “reawaken and keep ourselves awake…[in] expectation of the dawn”. Using Stanley Cavell’s *Senses of Walden*, this paper argues for a connection between Thoreau’s imperative to “reawaken” and Plato’s allegory of emerging into the light of the sun: both involve seeking the truth that goes beyond our individual selves. What is the role of nature here? Per Cavell, one goes to the woods not to be alone—this is not Thoreau’s own goal—but rather, in experiencing ourselves as *within* nature, we realize, Cavell says, “that we are alone and never alone”: as both strangers and neighbors to the rest of nature, we understand ourselves anew. Both Plato and Thoreau demonstrate the continual inquiry involved in seeking the truth beyond our individual selves, in waking up to the reality illuminated by the sun.
A19-402
Program Committee
Theme: How to Propose a New Program Unit
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Whitney Bauman, Florida International University, Presiding
Tiauna Lewis, American Academy of Religion, Presiding

Join the Program Unit Director, Director of Meetings and Programs, and Scholarly Engagement Coordinator for an informal chat about upcoming Annual Meeting initiatives as well as the guidelines and policies for proposing a new program unit.

A19-403
Public Understanding of Religion Committee
Theme: Aspen Institute Salon: Bringing Religion Scholars into the Mainstream
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Rachel Mikva, Chicago Theological Seminary, Presiding

Panelists
Simran Jeet Singh, New York University

A19-404
Reading Religion
Theme: Reading Religion 101
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Kimberly Davis, American Academy of Religion, Presiding

Founded in 2016, Reading Religion is the AAR's openly accessible book review website for up-to-date coverage of scholarly publishing in religious studies and related fields. This session will focus on the who, what, when, how and why of Reading Religion and include information on best practices for reviewing books, offering books for review and our editing process.

Panelists
Kevin Schilbrack, Appalachian State University
Evan Sandsmark, University of Virginia

A19-405
Regions Committee
Theme: Regions Forum
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Brian K. Pennington, Elon University, Presiding

An annual opportunity for the leadership of the AAR's ten regions to discuss regional issues and
concerns. This year we consider how the widespread adoption of virtual meeting technologies, and shifting place of learned societies in the professional lives of their members impact our regional organizations. As the AAR's Futures Task force proceeds with its work and the AAR adapts to the changing landscapes of higher education, where do our regions fit? What regional meeting practices serve our members best? How is the relationship between the AAR's central office and its regions best configured for pursuing our respective missions?

Panelists

Derrick Lemons, University of Georgia
Matthew Vaughan, Columbia University
Tiffany Puett, Institute for Diversity and Civic Life, Austin, TX

A19-418
Religion and Cities Unit
Theme: Imagining and Remembering Urban Communities
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Fatimah Fanusie, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies, Presiding

Cities are more than buildings and roads. They are composed of communities. However, not all communities who live and work in cities are treated equally. While some communities are heralded as representative of the urban ideal, other communities are denied and even destroyed in the name of urban development or renewal. This panel features papers that examine how urban communities are imagined or remembered. From case studies of Denver, Durham, and Richmond, this panel considers who is part of a city, how communities “remember”, and how religion/spirituality inform the ethics of urban community formation.

- L. Patrick Burrows, North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics

*What Happened to Hayti?: Memory and Spatiality of Spirit after Urban Renewal*

The city of Durham, North Carolina, is full of places that are not there anymore. Mostly, these places that are no more were the places of Black life. Chief among these is Hayti, the historic heart of the independent Black culture of the city, demolished and replaced by a highway amid "urban renewal." But Hayti lives on in the stories told about it, the spirits felt within it, and the way its memory is conjured to protest against gentrification and neighborhood destruction today. Following the work of Katherine McKittrick and Yi-Fu Tuan, this paper argues that the afterlife of Hayti reveals a spiritual-spatial ability, cultivated not through a present-day experience but through reception of community memory, which constitutes not only an enduring spiritual attunement towards post-catastrophic places but an acute ethical orientation towards the construction and alteration of all urban environments.

- Amanda Henderson, University of Denver
 Cole Chandler, Colorado Village Collaborative
A Catastrophe of Catastrophes, Religion and Homelessness in Denver

Homelessness is a catastrophe of catastrophes shaped by centuries of oppression, economic exploitation, racism, and economic policies that have decimated public investment. When walking the streets of Denver it is impossible to miss the impacts of multiple compounding catastrophes that result in homelessness. Living unsheltered is the ultimate end of the line for those who have been cast aside by society. This paper explores the ways homelessness intersects with religion by analyzing a case study of the Colorado Village Collaborative and the emergency shelter Safe Outdoor Spaces project. Calling upon the work of Janet Jakobsen and Chela Sandoval, this paper excavates the way religion, as an interlocking set of forces, shapes the political structures and ideological assumptions that perpetuate homelessness, informs community response to the crisis of homelessness, and compels collaborative imaginative work to move beyond entrenched ideologies that perpetuate homelessness.

• Laura Snell, University of California, Santa Barbara

Material Negotiations: Christianity, Ontology, and Civic Identity in Richmond, Virginia’s Monument Avenue

An examination of Richmond, Virginia’s Monument Avenue beginning with the construction of the Robert E. Lee Monument in 1890 and concluding with the Black Lives Matter encampment at the same site in 2020. The paper argues that in order to be legitimate in the eyes of the state and the public, modifications and negotiations of Monument Avenue’s public narrative must utilize a Christian vernacular. Utilizing Sally Promey’s framework of “material establishment”, the paper tracks the narrative development of the relationship between state, religion, and white supremacy in the confederate statuary of Monument Avenue. The paper then examines how even recent modifications to the visual programming of the neighborhood such as the Arthur Ashe monument, Kehinde Wiley’s Rumors of War, and the 2020 Black Lives Matter encampment at the Robert E. Lee Monument utilize Christian language and imagery to contest the history and white supremacy of Richmond’s landscape.

Responding

Edward Dunar, Albertus Magnus College

A19-419
Religion and Memory Unit
Theme: The (Life) Stages of Memory: Religion, Commemoration, and the Cultivation of Identity
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Christopher Cantwell, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Presiding

While debates over memorializing the past often take shape around museums or monuments, the domestic sphere is also a site of commemoration and conflict about the past. This panel brings...
together three papers that consider the relationship between religion and memory in some of
life's most intimate settings. Topics include how the iconic whiteness of the American "pioneer"
shaped conceptions of evangelical girlhood at the turn of the twentieth century; how digital
wedding photography is changing religious and secular understandings of marriage in twenty-
first-century Europe; and the ways in which the celebration of the white founders of missionary
schools in Sri Lanka shapes the religious and racial identities of their contemporary students.
Though the papers cover three continents, they all highlight the braided relationship between
religion and memory in the fashioning of social and familial identities.

- Sarah Hedgecock, Columbia University

**Pioneer Girls and the Nostalgic Whiteness of Ideal Evangelical Girlhood**

Pioneer Girls began in 1939 as an American evangelical ministry for girls that bore more
than a passing resemblance to the Girl Scouts. The organization aimed to bring girls to
Christ through a combination of games, badge activities, witnessing, and Bible study. In
doing so, at least through its 1981 transformation into the now-coed Pioneer Clubs, it
employed nostalgia for a notably white American past in order to model an ideal
evangelical girlhood of the present. In linking ideal evangelical girlhood to white settler
colonialists of the past, Pioneer Girls recapitulated the very history of Manifest Destiny
while at the same time marking the clubs as ideally white. By looking at how Pioneer
Girls made use of the past, it is possible to discover how it situated girls’ bodies in an
evangelical historical imaginary, and what that might mean for girls in other corners of
evangelical America.

- Marie-Therese Mäder, University of Munich

**Studying the Mediated Memories of Weddings**

Digital and electronic media play a central role in contemporary weddings, be it during
the preparation, the ritual itself or afterwards. By means of photographs and videos
specific moments are made memorable through the media produced around the wedding
in order to shape the bridal couple’s and their guests’ memories in the future. The focus
of the current contribution is directed to the question of how do couples deal with their
wedding photos and videos and what role do these media play to awakening memories of
religious and secular dimensions of the event? I argue that the mediatization of weddings
influences how a wedding is memorized and results in a partly standardization of
memories of the event. The paper seeks to provide insights into an ongoing research into
religion, memory, and mediatization by applying ethnographic field work and qualitative
methods. The presentation includes clips of the interviews with couples.

- Jessica Albrecht, Heidelberg University

**Biographical research and the decolonial lens. This history and memory of white women
educators in Sri Lanka**
Religion is central to Sri Lankan education. How religion is taught and practiced and what role it plays for the individual’s life is highly related to these school years. The most prominent middle-class schools celebrate their founders – white women who came in the nineteenth century to ‘help their sisters’. Being a white scholar from the Global North, mostly conversing with women my age about these years and reminiscing on our school experiences, relationships and friendships, created a situation in which I had to put down the ‘postcolonial’ lens trying to challenge the memory of the early Principals. Only so could I try to be fully able to understand the meaning women in Sri Lanka place onto their school lives and the space created by these white women. This presentation will reflect on these experiences in my fieldwork and ask the question what it means to be a decolonial feminist researcher.

Responding

Jodi Eichler-Levine, Lehigh University

Business Meeting

Rachel Gross, San Francisco State University, Presiding
Christopher Cantwell, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Presiding

A19-420
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Religion and Science Fiction Unit
Theme: The World at Risk: Science-fictionality, Religion and Catastrophe
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Laura Ammon, Appalachian State University, Presiding

These texts consider the relationships of religion, politics, technology and climate change to catastrophe in the realm of science-fictional thinking.

- Christopher Sheklian, Radboud University

_In the Face of the Catastrophic Loss of a Form of Life: The Eleventh Century Armenian Catholicos Petros Getadarj and the Speculative Fiction of Arkady Martine_

Arkady Martine’s Hugo-winning work of science fiction, _A Memory Called Empire_, explicitly draws on Byzantine and Armenian interactions in the eleventh century. She has stated in interviews that she was compelled by the figure of Catholicos Petros Getadarj, the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church at the time. Getadarj faced the impossible decision between political autonomy and the continued existence of the unique form of Armenian Christianity. Using Martine’s fiction, the paper draws on the works of philosophers Jonathan Lear and Marc Nichanian to consider the tragic actions of Catholicos Petros in the face of the potentially catastrophic loss of a “way of life.” The paper reads the historical and the fictional together to explore the connections between religion, political autonomy, and a form of life, suggesting that Getadarj and Martine’s
protagonist Mahit Dzmare both acted meaningfully in the face of a catastrophic loss of a form of life.

- Rachel Wagner, Ithaca College

The Pseudo-Science Fiction of Alex Jones' COVIDLAND

The loaded gun and the unmasked pandemic face are familiar symbols in American far right rhetoric. Both represent the ability of the possessor to think only of their own “safety.” Refusal to mask and the “right to arms” both represent a warping of the constitutional “right to free speech” if the loaded gun is viewed as a proxy mouth and the mask is viewed as a muzzle. COVIDLAND is a popular right-wing “documentary” series that conspiracy-theorist Alex Jones says will “untangle the lies about the lockdowns, the face mask, and the so-called COVID vaccines” by drawing on “science” and “common sense.” In its dogged attempt to fit the COVID pandemic into a pre-existing slate of conspiracy-laden apocalyptic expectations, COVIDLAND presents people with medical vulnerabilities as unwitting props used by “global elites” to reify their imminent control over Americans. Like science fiction, these far-right concocted narratives imagine a “what if” apocalyptic scenario, then unspool its narrative implications fitting victims in wherever they fall even if this means endangering the vulnerable. As with gun rights, “freedom” is understood individually, so the refusal to mask becomes the freedom to kill.

- Jovana Isevski, University of California, Riverside

The Drowned Buddha: Buddhism, Ecology, and Mythopoeic Science in Kim Stanley Robinson’s Science in the Capital Trilogy

A number of scholars and Buddhist practitioners have argued that Buddhist ethics have the potential to avert the climate crisis, an idea rooted in the notions of emptiness (śūnyatā), dependent origination (pratītyasamutpāda), and compassion (karuṇā). Drawing on the 17th Karmapa’s “path of environmental Buddhism” and the 14th Dalai Lama’s “secular ethics,” this paper examines how climate fiction (cli-fi), Kim Stanley Robinson’s Science in the Capital trilogy in particular, addresses such hopes. In his critique of scientific hyperrationality, a conceptual platform grounded in materialism and logical positivism, Robinson challenges the epistemological authority of what Lisa Sideris calls “mythopoeic science,” a dogmatic view that science offers the most satisfactory explanation of reality. The trilogy calls for a dialectical exchange between Buddhism and science and concludes that only a paradigm shift that promotes a compassionate being-in-the-world can serve as a viable response to the eco-disaster.

Business Meeting

Laura Ammon, Appalachian State University, Presiding
Emanuelle Burton, University of Illinois, Chicago, Presiding
What are the categories of "local", "cult," and "subjectivity" doing to the study of religion in Southeast Asia? This session presents new scholarship on Thailand, Singapore, Taiwan, and the Philippines to reconsider these key words and propose new ones. The first paper argues that "local religion" is not a useful category for describing Thai religion. The second paper takes up the contested category of "the cult" to see how it can be used to explore social formations around two underworld deities in Singapore and Taiwan. The third paper argues that the formation of Filipino servant subjectivity is inextricably related to the adaptation and cooptation of the indigenous concept of "kapwa." Together these papers from across the region share new research to inform a reappraisal of the key terms we should and should not be using to communicate the specifics of our findings to our colleagues, students, and more general audiences.

- Fabian Graham, National University of Singapore

*Interrogating the Notion of “Cult” as a Social Formation in Chinese vernacular Religion: A comparative study of Chinese healing rituals in contemporary Singapore and Taiwan*

Interrogating the Notion of “Cult” as a Social Formation in Asian Religions by comparing two varieties of healing rituals performed by two deity cults that have come to dominance in Singapore and Taiwan with contrasting cosmologies, ritual and material cultures. The first ritual was performed by an Underworld (Hell) deity spirit medium (tang-ki) cult in Singapore who prepared ‘medicines’ comprised of items collected at night from Singapore’s largest cemetery to cure a devotee of leukaemia, thereby ‘enlisting the dead to cure the living’. The second ritual focusses on a twelve-day lingji cult medicine festival held in Taiwan ‘enlisting the living’ to cure the souls of the dead to reduce conflict in the contemporary world. As until perhaps forty years ago the two religious landscapes were essentially analogous, the purpose of the paper is twofold. First, to illustrate two diametrically opposed cosmologies and associated ritual traditions which have evolved and are enacted in Chinese vernacular religion today. Second, to highlight how each tradition is comprised of multiple micro-cults based around individual charismatic leaders. The analysis highlights the diversity of beliefs and practices within contemporary Chinese vernacular religion in Southeast Asia and Taiwan.

- Jeizelle Solitario, University of Toronto

*Religion, Culture, and History: The Construction of Filipino Servant Subjectivity*

Drawing on Foucault’s articulation that subjectivity is formed through discourses, discipline, and governmentality, I explore the formation of what I call the Filipino
“servant subjectivity” by studying the Tagalog concept of kapwa (“fellow-being”) in relation to Christianity, colonialism, and neoliberalism. In focusing on the role of kapwa in Filipino subject formation, I acknowledge but also go beyond the conceptualization of Filipino subjectivity as a subjectivity that is formed solely through the power of a colonizing other to impose violence through religious ideologies and economic practices; rather, I demonstrate that Filipino subject formation is also a result of self-regulation that can be traced to the historically contingent conceptualization of kapwa. This, I argue, mobilizes the Filipino subject toward action and creative interpretation of her place in the contemporary global context.

- Shalahudin Kafrawi, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

*The Epistemology of Humanitarian Islam: Context and Roadmap*

Indonesia increasingly experiences a conservative turn. Such a challenge poses a threat to social cohesion and religious pluralism. Efforts to address the conservative and radical expressions vary ranging from governmental policies, social activism, and religious proliferation. My paper situates such efforts within the contexts of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). In particular, the Ansor’s wing of NU responded to the threat of Islamic radicalism by issuing The Declaration on Humanitarian Islam in 2017. This declaration invites Muslims to strengthen the role of moderate Islam in contributing to nation building and religious pluralism. This paper will examine the strategies drawn by the Nahdlatul Ulama to address the emerging threat of religious extremism in Indonesia. In doing so, I will evaluate the interplay between Islam’s theological foundation and its manifestations in socio-cultural and political contexts of Indonesian Muslims. Here, I will discuss how the NU leaders problematize orthodoxy and appeal to it simultaneously.

**Responding**

Jack Meng-Tat Chia, National University of Singapore

**A19-422**

**Religion, Sport, and Play Unit**

Theme: *Religion and Sport under Duress*

Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Terry Shoemaker, Arizona State University, Presiding

Sport and exercise provide many individuals and communities across the globe with rhythms to mark time and myriad ways to engage the body—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. From three distinct perspectives, this session examines these dimensions in terms of transcendent and ethical values; the promotion of the integrity of health by attending to limitations; and an exploration of the benefits and risks associated with conceptualizing sport and/or exercise as alternative cures or comfort in addressing mental, emotional and spiritual challenges.
Francis Klose, Rosemont College

Lent Disrupted: COVID-19 and the 2020 Major League Baseball Season

The COVID-19 Pandemic shut down Major League Baseball on March 12, interrupting the period of preparation for players. What did it mean for the players physically, mentally, and spiritually to have their season of preparation disrupted? The experience of Spring Training evokes thoughts of the spiritual journey of Lent. Without proper preparation, the season was a challenge. But for fans, who rely on the daily experience of baseball, the challenged season was a return to "normal".

Cody Musselman, Yale University

The “Sport of Fitness” becomes the Sport of Health: CrossFit Health in the COVID Era

This paper traces the rise of CrossFit Health and its response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While recent scholarship on religion and sports attempts to move the subfield away from debates around whether or not sport is a religion, assertions likening sport to religion still animate the field. This paper joins recent scholarship in pivoting the conversation away from asking whether or not sport is a religion and instead looks at how certain actors within sport are doing religion. Through the example of CrossFit Health, a healthcare initiative of “the sport of fitness,” this paper examines how Glassman positioned himself as a health crusader with a global mission to save the world through diet, exercise, and the communal joys and accountability of sport. When gyms first closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, CrossFitters collectively vowed that CrossFit would survive the pandemic because CrossFit was more than a sport: it was healthcare.

Nicholas Fieseler, University of Calgary

Wrestling with Religion: A Theodramatic Exploration of Religion in Popular Culture

The intersection of religion and popular culture has been the subject of increasing study in recent years, due in part to the changing understanding of what constitutes religion, as well as the decreasing level of influence traditional religions currently exercise over their practitioners. This paper will examine religion implicit in popular culture as understood through the lens of professional wrestling. By utilizing Hans Urs von Balthasar's concept of Theodrama, which re-envisions the world as a stage housing an interaction between the sacred and profane, as well as Rene Girard’s Mimetic Theory to explain the human attraction to violence, the blurred distinctions between traditionally good and bad wrestlers serves as a means of exploring the moral ambiguity that characterizes much of modern society, and the emotional drives that motivate human behavior, while also re-interpreting the nature of religion as it is understood in popular culture.

Reviewers

Randall Balmer, Dartmouth College
A19-432
Religions, Borders, and Immigration Seminar
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Loye Ashton, Aoyama Gakuin University, Presiding

This session will explore the intersections of religious beliefs, practices, and institutions with global migration and national borders in an age of increasing instability and conflict - political, military, climate, economic, inter- and intra-religious, and public health. We want to dive deeper to see how we can define in more detail what we mean by instability and conflict as these are crucially important for our thinking about present and growing migration and humanitarian emergencies. Session will conclude with seminar Business Meeting.

Panelists
Anne Blankenship, North Dakota State University
Michael Canaris, Loyola University, Chicago
Mary Beth Yount, Neumann University
Kirsteen Kim, Fuller Theological Seminary

Business Meeting
Kristine Suna-Koro, Xavier University, Presiding

A19-423
Schleiermacher Unit
Theme: Theology and the Plight of the Humanities in the Modern University
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Kevin Vander Schel, Gonzaga University, Presiding

Several notable volumes have offered important treatments of the rise of the modern research university, the development of the modern humanities, and the shifting roles and identities of the academic study of religion and theology within this setting. Among these are: Jennifer Herdt's *Forming Humanity: Redeeming the German Bildung Tradition* (UCP, 2019); Paul Reitter and Chad Wellmon's *Permanent Crisis: The Humanities in a Disenchanted Age* (UCP, 2021); and Kevin M. Vander Schel and Michael DeJonge, eds, *Theology, History, and the Modern German University* (Mohr Siebeck, 2021). This roundtable discussion brings the insights of these three volumes into conversation concerning the shifting and competing conceptions of the humanities in the modern university, the German tradition of *Bildung* and its ongoing legacy, the increasingly precarious place that of the study of religion and theology in the modern university.

Panelists
Jennifer A. Herdt, Yale University
Society for Comparative Research on Iconic and Performative Texts
Theme: Material-Textual Approaches for the Study of US Protestantism
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Michael Baysa, Princeton University, Presiding

This panel offers a capacious sample of scholarship on US Protestantism and material texts. It features four papers by US Americanists whose research bridges both areas. In her paper about the American Tract Society’s book production, Sonia Hazard shows how evangelicals’ embrace of the media format of the book was not a natural outgrowth of tract ministry, but must be understood as entangled with the political economy of slavery. Continuing the connection between antebellum printed texts and slavery, Seth Perry shows how book historical research into the subscribers of a Lorenzo Dow pamphlet reveals a slaveowning readership at odds with textual contents. Next, Daniel Vaca traces the material history of the donation envelope, one of modern Protestantism’s most ubiquitous fundraising devices and bureaucratic technologies. Finally, Brook Wilensky-Lanford explores the remediation and circulation of the nineteenth-century Protestant trope of the "gates ajar" through novels, theatre, floral arrangements, and more.

- Sonia Hazard, Florida State University


In 1833, the American Tract Society (ATS) began to print and distribute not only tracts but also bound books. Why did the ATS abruptly change course? This paper argues that the ATS’s embrace of the book format was a political decision made to satisfy white Southerners during a time of escalating sectionalist pressure. First, it demonstrates how major pro-slavery donors convinced the ATS to begin book production in the 1830s to provide subsidized books for white Southern families. Second, it traces how the ATS doubled down in its complicity with slavery because of changes in its financial structure after the turn to book publishing. For the first time it had to cater to consumer demand. This meant that it engaged in a massive, mostly silent, editorial effort to excise all mentions of slavery, in text and image, in aims of avoiding causing offense to its most conservative readers.
Seth Perry, Princeton University

From Babylon to Lynchburg: Using Material Texts Approaches to Contextualize Sources

Lorenzo Dow, the most famous itinerant preacher of the early nineteenth century, published *Journey from Babylon to Jerusalem, or The Road to Peace and True Happiness* in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1812. A robust book-history approach to this text – accounting for the circumstances of its publication, its material form, and evidence of its intended and actual readerships – reveals *Journey* to be an important source for thinking about the relationship between evangelicalism and the institution of slavery in the early national period. The Lynchburg edition of *Journey* alone was printed with a list of subscribers. Though Dow himself was anti-slavery, census analysis reveals that well over half of these subscribers were slaveholders. Reframed as an address to slaveholding Southerners, the text is shown to be a Northern evangelical’s careful accommodation to slavery. Further reflection on the unusual expense Dow took in printing this edition provides material purchase on that accommodationist pose.

Daniel Vaca, Brown University

Giving Is Good for You: The Persuasive Power of Donation Envelopes

This paper examines the invention of a material object that became a popular solution in ecclesiastical settings at the end of the nineteenth century: the donation envelope. A fundraising device that remained pervasive throughout the twentieth century, donation envelopes dramatically raised revenues not only by making giving "systematic" but also by investing the practice of regular giving with moral significance. By encouraging donors to imagine themselves in a contractual relationship with both church and God, churches came to treat donation envelopes as methods of both philanthropic persuasion and moral formation. To bring the materiality of these rituals into view, this paper examines the fundraising activities of a prominent Gilded Age church in New York City: St. George's Episcopal Church, where the financier J.P. Morgan served as lay leader. This church's initiatives reveal how giving occurs through material infrastructures of philanthropy that shape the perceived obligations, aspirations, and identities of donors.

Brook Wilensky-Lanford, University of North Carolina


Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s 1868 novel *The Gates Ajar*, said to be the second-best-selling work of fiction of the 19th century after *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, popularized a radically accessible vision of the afterlife among mainstream American Protestants. The novel remained continuously in print between 1868 and 1909, as the “gates ajar” trope simultaneously proliferated in other material forms: hymns, theatrical productions, flower arrangements and topiary, funerary societies. There is often presumed to be an alliance between the book’s popularity and its implicit (and explicit) theology: the more people
encountered the “gates ajar” in either its textual or material form, the more inclusive its vision of its afterlife was seen to be. I explore and problematize the dynamics of this relationship, focusing particularly on the theatrical “gates ajar,” which was widely incorporated as a grand finale into nationally touring productions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, or “Tom-shows.”

**A19-406**
Professional Development
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
**Status of LGBTQ Persons in the Profession Committee**
Theme: **Annual LGBTQIA+ Professional Development Conversation/Mixer**
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Benae Beamon, Bucknell University, Presiding

This session will replace the Status of LGBTQ’s Annual Luncheon and offers an opportunity for individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ to come connect around both professional development and fellowship. With a variety of LGBTQ mentors and tables that will explore a range of topics from scholarly production to joy and wellness within the academy, this space provides an informal venue within which individuals can engage, offer inquiries, and connect around specific concerns professional and social.

**Panelists**
Eziaku Nwokocha, University of Miami

**A19-424**
Study of Islam Unit
Theme: **Reimagining Gendered Being in Muslim Discourse**
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Elliott Bazzano, Le Moyne College, Presiding

This session will analyze different perspectives on gender in Islamic discourse.

- Nura Sophia Liepsner, Princeton University

*Ways of Being. ‘A’isha Taymūr’s conceptualization male guardianship and divine order.*

The chapter contributes to a discussion in Islamic studies about the production of religious knowledge in late Ottoman Egypt not from the centers of learning and power but from the epistemological margins of women’s writings. Through an interdisciplinary focus on Islamic and gender studies, the goal is to highlight a tension in Taymūr’s writing between a commitment to gender norms as rooted in the Islamic tradition, on one hand, and a sharp critique of male expectations and behavior, on the other. Another goal is to argue that unlike later feminists, Taymūr is not espousing views of gender-equality, but whether men have earned the privileged position that God has given to them. Throughout, it argues that despite Taymūr’s partial support of gendered hierarchies, her
writing offers avenues to challenge these relations of power and imagine how God-human relations may be conceived beyond the bounds of colonialism and the modern nation state.

- Hinasahar Muneeruddin, University of North Carolina

**Twitter Trans(formations): Re-Envisioning Queer & Trans Muslim Becoming in the Digital Space**

Using digital ethnography and literature in Islamic Studies that explores digital space (Piela, Riley, Auston), this paper explores how queer and trans Muslims reclaim digital space to affirm their Muslim, racial, and gender identities. Faisal Alam, a Pakistani queer Muslim, started an email-based listserv in 1997, marking the first time LGBTQ Muslims were able to virtually gather. Since then, digital platforms serve as a site in which queer and trans U.S. Muslims cultivate communities where they may re-envision an inclusive space for themselves. Through short tweets, trans and queer Muslims find and create niches in digital spaces such as Twitter—transforming this virtual niche into a space where they may explore their racial, gender, sexual and Muslim identities. This paper ultimately argues that digital platforms provide strategic outlets for challenging and re-envisioning the material realities of racialized queer and trans Muslim bodies in the U.S.

- Samira Musleh, University of Minnesota

**Feminist and Islamic Perspectives on the Labor of Biological Reproduction**

This paper charts how reproductive labor is discussed in the Qur’an and the Hadith literature and put these source materials in conversation with major theoretical debates on reproductive labor in feminist theory. This comparative, theoretical analysis seeks to understand how contemporary conversations on Islam’s treatment of reproductive labor have been informed by, and interacted with, dominant Euro-American and feminist discourses on the matter. Moreover, I seek to illuminate whether and how our attitude towards reproductive labor has transformed from the premodern to the modern period. Most importantly, problematizing the perception of biologically reproductive labor, e.g., pregnancy and childbirth, as temporally bound activities, I define it as a lifelong process, not very different from the perpetual nature of housework. My goal is to trace the various constituent parts of this form of labor in the foundational Islamic texts toward a theoretical formulation of Islam’s approach to the labor of biological reproduction.

A19-425

**Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit**

Theme: Afterlives of Christianity: Supersession and the Scholarly Construction of Religion

Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Emily Filler, Washington and Lee University, Presiding

The aim of the panel is to think about the idea of supersession outside of a purely theological register, so as to get a sense of the way that supersession survives or persists in academic
scholarship on religion, especially where such scholarship self-consciously positions itself as secular and scientific. We aim to pay attention to supersession as something that is *originally* Christian, but which *spills over* its original theological and ecclesiological boundaries into numerous other material and intellectual domains: imperial and colonial projects, domestic policies regarding religious others (especially, though not only, Jews), religious materialities and aesthetics, philosophies of history, ethnographic ethics, comparative projects in linguistics and mythologies, debates about secularism, etc. Our hope is that our panel will encourage more scholarly reflection on the question of supersession throughout the academy.

- Benjamin Steele-Fisher, University of California, Davis

*Mystography and the Jewish Question: Between Lack and Excess*

This paper surveys the semantic deployment of Judaism and “the Jew” across Orientalist discourses on myth in the modern scholarly construction of “religion,” showing how mythography itself became imbricated with the politics of Jewish Emancipation. As an instance of what has been called “thinking with Judaism,” the paper argues that Jews and Judaism function for mythographers as floating signifiers crucial for the construction and maintenance of Euro-Christian identity vis-à-vis its colonized Others. In particular, Judaism serves as a superseded, legitimating negativity for either romantic nationalism or enlightened secularity fueled by either the valorization or denigration of myth. This is done by emphasizing either the lack or excess of myth in Jewish tradition relative to other religions. Finally, the paper reflects upon the phenomenon’s significance, contending that mythography betrays a larger supersessionism at work in the study of religion engendering the Orientalization of the Jew and the Judaization of the Orient.

- Timothy Snediker, University of California, Santa Barbara

*How Do We Recognize Christianity?*

In this paper, I contend that the work of the German philologist and literary critic Erich Auerbach can illuminate the internal structure of Christianity’s ‘founding moment,’ where Christianity recognizes itself by inventing itself and its others (especially Judaism) as religions. Auerbach’s analysis of the ancient theological paradigm of figural interpretation reveals a *logic of supersession* that grounds Christianity’s claim to be the privileged medium of the historical consciousness of the West. It is likely that this logic of supersession survives in philosophical and critical scholarship on religion today, especially in fields such as continental philosophy of religion, where even ostensibly critical engagement with theological materials runs the risk of repeating and reproducing the supersessionist gesture. My hope is that making the logic of supersession explicit will aid philosophers and scholars of religion in their understanding of both Christianity and its secular afterlives.

- Madison Tarleton, College of Charleston

*Personifications of Alterity and Theological Superiority: Strasbourg’s Synagoga and*
Ecclesia as an Illustrative Example of Material Supersession in Medieval Europe

In this paper, I argue that the figural pairing of Synagoga and Ecclesia from Strausburg Cathedral rests on the theological triumph of Christianity over Judaism, making the Jews of Medieval Europe a convenient representation of material supersession and alterity in the Middle Ages and Medieval world. Using female scholars of anti-Judaic art in the Medieval World, Sara Lipton, Debra Strickland, and Nina Rowe, in conjunction with material culture scholarship, I contend that the social and political conditions that created this façade, as well as the ever-growing distrust for Jews and Jewish communities across Northern Europe, sent a clear message to Jews and Christians in this city regarding alterity and theological superiority in the city of Strasbourg.

- Lucas Wright, University of California, Irvine

Theory and Narration: Philosophy of Religion, Supersessionism, and the Status of History

In this presentation, I investigate how a crucial and prominent presupposition that undergirds so much work in what is broadly called religious studies, or the study of religion, appears in certain philosophical treatments of religion. That presupposition is history as a concept, as a reality, and as a phenomenologically necessary horizon for the possibility of the coherence of taking a theoretical position. The form of said positions is, as a result, narratival. I make these points by looking at the concept of supersessionism in G.W.F. Hegel and Enrique Dussel. I argue that in order to understand what supersessionism is, we must look at supersession as a theory of and narrative position vis-à-vis what we call history.

Responding

Larisa Reznik, Pomona College

A19-426
Theology of Martin Luther King Jr. Unit
Theme: New Cartographies in Kingian Studies
Saturday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Larry Perry, University of Tennessee, Presiding

This session brings together scholars who are charting new territory in the realm of Kingian studies. It is the aim of the panel to explore new ways of reading King and the traditions from which he sourced, including the Black Church. New cartographies are about creating new maps and new paths that push human understanding. This panel introduces new theories that center the theology of Martin Luther King, Jr. in relation to other disciplines. To this end, the papers in this session will place King in conversation new theories of violence, abolition theory, and the primordial.
Jaden Janak, University of Texas

*The Beloved Community as Abolition: Mutuality, Solidarity and Kingian Philosophies of Liberation*

#ReclaimMLK, a social medica hashtag and clarion call for the Movement for Black Lives and its supporters, celebrates the radical vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and denounces efforts to sanitize his legacy. This paper pushes that call further by connecting King’s work against the carceral state to contemporary movements for prison industrial complex (P.I.C.) abolition. King’s dream of a beloved community, structured in principles of global solidarity non-violent mutuality, and support for all people, is a dream of P.I.C. abolition. For a beloved community cannot exist within a world dictated by carceral logics, jails and prisons, state surveillance, and racial capitalism. King’s insurgent dream of liberation is still alive today in the work of P.I.C. abolition.

David Justice, Saint Louis University

*King and the Human: Recovering and Reimagining the Dream of a Beloved Community*

King saw resistance to and destruction of the forces of oppression in our world as culminating in the creation of a new kind of humanity. This new humanity rejects the individualism and paradigm of war (as laid out by Nelson Maldanado-Torres in *Against War*) and Enlightenment idolization of white manhood and instead sees all humans as inherently persons-in-community. Though King retains the term “human,” I argue that his goal was to fundamentally reshape humanity and eradicate the anti-Black elements contained therein. However, though I argue that King was pursuing the goal of fundamentally reshaping what it means to be human, he retained aspects of patriarchy within his vision of a new humanity.

Aaron Grizzell, Graduate Theological Union

*Martin Luther King, Jr's Black Religious Primordium*

This paper looks to approach Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from a historico-theoretical lens of Black Religion that takes a critical look at his sacred formation from the perspective of a religious stance that is sourced in African spiritual traditions and sacred meanings tied to concrete experience with nature and rooted in the phenomenological and practical primordium of the Middle Passage experience. I first examine the works of Lewis Baldwin and Rufus Burrow, who enable us to view the growth of King’s thought through the immediate community and environment within which he emerged. And, I proceed to offer elements that may have served to underwrite the communities and environments wherein these common morés and values were found by investigating a primordial observation regarding King’s religious framework that guided his scholarship and social activism.
Business Meeting

Leonard McKinnis, University of Illinois, Presiding
Montague Williams, Point Loma Nazarene University, Presiding

A19-427
Books under Discussion
Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Unit
Theme: Ninetieth Anniversary of The Socialist Decision (Wipf & Stock, 2012)
Saturday, 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM (In Person)
Rachel Sophia Baard, Union Presbyterian Seminary, Presiding

This panel brings together contemporary questions, thoughtful assessments, and critiques of the political theology of Paul Tillich. As 2022 represents the 50-year anniversary of the first English publication of Die sozialistische Entscheidung (The Socialist Decision), the date of our meeting prompts us to consider presentations that examine the differences, influences, and distinctions in Tillich’s contribution to Germanic social and political thought with respect to his systematic theology, theology of culture, concept of theological symbolism, and his perspectives on Marxism and social democracy, political romanticism, nationalism, antisemitism, militarism, and capitalism. We are particularly interested in papers that take on diverse approaches in appraising the historical and modern relevance of Tillich’s thought on the relationship between faith and politics for combating social, economic, political, and environmental catastrophes. Papers may draw upon a variety of theoretical perspectives (e.g., political science, cultural and social theory, continental philosophy, liberation theology, feminist political theory, feminist/womanist/mujerista theology, queer theory, disability studies, critical race theory and whiteness studies, decolonial thought, etc.).

- Victoria Slabinski, University of Virginia

On “Myths of Origin” and the “True Origin”: Tillich’s Socialist Decision and Contemporary Post/De-Colonial Considerations

This paper begins with an interpretative account of the use of “origins” language in Paul Tillich’s The Socialist Decision, considering the ambiguity of the referent of his phrase “groups related to the origin.” Next, this paper considers a transposition of The Socialist Decision’s claims into the contemporary U.S. context, setting Tillich’s proposals for connection with the “true origin” and transcendence of “myths of origin” within an expanded post/de-colonial framework that accounts for groups differently impacted by legacies of colonialism. In a time in which various conceptions of “origins” are mobilized towards efforts as divergent as anti-racist resistance against cultural imperialism, Indigenous decolonization movements, and white Christian nationalism, a complexification of “origins”-related terminology appears necessary. Drawing on postcolonial theories critical of simplistic nostalgia, this paper raises questions that emerge around Tillich’s “origins”-terminology and inquires into the potential of his “socialist decision” to represent, also, an anti-colonial decision.
Kirk MacGregor, McPherson College

*The Power of Religious Socialism to Combat Global Climate Catastrophes*

This paper employs environmental ethics to appraise the modern relevance of Tillich’s religious socialism for combating catastrophes associated with global climate change. I argue that Tillich’s approach to centralization, technology, and government cooperation underwrites a twofold approach to remedying climate change: partially solving the problem politically, as advocated by Naomi Klein, and partially solving the problem technologically, as advocated by John Latham and Stephen Salter. Politically, corporations and industries presently responsible for pollution would be nationalized and then regulated by a global partnership of democratic governments. Technologically, marine cloud brightening (assuming its risks do not outweigh its benefits) would be supported by Tillich’s positive recognition of the limitless potential of science to benefit humanity as a whole.

**Reviewers**

Kristin Johnston Largen, Wartburg Theological Seminary

**A19-500**

Presidental Theme - Religion and Catastrophe  
**Presidental Address**  
Theme: **Presidential Address - Mayra Rivera**  
Saturday, 7:00 PM-8:00 PM (In Person)  
Amir Hussain, Loyola Marymount University, Presiding

**Panelists**

Mayra Rivera, Harvard University

**A19-503**

Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons  
**International Connections Committee**  
Theme: **International Members Reception**  
Saturday, 8:30 PM-10:00 PM (In Person)  
Olga Kazmina, Moscow State University, Presiding

International members reception

**Panelists**

John P. Burgess, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary  
Wei-Jen Chen, Chicago Theological Seminary  
Kimberly Hill, University of Texas, Dallas
A19-501
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
**Journal of the American Academy of Religion (JAAR)**
Theme: **JAAR Reception for Authors and Editorial Board Members**
Saturday, 8:30 PM-10:00 PM (In Person)

A19-502
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
**Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession Committee**
Theme: **Annual LGBTIQ Reception**
Saturday, 9:00 PM-10:30 PM (In Person)
Benae Beamon, Bucknell University, Presiding

This event is an annual opportunity for LGBTIQ individuals to connect in fellowship and socialize. While this also creates an opportunity for networking and professional development, its purpose is to create space to engage and exchange informally.

**Panelists**

W. Scott Haldeman, Chicago Theological Seminary

A20-100
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
**American Academy of Religion**
Theme: **Annual Business Meeting**
Sunday, 7:30 AM-8:45 AM (In Person)
Mayra Rivera, Harvard University, Presiding
Alice Hunt, American Academy of Religion, Presiding

Join the AAR Board of Directors for a brief business meeting.

A20-101
**Graduate Student Committee**
Theme: **Graduate Student Committee Business Meeting**
Sunday, 9:00 AM-9:30 AM (In Person)
Sabina Ali, Indiana University, Presiding

*Attention graduate students!* We will be holding our annual business meeting in the Student Lounge. We encourage you to attend the meeting, connect with your regional AAR student directors, and share your requests, concerns and/or suggestions for AAR’s 2023 Annual Meeting with the Graduate Student Committee.
A20-102
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
African Diaspora Religions Unit
Theme: The Snake Who Swallowed Its Own Tail: Haiti, Catastrophe, and the Controversy of Religious Resilience
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Kyrah Malika Daniels, Emory University, Presiding

Panel proposal: Haiti, the first anti-imperial and post-emancipation nation-state in the world, has endured innumerable atrocities in its history. This includes Haiti’s 13-year war for independence, economic embargoes, foreign military occupations, as well as devastating natural disasters, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Over the past 30 years, journalists have referred to Haitians as “resilient” to signal their tenacity in facing catastrophe. But the trouble with identifying a people’s “resilience” is that it removes accountability from the structural inequities caused by foreign powers (Jiha 2021). In this multidisciplinary roundtable, scholars with expertise in Pan-Africanism, International Studies, History, Anthropology, Gender Studies, and Religion convene to unpack the controversies surrounding notions of Haitian resilience. Recalling Haiti’s plural religious history of Vodou, Catholicism, and Protestantism during periods of crisis and catastrophe, we address how religious devotees turn to the divine world for strength amidst adversity, and also embody a sense of longevity that extends beyond resilience.

Panelists
Nathalie Frédéric Pierre, Howard University
Mamyrah Douger-Prosper, University of California, Irvine
Eziaku Nwokocha, University of Miami
Shamara Alhassan, Arizona State University

A20-103
Books under Discussion
Afro-American Religious History Unit and Pentecostal-Charismatic Movements Unit
Theme: 15th Anniversary Book Panel on Dr. Anthea Butler’s Women in the Church of God in Christ (University of North Carolina Press, 2007)
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Kijan Bloomfield, Columbia University, Presiding

2022 marks the 15th anniversary of Dr. Anthea Butler’s groundbreaking book, *Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World* (University of North Carolina Press, 2007). Within this study, Butler argued, “Making use of a traditional role, motherhood, the women of COGIC carved a niche of spiritual and temporal power for themselves within a black patriarchy that continues to assert its leadership and authority over women by denying them ordination yet allows them to have tremendous power and authority.” In the spirit of celebrating this important work, its author, and the Black churchwomen at its center, this roundtable brings together scholars of African American religious history, women’s religious history, and Pentecostal history to think critically about the book’s interventions in religious studies, to assess the current
state of the field of Black Pentecostal studies, and to chart new directions for future research.

**Panelists**

Judith Casselberry, Bowdoin College  
Ahmad Greene-Hayes, Northwestern University  
Ambre Dromgoole, Yale University  
Jonathan Langston Chism, University of Houston, Downtown  
Monique Moultrie, Georgia State University  
David Daniels, McCormick Theological Seminary

**Responding**

Anthea Butler, University of Pennsylvania

A20-104  
**Anthropology of Religion Unit**  
Theme: **Body, Technology, Object: ethnographic perspectives on material religion**  
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
James Bielo, Miami University, Ohio, Presiding

- Ian VanderMeulen, New York University

  *Digitizing the Divine: Sonic Materiality and mp3 Qur’ans*

  This paper engages the problem of “scriptural materialities” through the case of Qur’anic recitation recordings circulated in mp3 format. I focus ethnographically on Yassine, a bootleg CD vendor in the traditional quarter of Rabat who, at a time of increasing interest in Qur’anic recitation, sells Qur’anic CDs almost exclusively in mp3 format. Though usually deployed to facilitate “low bandwidth” circulation, here mp3 allows recitations of the entire Qur’an—normally several hours in length—to fit on a single CD. Thus, although digital media is mythologized as “immaterial,” here it carries distinctly material import, helping to forge a connection between the sonic materiality of “the complete Qur’an” (al-quran al-kamil) and a specific medium of circulation, the CD. This, I argue, implicates the mp3 in an ethics of Qur’anic “perfection” rooted in a sense of completeness—evoked by parallel constructions of the Prophet as “the perfect human” (al-insan al-kamil).

- Christina Pasqua, University of Toronto

  *(Re)producing the Bible: Notes on the Creative Labor behind Visual Translation*

  Taking the contributions of visual anthropology into consideration, this paper draws attention to the materiality of hand-drawing the Bible, and the physical labour involved in such processes, to shape an understanding of the Bible as both a word and image-based text with a long material history in North American forms of Christianity. Through a
practice-based method, I challenge the assumption that creativity lies solely with the original creator of a literary text (or religious scriptures) to show how the translator is doing creative and interpretive work of their own when retelling these stories.

- Sowparnika Balaswaminathan, Concordia University, Montreal

*Casting Selves: Religious Labor, Aesthetic Practice, and the Commodity Object*

South Indian bronzes are a well-recognized, aesthetically and religiously venerated art object, the earliest of which has been traced to the 8th century (Śrīnivasan 2004). The decline of the bronzecasting tradition during the colonial period necessitated governmental efforts to revive the craft through art education and commodity promotion. These competing claims over the status and valence of bronzes and bronzecasting has caused a need for the community of sculptors who make these bronzes to straddle sacred, secular, and heritage spheres. In this paper, I interrogate how labor is theorized by artisan communities in terms of aesthetic and ethical obligations. I further examine how caste location allows artisans to construct their labor as “proper” and the consequent resistances that emanate from marginalized sculptors.

- Marisa Franz, New York University

*Dust to Dust: Graveside Tributes at a Cemetery and Site-Specific Decay*

This paper examines the role of decay in material religion through engaging with ritual studies and creative destruction as a heritage model. Based on research conducted at a historic and active cemetery in Brooklyn, New York, I approach graveside tributes as ritual objects embedded in a site specific and temporally finite materiality. Material studies often prioritize singular and preserved things—museum pieces, temple art, or heirlooms passed down in families—but these graveside materials are often ordinary commodities such as bottles of alcohol, plastic flowers, and, once, a pair of eggplants. As decaying things, these become markers of time and space; Palm Sunday crosses rot after the spring rainfalls and then are replaced by wreaths with decorative plastic eggs. The passage of time and the decay animate these objects as ritual and relational things connecting the living and the dead, and the artificial and the natural in a living environment.

**Responding**

Zareena Grewal, Yale University

*A20-105*

**Arts, Literature, and Religion Unit**

Theme: *Aesthetics of Decay*

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

George Pati, Valparaiso University, Presiding
This panel examines various narratives and reflects on aging, catastrophe, disfigurement, death, and pathos. Exploring Octavia Butler's *Earthseed* series, Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam* trilogy, Simone de Beauvoir's *A Very Easy* Death, and the story of ninth-century Byzantine brothers Theodore and Theophanes, and pathographical icons illustrate how literary and visual depictions of aging, catastrophe, disfigurement, death, and pathos invites us to think about arts, literature, and religion with a renewed sense of appreciation.

- **Ryan Darr, Princeton University**

  *Religion through and beyond Catastrophe: Octavia Butler and Margaret Atwood*

  Both Octavia Butler's *Earthseed* series and Margaret Atwood's *MaddAdda* trilogy imagine the emergence of new religious movements and explore their role in adapting to and living through social and environmental catastrophe. In both works, religious movements prove central to the capacity of individuals and communities to move beyond nostalgia for the past or mere survival in the present and toward the creation of new ways of being. This paper explores convergences and divergences between how religion functions in the two works. Both, I argue, imagine communities whose power comes primarily from their capacity to meet human need. Religious teachings are central but also shadowed by constant expressions of doubt and disbelief. Yet despite the constant shadow of doubt and disbelief, religious teachings are crucial – in differing ways in the two works – to the power of the communities to move people through and beyond catastrophe.

- **Tara Flanagan, Maria College**

  *Simone de Beauvoir on Aesthetics, Aging, and the Limits of Medicine*

  Using narrative medicine as an interpretive framework, this presentation analyzes Simone de Beauvoir’s account of her mother’s hospital experience in *A Very Easy Death* as representative of the social and experiential motivations for and consequences of using life-prolonging technology for patients facing the end of life. The presentation addresses how the experience of dependent care is shaped by the presence of medical technology both in the context of the hospital and the hospice model of care. De Beauvoir’s account illustrates the aesthetics and the experiential dimension of the use of medical technology for end-of-life patients from a family member’s perspective. Offering valuable, autobiographical insight on the clinical experience, *A Very Easy Death* serves as a resource for moral reflection for those practicing methods in narrative medicine, such as chaplains, particularly those who are interested in the phenomenological experience of the clinical encounter and ethical perspectives on clinical care.

- **Nikolas Hoel, Northeastern Illinois University**

  *Disfigurement as Power in Byzantium: The Literary Representation of the Strange Case*
The story of ninth-century Byzantine brothers Theodore and Theophanes seems to take the normal perceptions of disability and invert them. Both men were disfigured for their iconodule beliefs, became saints, and gained great spiritual authority. There were not weak or passive. When they had verses etched in their foreheads, the brothers become “written upon,” or *Graptoi*. Yet, how did they come to have power in a society that prized perfection of the body? This paper examines the literary depiction of the brothers through the lens of disability theory. Yet, this method does not seem to fully answer the question. As a result, animal and monster theory are combined with disability theory to reassess the historical material. This paper demonstrates that through the medium of sacred literary texts, inversions of social norms and perceptions of disability are possible, and even necessary to reach the goals for which the texts are written.

- Kristen Drahos, Carthage College

*Pathography as Iconography: Narrative Icons for the Church*

I argue that Devan Stahl Stahl’s *Imaging and Imagining Illness* (2018) introduces a collaborative form of writing that serves as a model for transforming pathography into iconography. I begin by considering various uses of pathography, with a focus on clinical and narrative pathography, and I outline their merits as well as limitations. I claim that another form of pathography—iconographic pathography—offers valuable opportunities for expanding this genre. I show that in a world with increasing numbers of people living into chronic illness, the Church has the urgent responsibility to embrace the power of pathographical icons.

**Business Meeting**

Gloria Hernández, West Chester University, Presiding
George Pati, Valparaiso University, Presiding

**A20-106**

Asian North American Religion, Culture and Society Unit and Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism Unit

Theme: *Asian American Settler Colonialism and Climate Change: Notes Towards a New Conversation*

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Kathy Chow, Yale University, Presiding

Composed of a mix of faculty and students, this roundtable brings a diverse set of analytical perspectives to the topic of Asian American settler colonialism. Some of our shared questions include: How do the imagined roles for Asian Americans in the U.S. settler state contribute to rationalizations of coloniality, and what are their theological dimensions? What relationships to land, nature, and place take shape in the context of Asian American subjugation by and collaboration with empire? How do coercion, objectification, and racialization condition the
ways that Asian American subjects participate in settler colonial projects? What roles do religious narratives, imaginaries, and structures of reasoning play in rationalizing these hierarchies and recruiting Asian Americans into their service?

Panelists

Eleanor Craig, Harvard University  
Mihee Kim-Kort, Indiana University  
SueJeanne Koh, University of California, Irvine

Responding

Tammy Ho, University of California, Riverside

A20-107  
Bioethics and Religion Unit and Japanese Religions Unit  
Theme: Bioethics and Religious Pluralism in the Age of Covid and Advanced Medical Technology  
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Jessica Starling, Lewis and Clark College, Presiding

This session seeks better understanding of the diverse religious and religiously-inspired roles and decision-making frameworks that emerged during Covid-19 and in transplant medicine.

- Tim Graf, Nanzan University

*Buddhist Clerical Minorities during COVID-19 in Japan*

Based on ethnographic research in Japan, this paper argues that the priests most vulnerable to COVID-19-related disruptions, namely social distancing measures, belong to clerical minority groups. I will introduce three different categories of priests to illustrate their experiences and responses to the pandemic: 1) priests with only few parishioners or without temples, who lost their income as assistants (*yakusō*) during larger rituals and events, due to the downsizing of funerals and participant limitations in mortuary rituals; 2) female Buddhist priests who also are mothers and caregivers; 3) ethnic minorities, notably Vietnamese clergy who provided aid for Asian workers that had lost their jobs and homes in Japan. By drawing on theories of intersectionality, the paper examines how diverse experiences of marginalization and agency among Buddhist clerical minorities intersect on the ground. I will also demonstrate how responses to the pandemic are rooted in pre-pandemic conditions and post-disaster networks.

- Nathan Knutson, Harvard University

*Evaluating Alcohol Related Liver Transplant Practices Through Contemporary Pagan Ethics*
The transplanting of a liver into a patient whose diagnoses include alcohol use disorder (AUD) and alcoholic lived disease (ALD) brings about ethically difficult situations for all those involved. Religious ethics are not routinely employed within such a decision making process because of modern attempts to separate religion from the secular world of medicine. However, by utilizing the ethical concepts of nature-based religion a new less harmful understanding of liver transplant ethics can be created. This paper will draw upon the ethical framework of nature-based spirituality to engage the bioethical concerns of alcohol related liver transplantation from this previously unconsidered religious lens. Such an approach will allow for more nuanced dialog around the implications of solid organ transplantation’s ethically rigorous components in addition to serving as an initial case study for the potential wider use of contemporary Pagan ethics within the existing arenas of bioethical research and thought.

- Kevin Lazarus, Emory University

*Lessons from Familial Moral Agency in the COVID ICU*

In an effort to curb spread of COVID-19, most hospitals across the country drastically restricted or prohibited family visitation. While intended to promote public health, these restrictions had devastating effects on families unable to be present with loved ones. Throughout the pandemic, many news stories have highlighted the great, even heroic, lengths that medical providers have gone to mitigate these harms. However, these news stories often fail to highlight how patients and families themselves act as moral agents in response to physical separation.

In recognition of this gap, this paper is a case study of familial moral agency under the constraint of hospital visitation policies, drawing upon interviews with ICU chaplains to access narratives of patients’ families. This paper concludes by lifting up the moral wisdom of families as guidance for healthcare professionals (especially chaplains) seeking to cultivate greater empathy and craft more equitable healthcare policies and practices.

- Nichole Flores, University of Virginia

*Solidarity and Institutional Partnerships: Lessons from Effective Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic among Black and Brown Communities*

What has the COVID-19 pandemic taught us about theology, health care, and *comunidades Latinas*? To address this question, this presentation examines the situation of the Black and Brown “essential workers” during the COVID-19 pandemic. First employing Pope Francis’s conception of the “throwaway culture” to examine the interlocking structures that deem the lives of Black and Brown lives disposable within the global economy, the presentation then examines organizational responses to the pandemic that were orchestrated to protect Black and Brown people. Specifically, the presentation addresses instances of cooperation among religious institutions and public health organizations that proved crucial to pandemic response in these communities.
These practices suggest several important tasks for bioethics and Latine theology: (1) the need for an account of parish cooperation with public institutions, (2) the priority of solidarity among Black and Brown communities, and (3) the need for greater engagement between bioethics and Latine theology.

A20-108

Body and Religion Unit

Theme: Borders and Bodies: Blood, Flesh, Disease, Trauma
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Wesley Barker, Mercer University, Presiding

This panel engages borders and crossings of and by bodies from historical, anthropological, and theological perspectives. Collectively, these panels interrogate bodies’ relations to the cultural and religious worlds in which they are inscribed while also considering how crossings transform the physical and conceptual boundaries between body and spirit, body and society, body and politics.

- Adam Newman, University of Illinois

The Cow's Curse: Disease, Immunity, and the Body Politic in a North Indian Kingdom

This paper applies the biopolitical philosophy of Roberto Esposito to representations of “foreign” and tribal bodies in a fifteenth century Hindu narrative titled Ekaliṅgamāhātmyam (ELM), a text that glorifies the kingdom of Mewar, Rajasthan. I argue that the ELM reflects the metaphor of the ‘body politic’ and makes an analogical comparison between disease trespassing the borders of the biological body and enemies who trespass the political borders of the body politic. However, in keeping with the analogy of the immune system of the individual body, in order to immunize the political body against foreign invasion a small portion of that very threat must be allowed past the border. Despite describing invading bodies as both violent and prone to disease, the ELM allows space for some of these groups to dwell within the kingdom, carrying as they do both the source of conflict and its very resolution.

- Manuela Ceballos, University of Tennessee

The Blood and Body of Saint Teresa

In this paper, I tell the story of how the body of Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582) became an object of veneration after her death. I also examine how prevailing ideas about blood and concepts of purity and impurity impacted her status as a saint. First, I explore how ideas about blood and residual bodily matter were linked to religious authority in early modern Spain. I then focus on narratives on the blood and balm produced by Teresa’s body after her death and the impact that these residual substances had in the popular imagination and her model of sainthood. I show that concepts of purity and impurity are malleable and heavily influenced by the contexts in which they emerge. Finally, I demonstrate that blood practices and concepts, as well as ideas about residue, can be central to the
construction of bodily hierarchies.

- Katherine Guerrero, Yale University

*In the Bushes Along the River Bank: Sentient Flesh at the U.S-Mexican Border*

Alongside R.A. Judy’s theorization of flesh in *Sentient Flesh*, this paper will explore the performance of fugitive migrant bodies at the U.S-Mexican Border to speak of how this flesh persists against the violence inherent to the discourse of modernity, and in their persistence poses a challenge to modern dominant discourses of being.

With *Sentient Flesh*, this paper will explore the performance of fugitive migrant flesh at the U.S-Mexican Border to ask, how does the flesh that runs, and disappears at the border gets marked by the violence of modernity? How does the act of border crossing demarcate both the violence of religion and offers an enactment for a distinct way of being-ness and human-ness opposite to that which upholds modern notions of the self? How does this flesh point to practices of escape demarcating a religiosity that addresses how to survive a world where violent regimes are imposed on us?

- Hye Hyun Han, Graduate Theological Union

*Somatic Spirituality for those Traumatized by Human Objectification: Utilizing Authentic Movement as a Spiritual Practice*

The aim of this research is to explore the relationship between dance, trauma, and spirituality, based on three disciplines: Christian Spirituality, Religious Education, and the Arts, to help victims of human objectification. As a means of overcoming negative perceptions of the body prevalent in Christianity, the study suggests a somatic spirituality that employs authentic movement aimed at healing the victims of human objectification suffering from ontological dissonance. This embodied spiritual practice starts from the premise that the human body is the spiritual space where God dwells, and our bodies and spirits are strongly connected. The traumatized might recognize their dignity and inner strength through a spiritual experience of their bodies, selves, and the divine, as part of a process of embodied liberation.

A20-109

Buddhism Unit

Theme: *Performing Time in Buddhist Literature: Creative Re-imaginings of Past, Present, and Future*

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Chenxing Han, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Presiding

Buddhist literature throughout time has danced between multiple temporalities, inducting its audiences into narratives that presence the past, predict the future, and transcend both. The narratives of crisis and catastrophe rampant in our contemporary moment offer a unique opportunity to call into question a liberal secular vision of linear, progressive time as a norm, and
instead to look to alternative temporal framings as a way to re-imagine our relationship to past, present, and future. Our panel explores temporal plays in Buddhist writings as a resource to transform narratives of catastrophe. Our topics span from creative interpretations of the nidāna “At one time,” to affective responses of joy as a way to rewrite the past and future, to narrativizing the moment of straying into samsaric existence as a continual expression of gnosis, to ritual performances of the Heart Sūtra as an inter-religious performance of unity in the aftermath of disaster.

- Elaine Lai, Stanford University

*Straying into Samsaric Time According to Heart Essence Literature*

Samsaric time has traditionally been portrayed in a negative sense; wandering in cyclic existence is a perpetual form of suffering propelled by afflictive karma. My paper seeks to understand what other modes of Buddhist temporality are available for us to consider the question of suffering and its repetitive cycles. How might Buddhists have experienced themselves as temporal beings in a more enlivening way? Using a previously unstudied Heart Essence (*snying thig*) tantra called *Tantra of the Sun: Blazing Luminous Matrix of Samantabhadri* (*Kun tu bzang mo klong gsal ’bar ma nyi ma ’i rgyud*) that features a female Buddha speaking to a group of dākinīs, I argue that this tantra performs multiple temporalities on its readers, inviting us to experience the pivotal moment of straying from primordial gnosis into samsaric existence as an expansive creative act in which infinite possibilities for liberation co-emerge within every unfolding moment.

- Sinae Kim, Princeton University

*When is “One Time” (yishi 一時)?*

This paper discusses Buddhist preachers’ explanation of the phrase “[at] one time” (Ch. yishi) in the opening formula of sūtras in medieval China by analyzing sūtra lecture texts from Dunhuang. Comparing preachers’ interpretations to earlier scriptural commentaries, I argue that preachers’ exegesis is based on the indigenous cosmology of “sympathetic resonance” (ganying), as earlier commentaries were too. Yet, the two differ in their application of the term. Preachers interpret “one time” as transtemporal and transhistorical. It is no longer confined to a particular historical time of the Buddha’s sermon; any corresponding moment between a teacher speaking the Dharma and a disciple hearing it constitutes “one time.” This paper shows that preachers’ use of metaphors and analogies helped convince the audience that they did not merely speak for the Buddha but spoke as the Buddha and the present moment is none other than the “one time.”

- Adam Miller, University of Chicago

*(Re)Writing the Past (and Future) through Joy: The Story of Māra in the Precious Banner Sūtra*
In a past-life narrative (pūrvayoga) of the Precious Banner Sūtra (Ratnaketuparivarta), a prior incarnation of Māra asks a prior incarnation of Śākyamuni to foretell him to awakening when the latter attains buddhahood in the future. But the account’s narrator, none other than Śākyamuni himself, does not specify how or even whether his previous incarnation responded. Readers might assume that Śākyamuni’s narrative is fashioned out of (onto) logically prior “story stuff,” and thus that whatever happened cannot be changed. But reading Śākyamuni’s silence together with his subsequent declaration to Māra that the latter will receive prophecy if only he would find joy in the Dharma, I argue that the sūtra gives Māra a chance to (re)write his past such that his future is radically altered. In closing, I further suggest that the sūtra offers the same transformative promise to readers through such narrative strategies as focalization, analepsis, prolepsis, and self-reference.

- Shayne Dahl, Harvard University

*The Heart Sutra in Contemporary Japanese Mountain Asceticism*

While much has been written about the historical transmission and semiotic value of the Heart Sutra, it has seldom been analyzed from an ethnographic perspective that attends to the sociopolitical dynamics of contemporary performance. In this paper, I consider the role of the Heart Sutra in mountain asceticism (Shugendō) as practiced in Dewa Sanzan, a sacred mountain range in northeastern Japan. Drawing on 24 months of ethnographic fieldwork, I suggest that the recitation of the Heart Sutra by contemporary ascetics is not merely a matter of religious devotion. It is also a speech act that conjures Buddhist modes of historical consciousness in a religious space dominated by Shinto. Beyond text, the Heart Sutra works as a prism refracting history, sociality, grief, and the hope of reconciliation between longstanding rivals in the shared space of sacred mountains.

**Responding**

Natalie Gummer, Beloit College

**Business Meeting**

Reiko Ohnuma, Dartmouth College, Presiding
Bryan Lowe, Princeton University, Presiding

A20-110

**Catholic Studies Unit and Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit**

Theme: *Real Lives, Real Presence: A Roundtable on Robert Orsi's Contributions to the Study of Religion*

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Matthew Cressler, College of Charleston, Presiding

Robert Orsi began his first book by declaring, “It is the central assumption of this history that the [annual festa of the Madonna of 115th Street] cannot be understood apart from an understanding
of the lives of the people who took part in it.” He insisted that religion must be studied amidst the joys, sorrows, sufferings, and idiosyncrasies of ordinary life. When viewed from this vantage point, it became impossible to ignore the real presence of special suprahuman beings in people’s lives. This emphasis on real lives and real presence raises critical methodological, theoretical, and ethical considerations for religious studies writ large. In a conversation spanning subfields—from cultural history and Catholic studies to African American studies, Chinese philosophy, environmentalism, the study of secularism, and more—this roundtable will reflect on key questions and central assumptions that define Orsi’s work as both scholar and teacher. They will do so with an eye to the future of the field and consider the implications his work holds for their own—both its limits and possibilities.

Panelists

Sarah M. Pike, California State University, Chico
Jason C. Bivins, North Carolina State University
Katherine Dugan, Springfield College
Josef Sorett, Columbia University
Michael Puett, Harvard University
Kristy Nabhan-Warren, University of Iowa
James Hill, Northwestern University
Mona Oraby, Howard University
Kathryn Lofton, Yale University
John Seitz, Fordham University

Responding

Robert A. Orsi, Northwestern University

A20-111
Childhood Studies and Religion Unit and Law, Religion, and Culture Unit
Theme: Children and the Carceral
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Mélena Laudig, Princeton University, Presiding

This panel will explore “the child” as a category in religion and law.

- Laura Simpson, Villanova University

Infantile Citizenship and Carceral Imaginaries

This paper engages literary analysis and cultural theory to examine the fragile construction of citizenship through the disciplinary structures of the U.S. prison and immigration systems, with attention to how narratives of innocence are invoked through the rhetoric of these overlapping institutions. It interrogates the ways in which the carceral logics underlying systems of detention and incarceration come to be presented as essential, and even compassionate, to those existing under their disciplinary “care.” It
also examines how the figure of the child features in the imagination, maintenance, and justification of U.S. immigration and prison systems, representing those needing protection from outside or inside “threats,” as well as those whose proven innocence allows them conditional admittance into the national body.

- Hannah Ferguson, University of Toronto

*Retrieving 'The Child' as Subject: The Psychological Parenthood Principle and Human Beings as Psychological and Relational Persons*

This paper seeks to engage the shift in legal terminology from that of “de facto parent” to “psychological parenthood” as a parallel shift to that in Bernard Lonergan’s thought which characterized human beings first by an abstract universal human nature and later adopted a subjectivist model that emphasizes human beings as loving and conscious particular persons. This parallel illuminates the underlying anthropology in the legal framework and seeks to bring to the fore the values in the framework which recognize the dynamism and particularity of human psychology and relationality. By meeting a legal question through a theological lens, I hope to call into question the value of legal terminology that speaks of the messiness of human living in an abstract, universal, and detached manner. How do we achieve a balance in legal language that accounts for the fullness of human being while also maintaining a comprehensive aspect?

- Rebekah Gordon, Florida State University

*We Believe the Children... Even When We Shouldn’t: The Dangers of Relying on Narrative Constructions of Identity in Criminal Law*

Grounded in British Common Law theory and practices, American jurisprudence places an emphasis on the protection of innocence over and above the punishment of guilt, and few social constructs evoke an image of innocence more strongly than that of childhood. Yet, while the impetus to protect the innocent initially impelled the institution of extremely high burdens of proof and restrictions on the coercive power of the state (see constitutional amendments 5, 6, and 14) a recent trend in both ethics and public discourse has been to embrace the role of narrative as a way to incorporate the particularity of individual experience. This paper examines the “We Believe the Children” movement of the 1980’s as both a warning and a way forward for the incorporation of narrative ethics and law.

- Max Thornton, Drake University

*Who Owns the Future? Parents, Children, Gender, and Whiteness in the 2020s United States*

The early 2020s have already seen an intensification and proliferation of proposed legislation concerning children and parents. Two discernible trends are the curtailment of education around race and history (framed in terms of parental rights over their children’s
education) and the restriction of medical and social provisions for transgender children (in the case of Texas, even going so far as to criminalize affirming a trans child’s gender as abusive). At first blush, these trends appear contradictory: how can parental rights over their children be entirely sacrosanct, on the one hand, and yet at the same time meeting a child’s medical needs may warrant the removal of the child from the parents’ care? Yet a careful examination will reveal that both trends are governed by a shared political theologic of investment in a particular future, understood as a racialized project of nation-building, which is enacted on the bodies of children.

A20-112
Chinese Religions Unit and Tibetan and Himalayan Religions Unit
Theme: Innovative Elements of “Funerary Buddhism” in Medieval China and Tibet
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Catherine Hartmann, University of Wyoming, Presiding

Buddhism has, ab initio, been preoccupied with the problem of death. However, Indic scriptures and Indian authorities rarely touch upon the topic of lay funerals, even though funerary practices for the non-monastic certainly existed in Indian Buddhism. Because of this discrepancy, after Buddhism was introduced to China in the second century and to Tibet in the seventh century, “funerary Buddhism” underwent a process of drastic localization for several centuries. During this formative period, “funerary Buddhism” rapidly grew and became a defining feature of Buddhism in China, Tibet, and beyond. This panel, focusing on the innovative elements of funerary practices in these centuries, delves into the differences between lay and monastic funerals, the Buddhist afterlife reflected in mortuary practices, and the shifting boundaries between Buddhism and local customs. The panel collectively answers the question of how innovation helped define the contour of “funerary Buddhism” in Tibet or China.

- Max Brandstadt, University of California, Berkeley

*In the Monastery, Out of this World: Differences Between Lay and Monastic Funerary Rites in Medieval Chinese Buddhism*

While the date at which Buddhism began influencing Chinese mortuary practices has long been debated (cf., Teiser 1994), recent archaeological and epigraphical evidence suggests that aspects of Buddhist funerary cult were well-integrated with mainstream Chinese mortuary practice by the eighth century (Yang 2019, Ye 2005). Buddhist elements of dying and death in medieval China included the moving of the dying to Buddhist monasteries, the use of Buddhist grave goods, and ‘seven-seven feasts’ (qiqi zhai 七七齋). While these practices proliferated among non-monastics, different practices appears to have spread among ordained monastics, including cremation and corpse-exposure (linzang 林葬). This paper uses both biographical and epigraphical sources to document the spread between the sixth through eighth centuries of a distinct set of monastic mortuary practices, arguing that these more extreme practices served to enhance and distinguish Buddhist monasteries in a society increasingly interested in Buddhist funerary practice.
• Lan Li, McMaster University

“The Solitary Cliff that Hides the Soul”: Cave Burial as Funerary Practice at Longmen in the Tang

Why were the dead placed in caves? This Buddhist burial method of burying the dead in caves can already be seen in the hagiographies of eminent Chinese monks in the fifth century and was widely accepted by the Tang dynasty (618–907 CE). Aside from textual evidence, archaeologists have also identified a number of burial caves (yıku 疊窟) at extant Buddhist sites. This paper broadens our understanding of the Tang funerary Buddhism in two related ways: First, by synthesizing descriptions in surviving records with the latest archaeological evidence unearthed at Longmen Grottoes, it reconstructs the on-site context (e.g., layout, construction process, and associated rituals) of these burial caves. Second, by analyzing the donors’ inscriptions, this paper discusses their motivations for sponsoring these burial caves and participating in relevant rituals. Through this reimagined practice, Chinese Buddhists endowed the cave from Indian sources with new meanings and funerary functions.

• Yi Ding, DePaul University

Postmortem Option Selection: Funerary Phowa (“Consciousness Transfer”) and Bardo Practices in Early Kagyu Texts

Although funerary phowa (“transferring the consciousness”) and bardo (“the intermediate state”) rites are considered sine qua non for a typical Tibetan funeral, they were administered by priests to the dead in a funerary context in India. It was the early Kagyu figures who led the “funerary turn” and first discussed phowa and bardo together as an integral part of funerary rites. This paper examines the earliest appearances of verbal guidance administered to the dead in early Kagyu texts and delves into the narratives concerning funerary practices in the biographical corpus of Milarepa. It explains how funerary phowa and bardo are logically coupled together and how ritual innovations are introduced both narratively and doctrinally. Lastly, this paper argues that the couples of the two elements can be seen a process of postmortem option selection, which maximizes both the necessity of a salvific priest and the agency of the deceased.

• Rory Lindsay, University of California, Santa Barbara

Bringing in the Bardo: Sakya Innovations in the Funerary Rituals of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra

The funerary rituals of the Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra (SDP) have been important in the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism since the twelfth century. The SDP does not discuss the bardo, focusing instead on practices that liberate beings from lower realms. In keeping with the language of the SDP, early Sakya funerary manuals based on this tantra do not foreground the bardo in their instructions. Yet in the writings of Ameshap Ngawang Kunga Sönam (1597–1659), we find a striking innovation in SDP-oriented
funerary rites. Ameshap pinpoints the moment in the SDP liturgy in which one should begin speaking directly to the deceased, who at this point is presumed to be in the bardo. He mixes advanced tantric teachings with scholastic descriptions of the bardo to encourage the dead to cut through delusive appearances and achieve liberation, a soteriological model that is unattested in the SDP and excluded in major SDP-focused funerary manuals that preceded Ameshap’s time.

Responding

Brandon Dotson, Georgetown University

P20-140
Colloquium on Violence and Religion
Theme: Victimhood, Mimetic Escalation and the Current Crisis
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Grant Kaplan, Saint Louis University, Presiding

This session takes up three papers that analyse in different ways the hermeneutics of victimhood, the dilemma of false victimhood, and the tools that mimetic theory brings to the analysis of these phenomena.

- George Dunn, Zhejiang University

Populism, Patriotism, and National Chauvinism: A Mimetic Analysis

The American populist movement that coalesced around Donald Trump waves a patriotic banner celebrating “American Greatness,” but its members are most defined by their shared sense of grievance. This paper draws on Girard’s essay “Belonging”—in particular, its discussions of patriotism, chauvinism, and the erosion of relationships of belonging in the modern world—to come to a better understanding of the phenomenon of American populism in its Trumpian incarnation. One seldom noted fact is that the core of Trump’s support in the 2016 Republican primary came from individuals who identified as evangelical Christians but seldom or never attended church. Bringing Girardian insights to bear on this fact allows us to see how Trumpian populism arises from a weakened sense of belonging and how the ostensible patriotism of this movement is really what Girard, following Proust, calls chauvinism.

- Joel Hodge, Australian Catholic University

Re-Sacralising Modernity: Competing over the Victim in Modernity

Victim status has a peculiar power in modernity. The awareness of the victim, which René Girard argues is derived from a biblical source, has become central to modern public discourse, morality and politics. From identity politics and Trumpism to jihadism and autocratic nationalism, such discourse is becoming more extreme and polarizing. In this paper, I analyze how the victim-discourse has come to dominate the public space and
how it is leading to forms of victimary politics and re-enchantment, with the victim given a (semi) “sacred” status. This sacrality of the victim fuels and justifies the rivalrous dynamics of contemporary liberal democracies and of autocratic regimes (such as Russia) who promote hyper-nationalisms based on grievance narratives. Underlying this fundamental challenge to the public domain is a spiritual and cultural crisis. This crisis centres on how the human person is understood and how modern humans fulfil their social and transcendent needs.

- Brett McLaughlin, Boston College

_The Contemporary Barrage of Victimhood: The Posture of Vengeful Lament and Resentment_

Rene Girard concludes _I See Satan Fall Like Lightning_ with the observations that contemporary society has both fashioned and preserved more victims than any previous century. He decries that the “modern concern for victims obligates us to blame ourselves perpetually.” Wolfgang Palaver attributes the rise in public victimhood to the temptation of vengeful religious lament, articulations of resentment. Individuals become motivated to hunt for hunters of scapegoats. The obligatory compassion bestowed upon victims has thus engendered new forms of rivalry. This presentation examines the human subject’s accelerating attentiveness to victimhood as expressions of resentment for social advantage. Anthropologist Elizabeth A. Povinelli has ascertained victimhood as the contemporary “site of harms,” sometimes even for those who have not experienced physical injury or suffering. The aim of this investigation is not to detour the process of victims becoming visible, but ascertain when victim-claims are mobilized for competitive power.

A20-113
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Comparative Approaches to Religion and Violence Unit and Religion and Human Rights Unit
Theme: Religious Responses to Ecocide and the Rise of Climate Nationalism
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Kelly Denton-Borhaug, Moravian University, Presiding

This panel focuses on religious thought and practice in light of ecocide and climate catastrophe in the “Anthropocene” era. Thinkers and groups with extremely diverse religious and cultural perspectives are recognizing both the inevitability and the vast harms of climate change and ecocide, including real violence done to vulnerable and minoritized communities. This set of papers explores religiously-grounded responses to ecocide. Panelists will consider the actions of Indigenous communities who seek to protect sovereignty and sacred places while navigating a rights- and security-based international system; the impact of religious concepts such as “sacrifice” and “personhood” on scholarly and community conversations about climate change; and the use of the idea of environmental catastrophe as a justification to exclude and harm vulnerable communities, specifically the concept of “climate nationalism” as an anti-immigrant talking point.
Environmental Security, Religious Imagination, and Anthropocene Politics

Climate change threatens to spark violence by worsening resource conflicts, displacing peoples, and upsetting international relations. This is one influential way of framing the moral significance of Anthropocene futures: "humanity’s" vulnerabilities to environmental forces will fuel our tendencies toward discord and inflame latent strife. In this narrative, responses to climate change must manage scarcities and foster societal resilience against ecological stress. Here, the central challenge of the Anthropocene is environmental security, and human existence within ecological systems is encompassed primarily by resource politics. This paper probes the public ecological anthropologies emerging from discourses of environmental security and climate conflict, casting light on their assumptions and their implications for Anthropocene politics by juxtaposing them with discourses from global indigenous climate justice movements. What does the environmental security paradigm convey about humanity’s entanglements with nature, and how does it occlude other ways of being human and wider moral visions of Anthropocene futures?

Protecting Native Sacred Places as a Matter of Native Sovereignty

Efforts to protect Native American sacred places under the aegis of religious freedom have consistently failed in U.S. courts, even as the language of the sacred has been generative in other respects. Drawing on case studies that illustrate best practices and cautionary tales of Native sacred places on public lands, this paper explores strategies for their protection beyond the First Amendment through mechanisms that affirm sovereignty in federal Indian law and Indigenous peoplehood in international law. Through consent agreements, co-stewardship, land transfers and land back, Native Nations can insist on protections that are meaningful to them without making public showings of “religion.” Such mechanisms can operationalize the free, prior, and informed consent standards of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Slow Violence or Slow Sacrifice?: Theorizing Religion and Environmental Justice

Rob Nixon’s influential concept of “slow violence” draws attention to the slow-developing nature of climate catastrophes and the challenge of representing incremental processes as urgent matters requiring response. This paper amends Nixon’s concept, arguing that it does not adequately conceptualize the dynamics that create and concentrate environmental harms in particular places. Instead of violence, my fieldwork and analysis of religious responses to environmental injustices in the US suggest that the religious concept of sacrifice better conceptualizes the complex forces and desires that produce climate catastrophes. The concept of sacrifice draws attention both to existential
matters of life and death and the power of sacrifice to bind communities together. In a “slow sacrifice” framework the cause of climate catastrophe is not figured as enmity, as in the case of violence, but as the pursuit of a good, abundant, and sustainable life for oneself, one’s community, and one’s land.

- D. Brendan Johnson, Duke University

“Let me see your face, Let me hear your voice”: A Constructive Prosoponic Foundation for the Rights of Nature in an Age of Catastrophe

The Rights of Nature movement seeks to make natural features into ‘legal persons’ to protect them. Though they emerged from Human Rights and Indigenous traditions, can the Rights of Nature find a home within the Western legal-theological tradition? Fictive legal persons (persona ficta) indeed have a long tradition within canon law. However, if rights are theologically grounded in humanity’s exclusive imago Dei, can non-human entities bear them? Yes, if they rest upon the Greek theological notion of the prosopon (‘face’ or ‘mask,’), as unique communicants in the divine economy of love. Because the Godhead has one nature but three prosopa, and Christ has two natures but one prosopon, there is conceptual slippage between nature(s) and personhood. Natural iconic prosopa are durable and communicating entities which may bear rights rights, be attentively listened to in an era of crisis, and may benefit from religious communities serving as their (legal) advocates.

- Matthew Hartman, Graduate Theological Union

The Rise of Climate Nationalism: Media, Migration, and New Religious Formations on the Right

As global temperatures rise and extreme weather events become exceedingly commonplace, the specter of climate catastrophe is increasingly a lived reality for many resulting in growing climate migration. In this paper I analyze environmental rhetoric increasingly employed as a backlash to immigration patterns by coalitions on the religious, political, and cultural right. Employing critical media discourse and cultural law analysis, I examine the growing environmental rhetoric of anti-immigration law and policy proposals championed by many on the religious right, and how coalitions are forming on the right through digital media landscapes that are increasingly adopting the language of climate chaos to adopt anti-immigrant rhetoric. I argue that a certain kind of white Christian identity politics mixed with anti-immigrant rhetoric is fundamental to understanding a rise in climate nationalism—which is increasingly playing out in responses to border anxieties that are actively reshaping American political and religious landscapes.

Responding

Wendy Wiseman, University of California, Santa Barbara
Business Meeting

Chase L. Way, Other, Presiding
Kelly Denton-Borhaug, Moravian University, Presiding

A20-114
Comparative Theology Unit and Theology Without Walls
Theme: The Concept of Home in Comparative Theology and Theology Without Walls
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Jeanine Diller, University of Toledo, Presiding

One of the critical issues apparently distinguishing confessional comparative theology from theology without walls is the place and role of a "home" tradition in engaging religious diversity. This roundtable brings together theologians who identify with each of these theological approaches to reflect on their respective relationship to a home tradition, and the relative role it plays in their theological reflection.

Panelists

Wesley J. Wildman, Boston University
Francis X. Clooney, Harvard University
John Thatamanil, Union Theological Seminary
Catherine Cornille, Boston College
S. Mark Heim, Yale University
Wilhelmus Valkenberg, Catholic University of America

A20-115
Contemporary Islam Unit
Theme: #Muslims: Critical Muslim Mediations on Piety, Authority, and Legibility through Online Contexts
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Yasmine Flodin-Ali, University of North Carolina, Presiding

Given this year’s theme of religion and catastrophe, we offer this papers session as an opportunity to highlight the generative and joyful experiences cultivated in online contexts by Muslim communities during times of overlapping crises. Examining text, music, dance, memes, video, and audio as sites of knowledge production, these papers take a look at how Muslims are utilizing online space to creatively mediate normative practice and authority. In what ways are Muslims using digital space to draw on, negotiate with, or outright contest hegemonic structures of authority and conceptions of legibility in relation to race, ethnicity, gender, age, and/or body size? How do digital mediations impact our understandings of pious subject formation? What are some of the ways that the relationship between online and offline worlds are impacting religious experience? This papers session approaches these questions from a variety of perspectives to theorize some of the ways in which Muslims are engaging in transnational community building.
in online contexts.

- Sana Patel, University of Ottawa

*Democratizing Ijtihad: Young Muslims Conducting Religious Research Online*

This paper discusses the significance of digital piety and ways of conducting religious research online by young Muslims in Canada and the United States. As a part of the author’s doctoral research, the interviewees identified how they differentiate between authentic and non-authentic Islamic sources when they look for Islamic information online. In doing so, they democratize ijtihad which was once reserved for trained Islamic legal scholars. For the participants in this study, ijtihad could be done by anyone who has access to religious sources in the online world. Religious authority is no longer needed for in-person consultation and this fits in line with their experiences of lived Islam which is how they choose to practice and understand Islamic matters. Religion is a personal matter where they feel that customizing religious practices to fit their understands is appropriate.

- Aysha Khan, Harvard University

*TikTok Qariahs: Women’s Quran Recitation, Digital Islamic Authority and Private-Public Fluidity*

As Ramadan began two years ago, Shaykha Maryam Amir, a female Islamic scholar in California, posted an Instagram video urging women to join her in posting a daily clip of themselves reciting the Quran. To men concerned about the legality of women’s public Quran recitation, she added, “We just ask that you turn off your sound, because this isn’t about you.” Such social media practices — including Spotify playlists of female Quran reciters, live group recitations on Instagram, and the hashtags #FemaleReciters and #Foremothers — are forging rich digital networks prioritizing female mediation of Islamic knowledge. This paper will focus on the multimedia discourse surrounding these digital practices to understand how these Muslim counterpublics are contesting gendered notions of Islamic authority and public participation in Islamic practices. It will also examine how these diverse, global female networks are engaging in transnational community building, using social media to construct women’s spiritual spaces that are private and public all at once.

- Amadu Kunateh, Harvard University

*Grace Extended: BarakaBoys and Young Muslim Spiritual Practice Online*

Works on the historical development of the Community of Grace, al-Fayda Tijaniyya, illustrate the dynamism of the Sufi Community. At 29 years old, Sheikh Ibrahim Niasse (d.1975) inaugurated the Fayda, which would quickly spread to urban centers like Dakar, predominantly through the leadership and fervor of his young disciples. Across its nearly century-old history, the Fayda has managed to adapt to the various contexts to which it
has spread. The Fayda Tijaniyya understands itself as a global phenomenon and a historically youthful movement. The case study of the BarakaBoys highlights how the Fayda is contending with this unprecedented terrain: digital space. This paper moves beyond the American Experience, to include a transnational, ‘youth-focused,’ and racialized engagement with scholarship on Cyber Sufism by highlighting how the BarakaBoys, as young, Black, Euro-American members of the Fayda Tijaniyya, engage the digital landscape. It demonstrates how the imaginary of the Fayda, as an expansive movement that necessitates constant remaking, ushers in a *hypersufism* that blurs the contours of spiritual practice.

- Abtsam Saleh, Harvard University

> “These are for girls only”: Experience, Authority, and the Practice of Naṣīḥa in Online Contexts

When the “these are for girls only” meme went viral on TikTok in 2021, many Muslim women used it to create content that comically addresses the commentary they receive about their Islamic practice and the boundaries they’ve established around their practice. This paper focuses on the concept of naṣīḥa, understood to be a discursive mode of communal regulation in accordance with constructed ideals, in digital contexts. It examines several TikTok videos where Muslim women address their audience about who is or is not authorized to offer social commentary on their Islamic practice on the basis of shared experience, including race, ethnicity, gender, and body size. It explores these videos as sites of contestation surrounding authority, arguing that these women use their videos to counter hegemonic conceptions of who has the authority to determine proper practice. How might focusing on the concept of naṣīḥa, or social commentary, complicate scholarly understandings of top-down models of Islamic authority? In what ways does centering shared experience as a principle in negotiating legibility surrounding authority impact our understandings of traditionally recognized forms of authority? This paper attempts to address these questions by using intersectionality and the politics of refusal as frameworks of analysis.

- Ariella Gayotto Hohl Khan, Harvard University

> #MusulmanaLatina: Latina Muslim Women Contesting Normative Islamic Practice Online

In a 2021 TikTok post, user @sofiapena00 dances to a Mexican cumbia song while wearing hijab noting her celebration of her religious identity as the first and only Muslim in her family. In the comments, she voices her frustration with being perceived as too religious by Mexicans while being perceived as not religious enough in hegemonic Muslim spaces. This type of content has become increasingly visible on TikTok, where Latina converts to Islam are challenging normative portraits of Muslim piety by reclamation of their ethnic and national identities. This paper explores a variety of TikTok performances that intertwine aspects of Latinindad and Muslimness to examine how Latina Muslims use TikTok to negotiate understandings of their faith and culture against
normative Muslim opinions that deem their identity and practice as “un-Islamic.” It will look at the ways in which TikTok trends, including music and dance, are being utilized to counter claims around social legibility as well as the discursive formations this type of engagement has fostered. Attention will be paid to how intersecting layers of marginalization, including race and gender, play a role in the discursive production of this content.

Responding

Nurhaizatul Jamil, Pratt University

Business Meeting

Noah Salomon, University of Virginia, Presiding
Zahra Ayubi, Dartmouth College, Presiding
Kayla Renee Wheeler, Xavier University, Presiding

A20-116
Ethics Unit and Religion and Politics Unit
Theme: Lessons and Legacies of Twenty-First Century Wars
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
John D. Carlson, Arizona State University, Presiding

What have we learned from the wars of the twenty-first century? The withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan in 2021 closed a significant chapter in recent history that saw the United States continually at war for two decades. This period included the longest war in US history (Afghanistan), the most controversial war of the last 50 years (Iraq), and numerous combat operations around the world (Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, etc.) focused on defeating terrorism. We have yet to grapple fully with the moral lessons and legacies of these “war decades”—even as the world's attention (and US/NATO military support) turn to Ukraine to defend against Russia's military invasion. This panel will consider the religious, ethical, and political implications of twenty-first century wars for US foreign policy; the future of just war thought; military strategies and operations; the authorization of force; and the future of the all-volunteer force.

- Randy Thompson, University of Washington

The Southern Baptist Convention and Operation Iraqi Freedom

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) proved a perfect example of a classic imperial blunder: over-expanding into a quagmire. Southern Baptists, whose close ties to the Bush Administration persisted from a shared history in Texas politics, helped make the case for war. They then participated in the ensuing nation building project, via partnerships with local churches, only to lose missionaries in drive-by shootings at those churches in attacks by Islamist militias.

This paper will describe the impact this war experience had on the Southern Baptist
Convention (SBC), the largest Protestant denomination in the U.S. Primarily, it argues that a post-OIF shift in their Just War theology led to an isolationism that attracted an overwhelming majority of Southern Baptists to Donald Trump in 2016 and 2020, despite his record of public immorality. Secondarily, it considers the future of U.S. policy in an era when not a single U.S. Christian denomination seeks intervention abroad.

- Anand Gopal, Arizona State University and The New Yorker

*On Intention: Moral Lessons from America’s Recent Wars*

Drawing from in-depth reporting and field work in Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan, journalist and sociologist Anand Gopal discusses the moral lessons that should be drawn from recent US wars and how just war thought must be reframed in light of these experiences.

**A20-117**

**Hinduism Unit and Religion and Popular Culture Unit**

Theme: Hinduism in Contemporary Popular Fiction and Film: Themes of Family, Fantasy, and Gender

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Nicole Karapanagiotis, Rutgers University, Camden, Presiding

This session explores how "lived" Hinduism is reflected back to Hindus—and others—through popular narrative genres. How do hit movies and bestsellers shape perceptions of Hinduism at the turn of the twenty-first century? We examine four Bollywood blockbusters and two popular fantasy novel series that place contemporary Hinduism at a series of pivot points: between traditional and new, ideal and individual, public and domestic, familiar and strange, and gender-normative and gender-creative. The works we explore present religion as a matter of both family and fantasy; they locate Hinduism “here” in familial relationships and settings while simultaneously constructing a religious landscape that is “out there” in literary or ideological fantasy. Our session asks how contemporary works of popular fiction and film problematize assumptions of uniformity in Hindu narratives about women in particular and how concepts of family and fantasy, whether literal or ideological, might either reify or destabilize those assumptions.

- Pranati Parikh, Harvard University

*Photographs Between Pages: Family, Friends, and the Gods in *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham**

In the opening scenes of Karan Johar’s Kuch Kuch Hota Hai (1998) and Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham (2001) are a parallel image of a single photograph of an estranged friend or family member hidden between the pages of a prayer book. The way in which these photos seamlessly become a part of prayer, ritual, and longing in these films suggests a relationship between family drama, love, and Hinduism that leans on the motif of the transposable image—an image of a loved one as a mūrti, and vice versa. In my paper, I...
hope to explore this perspective on the way the gods are involved in mundane affairs, how beloveds often stand in for the gods and the gods for beloveds, and ultimately how Hindu iconography and themes are creatively engaged in these millennial Bollywood films to affirm earthly love over conservative cultural norms.

- Diana Dimitrova, University of Montreal

*Hinduism and Popular Culture: Sita in Hindu Traditions and in Popular Imagination*

This paper explores issues related to Hinduism, popular culture, and the representation of the figure of Sita in Hindu traditions and popular imagination, as revealed in Hindi films of the 1990s-2000s. I examine the Bollywood films Ham apke hain kaun (Who am I to You), 1994, Kuch kuch hota hai (There is Something), 1998 and Khalnayak (Villain), 1993 from the perspectives of mythological and ideological criticism. It is characteristic of these films that no matter how modern the subject matter, the representation of women is mostly conservative and traditional. In my paper, I deal with Hindu images of the feminine and myth-models for women and explore how Bollywood films have represented gender and translated Hindu myth-models into social role-models for women. I also examine the ideological implications of the representation of gender and the ensuing conservative re-mythologizing of contemporary Indian culture by the media.

- Tracy Pintchman, Loyola University, Chicago

*Rewriting Sita: Sita as Warrior, Prime Minister, and “the Vishnu” in Amish Tripathi’s Fantasy Novel, Sita: Warrior of Mithila*

This paper explores the rewriting of Sita’s story in Amish Tripathi’s popular mythological fantasy novel Sita: Warrior of Mithila (2017). Amish is a controversial writer who has been criticized from the right, which objects to his total rewriting of the Ram story, and the left, which accuses him of playing into Hindutva sentiments by advocating a retrieval of “traditional” Indian culture. He professes to champion liberal values, and his views on gender are progressive. In his novel on Sita, Tripathi recasts Sita as a fierce warrior, political leader, incarnation of Vishnu, and heroic advocate of women’s self-determination. The paper argues that Amish’s Sita succeeds in large part because she is woven into a narrative that reflects the political, social, and economic aspirations and values of many young, urban, educated Hindus—who face the challenge of embracing and celebrating “traditional” Hindu identity while accommodating it to modern, liberal, and capitalist values.

- Nell Hawley, Harvard University

*“I Was Never a Tale, but the Truth:” Fantasy, Language, and Second-Generation American Hinduism in Roshani Chokshi’s Aru Shah Series*

Mahābhārata readers have long traveled alongside the Pāṇḍava brothers, the epic’s half-human, half-divine protagonists. But it is only in Roshani Chokshi’s “Pandava Quintet”
(Disney Hyperion, 2018-22), a bestselling middle-grade fantasy series built around the character of Aru Shah, a twelve-year-old girl growing up in Atlanta, that we finally meet the Pāṇḍava sisters. As Aru and her “soul” siblings live out a classic portal-quest fantasy (Farah Mendlesohn’s term)—journeying through the Otherworld, battling destructive forces, and saving lives—new dimensions open up. The Aru Shah novels bend the expectations of fantasy literature to depict and allegorize second-generation American Hindu adolescences. Here the heroine’s discovery of her superpowers is explicitly tied to a Hindu mythological world that is at once strange and familiar. Chokshi uses the theme of unknown language to illustrate those dynamics of estrangement and familiarity, revealing how fantasy articulates and is even shaping the landscape of American Hinduism.

Responding

Deepra Dandekar, Free University of Berlin

A20-118
Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit and Native Traditions in the Americas Unit
Theme: A Beloved Among Us: Celebrating the Life and Work of Our Colleague Michelene Pesantubbee
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Mary Churchill, Sonoma State University, Presiding

This session provides an opportunity not only to remember and celebrate our colleague but also to explore and propose how her work can inform us in our own chaotic times. Her ethnohistorical book *Choctaw Women in a Chaotic World: The Clash of Cultures in the Colonial Southeast* (2005) makes a significant contribution to the fields of American Indian, feminist, and religious studies. The introduction to *Choctaw Women* serves as the starting point for this roundtable session. Through the lens of the introduction, the broader themes Pesantubbee’s work as a scholar and teacher come into focus: Indigenous cultural continuity and change, land and the environment, decolonizing the religious studies academy, and foregrounding of the lives and perspectives of Native American women. These themes, among others, will be taken up as Pesantubbee’s colleagues, including senior scholars and former students, reflect on Pesantubbee’s contributions. Truly, she was a contemporary beloved woman among us.

Panelists

Gabriel Estrada, California State University, Long Beach
Sarah Dees, Iowa State University
Michael Zogry, University of Kansas
Ines Hernandez-Avila, University of California, Davis
Jason Sprague, University of Michigan, Dearborn
Suzanne J. Crawford O’Brien, Pacific Lutheran University
A20-119
Innovations in Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Unit and Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit
Theme: Ethical Care? Moral Advocacy and the Challenge of Working in Institutions
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Sarah Jobe, Duke University, Presiding

Given the growing consensus among spiritual and therapeutic caregivers that moral advocacy is
central to their professional identity, how might spiritual caregivers understand the future of their
work in institutional contexts like hospitals, prisons, the military, or others that demand
neutrality on political matters such as racial and social justice? And how might pastoral
psychotherapists and clinicians negotiate the increasing emphasis on integrating spirituality as
a morally-neutral “tool” in psychotherapeutic contexts? We welcome proposals that answer these
questions directly or in any way address the moral complexity of operating as professionals at
the intersection of spiritual and clinical care in institutional settings.

- Beth Toler, Moravian University
  Bidden or Not Bidden: God and the Practice of Religious and Spiritual Integration in
  Contemporary Counseling
  
  Many therapeutic approaches treat religion and spirituality primarily as resources that can be leveraged to support healthy psychological functioning and positive counseling outcomes. While these approaches highlight the value of religion and spirituality in the clinical context, they fail to open avenues for counselors and clients to explore the impact that mental health issues have on a person’s relationship with God, the world, others, and self. and are thus exposed as neoliberal project devoid of any deconstructive practices.

  Using clinical case studies and current research, this paper explores important questions related to the complicated, multifaceted nature and process of religious and spiritual integration in the practice of contemporary clinical counseling. In particular, issues will be raised in regards to the nature and function of God in people’s lives, the nature and function of the contemporary clinical counseling process, and the role and identities of contemporary clinical counselors.

- Janelle Moore, Emory University
  Democratizing and Historicizing Care: An Exploration of Movement Chaplains’ Moral
  Advocacy
  
  Drawing on a qualitative content analysis of podcasts and webinars in which movement chaplains participated, I argue that movement chaplains practice moral advocacy by democratizing and historicizing spiritual, relational, and material care. I suggest that, when we adopt the expansive conception of moral advocacy that movement chaplains enact—moral advocacy as democratizing and historicizing care—the ways that chaplains in institutional contexts are already practicing moral advocacy comes into view.
Furthermore, while not all the strategies that movement chaplains employ are applicable to institutional contexts, many are. This paper contributes to the ethics of care by revealing the way movement chaplains’ practices reintegrate care processes that are often siloed and privatized. Through engaging moral advocacy by democratizing and historicizing care, movement chaplains offer a glimpse of a world in which care is shared, injustice is named and addressed, and all can give and receive the care they need to flourish.

- Jeremy Schulz, Independent Scholar

*Honoring the Decision to Die: Spiritual Care and Medical Aid in Dying*

In this paper I set the stage by providing an intimate portrayal of being with those who choose to die, caring for that person’s loved ones, and supporting the hospice care team. I then transition to consider the moral advocacy and agency of spiritual care providers who straddle the limits of life and the appetite for death. Taking an ethnographic and autoethnographic approach, I strive to better understand how spiritual care providers hold their own views of life and death while simultaneously supporting patients, loved ones, and their team as they journey alongside those people who choose to die via MAID. My hope is to critically and empathetically explore MAID from a spiritual care perspective, asking: how do spiritual care providers navigate their own moral advocacy and theological truths while honoring the agency, dignity, and quality of life of terminally ill patients who choose to take death into their hands?

- Kristen Hydinger, Boston University
  Xiaodi Wu, Boston University
  Steve Sandage, Boston University
  Laura Captari, Boston University
  Sarah Crabtree, Boston University
  Elise Choe, Boston University

*Religion is not a tool – From moral neutrality to moral responsibility*

Caring for others is not morally neutral. Thus, spiritual and religious (S/R) dynamics in psychotherapeutic and spiritual care cannot be understood as morally neutral. Morals exist independent of religious affiliation or adherence and S/R care need not shy away from “moral” approaches. Rather, S/R should be considered from a relational stance which can contribute to social justice, intercultural competence, and clinicians’ development; and institutions need to provide sufficient support for the care providers that administer this crucial service. When considered from a relational stance, spiritually integrative care is committed to social justice issues and value diversity and prioritizes intercultural competencies. The authors explore integrating S/R dynamics in psychotherapy and chaplaincy settings, challenge the morally neutral toolbox metaphor, and invite others to consider the relational nuances at the intersection of spiritual and clinical care. The RSM is an example of how spiritual care and mental health providers can integrate S/R in their care without resorting to moral neutrality.
A20-120
Islamic Mysticism Unit and Platonism and Neoplatonism Unit
Theme: Esoteric Neoplatonic Ontologies in the Islamic World
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Cyrus Zargar, University of Central Florida, Presiding

This roundtable explores the diverse relationships between the Neoplatonic Theology of Aristotle (al-Uthulujīyya) and other major mystical and philosophical treatises in the Islamic world. Although much has been written with respect to the importance of ethics and scripture with respect to the Theology, very little attention has been given to the how the Theology’s ontology and cosmology has shaped the thought of certain important Neoplatonic thinkers. The discussion includes several underrepresented or misunderstood Sunni, Shīʿite, and esoteric figures who represent the trifold relationship between Neoplatonism, Islamic Philosophy, and Mysticism. The figures and texts addressed in this roundtable are the Theology of Aristotle, the Brethren of Purity, Ibn Ḥarbī, Fakhru al-Dīn 'Iraqī, Ibn Sabʿīn, Mīr Findiriskī, Mīr Dāmād, and Mullā Ṣadrā.

Panelists

Vincent Cornell, Emory University
Kevin Corrigan, Emory University
Shankar Nair, University of Virginia
Ilma Qureshi, University of Virginia
Sayeh Meisami, University of Dayton
Syed Zaidi, Emory University

A20-121
Korean Religions Unit and New Religious Movements Unit
Theme: New Religions in Korea
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Holly Folk, Western Washington University, Presiding

A panel co-sponsored between the Korean Religions Group and the New Religious Movements Group on Korean new religious movements in Korea; contemporary Korean new religions and their influential predecessors; media representation of Korean NRMs; and Korean new religions’ practices in response to the pandemic.

- Eileen Barker, London School of Economics and Political Science

*Does It Matter Where We Are? A comparative contemplation on the relevance of country for religions in Korea*

This paper considers ways in which some Korean religions consider that Korea holds a special place in the cosmic order – how it is the chosen land. It was to Korea that Daesoon Jinrihoe, one of Korea’s largest indigenous new religions, believes that “the Lord of Ninth Heaven,” the Supreme God descended to Korea as Kang Il-Sun to
overcome past ills of the past, open the Three Realms of the World and establish an earthly paradise. Korea also plays a crucial, though different, role in the belief system of Victory Altar both historically and currently by, among other things, unifying the two Koreas. Again, Korea plays an important role in Unification theology. It is country in which the Messiah (Sun Myung Moon) was born and the land on which the battle between Satan and God is to be fought.

- Edward A. Irons, Hong Kong Institute

*Leadership and Doctrine in Bocheon-gyo: An Investigation Into Rapid Growth Under Colonialism*

Bocheon-gyo is one of the many new religions to develop in the wake of the dynamic religious figure Kang Jeungsan. Bocheongyo was founded as Sendo-gyo by Goh Pan-Lye in 1911. Leadership of Goh’s group later passed to Cha Gyeong-Seok, Goh’s cousin and also a direct disciple of Kang. Cha proceeded to build a major new religious organization that claimed some six million members.

This paper will look at ritual practice, including shamanism, and internal administration. In particular the paper discusses the nine dimensions of religious leadership developed by Jack Barentsen. The paper explores the extent to which this model is applicable to the early modern Korean context.

- Kyungsoo Lee, Rice University

*Organic God: Cosmotheistic retelling of Genesis in Korean NRM, focusing on Jin Jinhwa’s Principle*

Cosmotheism and monotheism seem to be incompatible with one another. Cosmotheistic Christianity does not sound like a possible option, with two alien words put together. Some creative thinkers, however, made such synthesis possible, leading to their respective founding of Christian new religious movements. They are Gim Baekmun, Moon Sun Myung, and Jin Jinhwa. Jin Jinhwa’s cosmotheism is distinguished since he expands his creative reading to the 6-day Creation story in Genesis. Since there has been no scholarly work published about Jinhwa Jin, I will provide a basic analysis of his theology focusing on his cosmogony. Different cosmologies of these figures share one thing in common: that they are relentlessly ridiculed and not taken seriously. I would find the reason for their rejected position in the Korean identity formation process, the identity of modern Korea.

A20-122
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Latina/o Religion, Culture, and Society Unit, Liberation Theology Unit, and Women and Religion Unit
Theme: Catástrofe, Esperanza, y Lucha: Puerto Rico a Cinco Años de María y el Plan Promesa (Catastrophe, Hope, and Struggle: Puerto Rico after Five Years Since Hurricane
In the five years since hurricanes Irma and María struck the island of Puerto Rico the island, its residents, and Puerto Ricans in the diaspora have resisted wave after wave of catastrophes. These include government malfeasance and misogyny in the recovery efforts after María, the ongoing crises of feminicide and gender violence, the vise-like hold by the Fiscal Oversight Board, a string of earthquakes that revealed once again the deep socio-economic divide product of colonization, and the impact of the global Covid pandemic. The last five years have also been marked by resistance from diverse actors on the island including women’s collectives, student groups, and everyday citizens. This session examines these experiences of catastrophe and resistance through the lenses of post-colonial, gender, and community resistance.

- Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, Iliff School of Theology

*Remembering Jurakán: Resilience and Reclamation in the Wake of Colonially Induced Environmental Destruction*

Puerto Ricans’ movements in returning to the land invokes a remembering of the enduring relationship between the people, the island, and Jurakán. Such remembering demonstrates a resistance to colonial powers seeking to further exploit people and resources, as well as a reclamation of indigenous knowledges passed down through generations in the face of more frequent, forceful hurricanes. Before, during, and after Hurricane María in 2017 (as only one event among many which has been death-dealing for Puerto Ricans on the island), islanders have formed both new and stronger existing coalitions—direct resistance and recovery movements—to transform Puerto Rico (back) into a sustainable, locally-based environment. Additionally, Puerto Rican diasporans have contributed significant support in the forms of time, money, resources, and advocacy en conjunto with islanders in defiance of the colonial forces that have heightened the destruction wrought by hurricanes, demonstrating solidarity, resistance, resilience, and reclamation of a decolonized Borikén.

- Ashley Coleman Taylor, University of Texas

*The Body as Contested Site in Legacies of Puerto Rican Resistance*

Puerto Rico is in the midst of an ongoing catastrophe of colonialism. Feminist organizations have centered the body as a tool of revolution and decolonialization targeting issues like abortion rights and the growing number of femicides. Not only do these activists and community members regularly put their bodies on the frontlines during protests and mutual aid responses, but their messages often reflect themes of body sovereignty alongside calls for Puerto Rican independence. With this work, I hope to demonstrate that these contemporary movements are part of a long centuries-long trajectory of resistive embodiment in the archipelago beginning with Spanish invasion of Taíno land and continuing through enslavement and American imperialism. I conclude
the paper by highlighting interview and participant observation data from three Black Protestant women. I outline how they use their bodies, as contested sites, to create a better world in the current crisis.

- Emanuel Padilla, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

*Wake Work, Death-Life, and Re-narrating Puerto Rico*

This paper makes use of Christina Sharpe’s *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* to offer an analysis of Puerto Rican life in the wake of Hurricanes Irma and María. Sharpe’s proposed “wake work” will serve as the interpretive lens for a decolonial reading of Puerto Rican life and a critical reading of dominant political narratives of its people and diaspora. Works of public art and cultural production will be used to examine both narrations of Puerto Rican subjectivity. After reviewing both versions of Puerto Rican life, this paper will present a biblical theology of *sheol* that sets Puerto Rican life in the imagery of 1 Peter. The paper concludes with ethical proposals for ecclesial networks working among Puerto Rican diaspora and the island.

**Responding**

Hilda Lloréns, University of Rhode Island

**Reviewers**

Ruben Rosario Rodriguez, Saint Louis University

**A20-123**

Books under Discussion

**Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit**


Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Michelle Wolff, Augustana College, Presiding

An author-meets-critic roundtable for Mari Jørstad's 2019 *The Hebrew Bible and Environmental Ethics: Humans, NonHumans, and the Living Landscape* (Cambridge University Press). From the publishers: "Using a combination of the tools of biblical studies and anthropological writings on animism, Jørstad traces the activity of non-animal nature through the canon. . . .The Biblical writers' attention to inhabited spaces is particularly salient for contemporary environmental ethics in their insistence that our cities, suburbs, and villages contribute to flourishing landscapes." This roundtable will engage Jørstad's book from decolonial, queer, Jewish, lesbian-feminist, biblical hermeneutical, and theological approaches. The author will respond to the panelists and discussions generated by the audience.

**Panelists**
Willie J. Jennings, Yale University
Stephanie Powell, Manhattan College
Laura Suzanne Lieber, University of Chicago

Responding

Mari Jorstad, Vancouver School of Theology

Business Meeting

Sarah Bloesch, University of North Carolina, Presiding

A20-124
Mysticism Unit and Western Esotericism Unit
Theme: Queerness and the Mystical Body
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Manon Hedenborg White, Södertörn University, Presiding

Queer theory is a capacious category that is becoming ever more so. The papers in this session interrogate the notion of queerness and its role in both sustaining certain mystical practices and redefining the notion of the mystical itself. In this domain, the body is reimagined through various public processes as a primary site of theological encounter; traditional hierarchies of power are upended while norms of sex and gender are subverted; and power is accessed through transgressive sexual practices and the destabilizing of gendered ideals and categories.

- Marla Segol, State University of New York, Buffalo

*Queer Moses, Weird Moses: the power of experimental body in Jewish mystical texts*

This paper explores the relation between power and play with models of gendering, embodiment, and cosmological categories in the characterization of Moses in three pre-modern esoteric and magical works: Midrash Pesikta Rabbati, the Shi’ur Qomah, and Moshe Cordovero’s *Tefilla le Moshe*. Each work begins with the biblical character of Moses, who has unparalleled access to divine power, but who does not always conform to the hegemonic masculine ideals of strength, self-containment (or bodily integrity), and able-bodiedness. Instead, these accounts narrate some fantastical play with existential and cosmological categories, all the while linking that play to human-divine intimacy and power. In this, queerness and weirdness are figured as source of power in these esoteric, magical texts centered on Moses, in a way that invites us to theorize the queer and the weird in religion as a whole.

- Jay Michaelson, Chicago Theological Seminary

*The Queernesses of Sabbatean Mystical Messianism*

The Jewish mystical-messianic movements of Sabbetai Zevi (1626-1676) and his heirs,
Beruchiah Russo and Jacob Frank, undermined rabbinic authority and transformed the Jewish world. They were also queer, in at least three ways.

First, Sabbateanism featured homoerotic religious rhetoric and hymns to the beautiful, “secretly female” messiah who was “wounded in his sex,” as well as rumors of same-sex attachments among its leaders. Frank, though voraciously heterosexual, enunciated a principled-libertine rejection of sexual morality. Second, Sabbateanism transformed sexual and gender norms. Women held positions of power, laws governing sexual expression were nullified, and sects engaged in sexual ritual. Third, Sabbatean messianism evolved from historical redemption to mystical experience, including that of sexual transgression. In Frank’s terms, the male hero liberates the female-erotic messiah, so that she may rule over men.

In sum, Sabbateanism undermined sexual and gender norms, sanctified transgression, and queered the boundaries of religion, mysticism, esotericism, and messianism.

- Zaccary Haney, Loyola University, Chicago

*Theological Becomings: Body as Mystical-Theological Subject in Bernard of Clairvaux*

This paper attempts to understand how the body itself is central to Bernard of Clairvaux’s mystical union with God as presented in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*. Read alongside Rivera’s framework of the discursive becoming of the body through process of (economic, sexual, gender, and racial) socialization in order to conceive of theology as always already a bodily activity and the body as the very thing that is always already marked in theologizing relation to God (through the pushing, pulling, and touching by other bodies). The paper seeks to explore further avenues for understanding the body as it relates to Bernard’s overall mystical theology and mysticism generally. It also seeks to begin answering a much larger question: how does the body itself become a theological subject and thus a central concern for theological reflection?

**Responding**

C. Libby, Pennsylvania State University

**A20-125**

North American Religions Unit and Religion and Sexuality Unit

Theme: ‘To Make the Wounded’: On Sexual Panics in Evangelicalism

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Amy DeRogatis, Michigan State University, Presiding

This panel introduces evangelical sexual panics past and present, spanning from the 1970s to the 2020s. The session explores the many different forms that panic can take, the consequences that arise from panic, and the strategies the faithful use to cope with and counter panic. In focusing on “catastrophic” events, the papers sketch the contours of evangelical identities molded in the midst of these panics. The papers also collectively model the critical value of multidisciplinary
engagements in the process of naming these frameworks and evaluating narratives of panic. Bringing together theological, ethnographic, and historical reflections, the session adds new voices to the scholarly discussions on evangelicalism and North American religious life at the intersections of race, gender, and queerness.

- Daniel Ballon, Emory University

“Nailing Our Sexualities to the Cross”: Black Gay Fundamentalism in a Time of Sexual Panic

This paper explores the theological perspectives and Christian praxis of Faith Temple, a predominantly black and gay Fundamentalist church in Washington, D.C., at the height of the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. In particular, this paper attends to the sexual panic Jerry Falwell and white evangelicals created over HIV/AIDS and to the modes of anti-panic Faith Temple and its founder, James Tinney, deployed in response. Faced with Falwell’s declaration that AIDS was God’s punishment on homosexuals, Tinney and Faith Temple developed a robust theology of grace—the idea that Jesus nailed sexuality to the cross—which informed the church’s ministry to people with AIDS. Yet this theology was complicated by Fundamentalist notions of sin and salvation—the notion that “[t]o say that God accepts us as gay people doesn’t mean that we are, in fact, acceptable to God”—revealing the complexity of modes of anti-panic framed in fundamentalist terms.

- William Stell, Princeton University

Writing (Off) the ‘Gay Church’: Antigay Evangelical Discourse on the Metropolitan Community Churches in the 1970s

Throughout the 1970s, both mainstream media reporters and influential evangelical writers portrayed the largely gay Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches (UFMCC) as “evangelical.” This worried many antigay evangelicals, some of whom worked quite hard to convince their fellow believers that the UFMCC was not what it looked like: a Christian church with many evangelical members. This presentation analyzes the various strategies that antigay evangelical writers developed to deny, distort, and distract from the UFMCC’s evangelical factions and features. It also argues that the gay panic gripping evangelicals in the late 1970s was fueled not only by anxieties about gay activism in society at large, but also by anxieties about gay activism within their own faith. Notwithstanding Christian Right rhetoric about “radical” and “secular” gay liberationists, the evangelical panic over gay activism in this period was in part a panic over how similar, not how different, some gay liberationists were. The UFMCC stood on the other side of a bridge too close.

- William Boyce, University of Virginia

Abuse, Scandal, and Slow Panic: The Evangelical Story of Kanakuk Kamps

This paper recounts the story of Kanakuk Kamps for the first-time in academic literature.
Founded in 1928, Kanakuk—then Kugaho Kamp—embodied the “muscular Christian” movements of the era, focused on faith and athleticism. Since 1976, under Joe and Debbie-Jo White, Kanakuk has expanded to become one of the largest Christian summer camps in the world. The world of Kanakuk was engulfed in scandal in 2009 when one of its campsite directors, Pete Newman, was charged with multiple accounts of statutory sodomy and enticement of minors. Over fifty-seven male victims have been identified. Newman is now serving two life sentences, but his “sins” were hardly unknown to Kanakuk leadership. This paper recounts the sexual scandal of Newman’s abuse and the complicated institutional responses proffered by Kanakuk and White. I give voice to survivors of this “slow panic” and narrate the theological deployments of accountability, forgiveness, purity, and salvation in the process.

- Kelsey Hanson Woodruff, Harvard University

“A Calculated and Continual Attack:” Preserving Patriarchal Power in an Egalitarian Megachurch

A week before Easter 2018, the Chicago Tribune broke one of the biggest abuse scandals in evangelical megachurch history: Bill Hybels, Willow Creek Community Church’s founder, was accused of sexual assault and misconduct by more than 7 women. Willow Creek staff and elders denied the allegations for months, refusing to take action against Hybels. In the months that followed, women formed online networks of support connecting survivors and sympathizers through Twitter and blogposts, adding their voices to the rising #ChurchToo movement. This paper argues that the leaders of Willow Creek reacted in panic to the allegations brought forward regarding their founder because it threatened to upset the patriarchal power structures of the organization. Despite its polity as an egalitarian church that allowed for women in all levels of leadership, the culture of Willow Creek resisted the combined testimony of women and worked to preserve the position of its patriarchs.

Responding

Lynne Gerber, Independent Scholar

A20-126
Books under Discussion
Philosophy of Religion Unit
Theme: Why Study Religion?
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Savannah Finver, Ohio State University, Presiding

Richard B. Miller’s Why Study Religion focuses on the question whether the academic study of religion can be justified, and it argues that, in adopting Weberian value neutrality and seeking to avoid the practice of theology, many scholars have failed to provide an account of the value of religious studies that might justify its place in the academy. In the place of this crisis of rationale, Miller offers an account of humanistic inquiry that held together by four values: post-critical
reasoning, social criticism, cross-cultural fluency, and environment responsibility. This panel is composed of four scholars who offer a range of critical responses to Miller’s project. All four identify as philosophers of religion of different stripes: one specializes in feminist accounts of materiality and embodied cognition, another on pragmatism, one on existentialist philosophy of religion and interdisciplinary studies, and one on philosophy religious studies. Miller, a religious ethicist, will respond.

- Stephen Bush, Brown University

*On the Limits of Philosophical Justifications for the Legitimation of Religious Studies*

In *Why Study Religion?* Richard Miller claims that religious studies is unable to justify itself as a discipline because it does not deal with normative questions of values and ends. He proposes that the discipline accept what he calls “Critical Humanism” as a value-laden telos. In this presentation, I make two observations. First, in terms of accounting for our field to the university, Critical Humanism isn’t a justification specific to religious studies. That question is more pressing than that status of humanistic knowledge in general, but Miller has comparatively less to say about it. Second, in terms of justifying the study of religion to the world outside the university, we must acknowledge that many do not take academic knowledge to be an intrinsic good, but an instrumental one that concerns future earnings. Philosophical justifications will have efficacy for this audience.

- Erin Kidd, St. John's University

*On Wanting More than More than Belief*

Richard B. Miller’s *Why Study Religion* is a bold attempt to answer the “so what?” question regarding the study of religion, arguing that it provides “ways to make sense of how and why humans construct and conduct themselves as they do” (248). I will focus particularly on Miller’s assessment of the “Materialist-Phenomenological” model (which he analyzes through the work of Manual Vásquez) and the more general question of embodied practice and human agency that runs throughout the book. I want to offer both a response from a materialistic perspective, that can integrate and build on Miller’s insights, as well as raise a question about how normativity ought to function in religious studies.

- Noreen Khawaja, Yale University

*In Every Crisis*

By telling us that the important debate is about whether scholars of religion should consider the moral dimensions of their work as central rather than peripheral to their work as scholars, Richard Miller permits himself to pass over the question of whether the question about normativity is best undertaken as a dialogue with other theorists.
Kevin Schilbrack, Appalachian State University

*Ontology, Folk Justification, and the Normative Turn in Religious Studies*

In *Why Study Religion*, Richard Miller proposes a justification for what we do, that is, a telos or purpose the value of which would justify the practice of the academic study of religion. Now, when people outside academia seek to justify a “should” statement, it is common or even typical that they ground their normative recommendation by referring to the way things are. We might call this everyday practice of basing one’s recommendation on a claim about the way things are: “folk justification.” In this response, I note that Miller is practicing folk justification. As he says clearly, “we should turn to matters of ontology when thinking about the study of religion.” In this paper, I describe Miller’s ontology of human agency and how it is useful for those in philosophy of religion, ethics, or academic theology seeking to spell out the value of normative disciplines in the public university.

**Responding**

Richard B. Miller, University of Chicago

**A20-139**

*Publications Committee*

Theme: *Committee Meeting*

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Timothy Beal, Case Western Reserve University, Presiding

**Panelists**

Anthony Cerulli, University of Wisconsin
Margaret D. Kamitsuka, Oberlin College and Conservatory
Andrea Jain, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis
Alda Balthrop-Lewis, Australian Catholic University
Jonathan Tran, Baylor University
John Nemec, University of Virginia
Robert A. Yelle, University of Munich

**A20-127**

*Religion and Cities Unit*

Theme: *Centering Community: A Roundtable Discussion on Lived Religion and the City*

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Daisy Vargas, University of Arizona, Presiding

This roundtable session puts the directors of three recently launched university-based projects focused on lived religion and cities into conversation: Engaging Lived Religion in the 21st Century Museum (UCLA), Lived Religion in the Digital Age (St. Louis University), and the Center for the Study of Religion and the City (Morgan State University). In this session, project directors will reflect on the importance of cities in defining religion and religious space. This
roundtable will offer insight into emergent and innovative models for the study of lived religion through new pedagogical frameworks, including active community inclusion in educational programming (including teacher institutes, university courses, and K-12 resources) and creating new historically and ethnographically informed publicly accessible museum exhibitions, oral history collections, and digital repositories of lived religious practice in the United States.

Panelists

Pauline Lee, Saint Louis University  
Harold Morales, Morgan State University  
Rupa Pillai, University of Pennsylvania  
Patrick Polk, University of California, Los Angeles  
Amy Landau, University of California, Los Angeles

Business Meeting

Rupa Pillai, University of Pennsylvania, Presiding  
Fatimah Fanusie, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies, Presiding

A20-128  
Religion and Disability Studies Unit  
Theme: Disability and the Church: Human Difference and Practicing Christian Community  
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
David Scott, Iliff School of Theology, Presiding

This panel features responses to Spurrier's "The Disabled Church" (Fordham UP, 2019), and Barton's "Becoming the Baptized Body" (Baylor UP, 2022). Both works center the experiences and voices of persons with disabilities, and privilege disability perspectives in exploring the dimensions of theology, ethics, and communal practices. Scholars from diverse disciplines will engage Spurrier's and Barton's contributions to religious communities specifically, and social justice efforts more broadly.

Panelists

Julia Watts Belser, Georgetown University  
John Swinton, University of Aberdeen  
Lauren F. Winner, Duke University  
Natalie Wigg-Stevenson, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

Responding

Sarah Jean Barton, Duke University  
Rebecca Spurrier, Columbia Theological Seminary

A20-129
Books under Discussion

**Religion and Ecology Unit**

Theme: The Spirit of Soul Food: Race, Faith, and Food Justice (University of Illinois Press, 2021) Book Roundtable

Sunday, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM (In Person)
Joseph Wiebe, University of Alberta, Augustana, Presiding

This roundtable discusses the problem of race and coloniality in food systems in response to Rev. Dr. Christopher Carter’s recently published book, The Spirit of Soul Food. This book seeks to discern what soul food should look like today given structural racism and food system inequities. The social and psychological vestiges of colonialism are present in American agriculture as a system built on the exploitation of black and brown bodies. How do we resist a structurally evil food system? How has colonialism limited our imagination of food justice and practices of resistance? Rev. Dr. Christopher Carter dismantles key aspects of colonial logic present in food justice: racism, neoliberal political systems, the erasure of African and black agricultural and culinary knowledge, and a racist and sexist theological anthropology. He also offers three theological agricultural and food practices for decentering white dominance and decolonizing our diets: soulful eating, seeking justice for food workers, caring for the earth. Panelists will reflect on the connections between race, religion, and foodways in different colonial, geographical, spiritual, and political contexts.

**Panelists**

Derek Hicks, Wake Forest University
Rachel Brown, University of Victoria
Chantal Forbes, California Institute of Integral Studies
Deborah Rogers, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School
Andrea McComb Sanchez, University of Arizona
Yuria Celidwen, Independent Scholar
Norbert Wilson, Duke University

**Responding**

Christopher Carter, University of San Diego

**A20-130**

**Religion and Economy Unit**

Theme: Beyond Capitalism: Four Constructive Proposals toward Ecological, Equitable, Democratic Economic Life

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Rosetta E. Ross, Spelman College, Presiding

This session includes a panel of four scholars all of whom work at the intersection of academy, religious communities, and broader social movements, and who are developing resources for building more equitable and ecological economies that go “beyond” the corporate-and-finance-driven global capitalism that shapes life today. They present their constructive projects including...
the theoretical and practical challenges involved in radical change in the political-economic structures and ideologies undergirding advanced global capitalism. All highlight roles that religion may play in the transition to economies beyond capitalism.

**Panelists**

Joerg Rieger, Vanderbilt University  
Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Filipe Maia, Boston University  
Jeremy Posadas, Austin College

**Responding**

Carmen Lansdowne, First United Church

**Reviewers**

Karen Baker-Fletcher, Southern Methodist University

**A20-131**

Books under Discussion  
**Religion and Memory Unit and Study of Judaism Unit**  
**Theme:** *Yerushalmi's Zakhor (University of Washington Press, 1982) at 40: Reconsidering Jewish Memory in Theory and Practice*  
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Sam Shonkoff, Graduate Theological Union, Presiding

2022 is the fortieth anniversary of the publication of Yosef Hayyim Yerushalmi's *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. It remains a foundational book in Jewish memory studies—and has poignant comments on the role of Jewish historians—but studies of Jewish memory have also developed considerably in the last four decades, both building upon and pushing back against Yerushalmi’s conceptions of Jewish history and Jewish memory. These papers reevaluate *Zakhor* in light of contemporary scholarship on Jewish memory and developments in Jewish communal practices. The first paper puts *Zakhor* in conversation with the work of Walter Benjamin to examine the temporal and political orientations embedded within their historical writing. Another paper reconsiders Yerushalmi as a theorist of Jewish survival, in conversation with Benjamin and novelist Nicole Krauss. The final paper examines how Yerushalmi’s ideas of Jewish memory are put into practice in one pluralistic Jewish high school.

- Tsiona Lida, Harvard University

*The ascent of fallen Jews: Affect and historical memory in Walter Benjamin and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*

This paper reads Walter Benjamin alongside Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi to examine the temporal and political orientations embedded within their historical writing. Despite
overlapping concerns, these two thinkers do not appear to have been put in conversation previously. According to Yerushalmi, ‘history’ supersedes sacred text as the arbiter of Judaism and becomes ‘the faith of fallen Jews’. Despite this melancholic diagnosis, Yerushalmi’s interest remains with transmission: what Jews hold onto, nonetheless. Benjamin, in contrast, foregrounds loss and the ‘weak messianic power’ of history’s victims. Yerushalmi carries us away from death, whereas Benjamin beckons us there. Using affect as an interpretive lens, I compare Benjamin’s and Yerushalmi’s orientations toward past and future to distinguish the way that each conceives of ‘hope’, as well as to reveal what is at stake in historical temporality—namely, the possibility of redemption.

- Evan Goldstein, Yale University

_Born Without Precedent: Literature and the Memory of Genealogy after Zakhor_

What is the relationship between Jewish memory and Jewish continuity? This paper reconsiders Yerushalmi as a theorist of the media of “Jewish survival.” First, I recast Yerushalmi’s distinction between memory and history in conversation with Walter Benjamin’s essay “The Storyteller.” For Benjamin, memory is bound up with genealogical continuity, with storytelling as a technology whereby experience passes “from generation to generation.” Reading Yerushalmi with Benjamin relates history and memory to a third term, pivotal and untheorized in Zakhor: literature. I then turn to Nicole Krauss’s story “Zusya on the Roof,” in which a thinly-veiled stand-in for Yerushalmi seeks to prevent his grandson from being circumcised, thus figuring Jewish history in relation to reproduction as the site of Jewish continuity. Krauss’s connection between memory, history, and genealogy, read alongside Yerushalmi and Benjamin, both asserts an inextricable entanglement of memory with continuity, and asks how fiction might resist continuity’s reproductive logic.

- Joshua Krug, Kehillah Jewish High School

_Teaching "Lizkor" Amidst The State of the World: The Case of Kehillah_

How are schools as institutions actually answering the question, “How might we adequately care for children, their development/formation, and spiritual lives?”

In this paper, I deeply dive into the case of one pluralistic Jewish high school. Specifically, I interrogate and draw out the precise means by which this school seeks “LiZKoR” (from the Hebrew word, Zakhor, meaning Remember)- to inculcate Jewish memory to its diverse students. I claim that the school navigates between a practice of teaching Jewish history and a postmodern “identity project” and point to how it does so. The paper speaks to how Yosef Yerushalmi’s ideas about Jewish memory are proactively- and selectively- engaged and applied in an institution in the contemporary milieu.

The paper engages and benefits from the author’s dual identity- as a Jewish Studies scholar and educational professional in the setting in question. The paper ends with a
reflection on implications of the ongoing practice of “LiZKoR”- as well as broader insights about current Jewish education and religious education, writ large.

Responding

Rachel Gross, San Francisco State University

A20-132
Books under Discussion
Religion, Affect, and Emotion Unit and Ritual Studies Unit
Theme: When Rituals Don’t Feel Good: A Conversation about Dana W. Logan’s Awkward Rituals: Sensations of Governance in Protestant America (University of Chicago Press, 2022)
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Sonia Hazard, Florida State University, Presiding

This Author-Meets-Critics session engages Dana Logan’s Awkward Rituals, a book that freshly brings together questions of ritual, sensation, and governance in ways relevant to scholars of religious studies across tradition, period, and region. Logan’s object in Awkward Rituals is “sovereign ritual,” a concept from Geertz that refers to the rituals that perform the power of a monarch. Oddly, the United States after the American Revolution also had sovereign rituals. Performed in civil society by white northeasterners intent on governing themselves and others, these rituals called back to pre-Revolutionary sovereign rituals, except in a new era that had supposedly done away with kings. Logan argues that sovereign rituals in the early United States were awkward. White northeasterners contorted their bodies into strange positions, donned ill-fitting costumes, and engaged in highly mannered speech. When they did these things, they often felt weird, silly, or embarrassed. Panelists will critically respond to Logan and consider the book’s theoretical implications for their various areas of study.

Panelists

Marko Geslani, University of South Carolina
Ian MacCormack, Hebrew University of Jerusalem
Constance Furey, Indiana University
Charles McCrary, Arizona State University

Responding

Dana Logan, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

A20-133
Science, Technology, and Religion Unit
Theme: The Role of Philosophy of Science in Science-Engaged Theology
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Meghan Page, Loyola University, Maryland, Presiding
Most research programs in science-engaged theology aim to employ empirical findings in developing theological frameworks or answering various theological puzzles. However, it is no small question how theology might engage with science. As many have pointed out, science is embedded within a naturalistic framework, and often employs a narrative of the world that appears at bottom in tension with a variety of theological approaches. How, then, might these two disciplines interact?

In this panel, we will discuss how contemporary philosophy of science might serve as a helpful mediator in said interactions. By philosophy of science, I am referring to the analysis of scientific practice and theory. Philosophers of science examine both the nature and structure of concrete scientific theories and theses, as well as general questions about what science is, how scientists engage with the world, the norms of explanation and scientific practice, and what values drive science. The panel will explore questions about how scientific theories are constructed, what they tell us about the world, what constitutes a scientific explanation, and how the systematic exploration of nature, as exemplified by scientific practice, might bring insights and challenges to theology.

**Panelists**

Elise Crull, City College of New York  
Hans Halvorson, Princeton University  
Alan Love, University of Minnesota  
Eric Martin, Baylor University  
Jeffrey Koperki, Saginaw Valley State University

**Responding**

Natalie Carnes, Baylor University  
Andrew Prevot, Boston College

**A20-134**  
**South Asian Religions Unit**  
**Theme:** Religion and/as Labor  
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Anand Venkatkrishnan, University of Chicago, Presiding

This panel explores several practices in contemporary South Asian religions as forms of labor, including women’s domestic puja (ritual worship), seva (devotional service) in the name of guru-led movements, and devotional musical performance. The panel’s four papers offer anthropological data from different regions of South Asia which collectively demonstrate the centrality of human labor—paid and unpaid, manual and intellectual, private and public—in the construction of religious life. Collectively, the papers explore the dynamics through which human religious labor creates value, both spiritual and material, and how this value is subject to various processes of extraction, exchange, commodification, compensation, and monetization. The panel illustrates how religious work becomes even more complex in the contexts of flexible
caste identity, gendered divisions of labor, the spiritual authority of gurus, and debates on the validity of devotional labor.

- Ashlee Andrews, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

*The Value of Hindu Women’s Domestic Worship (and Other Reproductive Labor)*

This paper, based on interviews with middle-class Bengali Hindu women in Kolkata, India about their traditions of *barir puja* (home worship), argues that, as labor shaped by gendered and classed divisions of space and labor that crucially produces ethno-religious and class subjectivities, women’s domestic worship traditions are reproductive labor. Marxist feminist theorists of Social Reproduction Theory have used the term ‘reproductive labor’ to refer to the unpaid caretaking labor that predominantly women perform and which both capitalism and patriarchal discourse make invisible. While Social Reproduction Theory emphasizes the value of reproductive labor as essential to the production of workers, this paper pushes on the Marxist limits of this theory articulating the value of this labor for the women who perform it, more particularly as a source of religious authority, as well as how the paid labor of, often lower-caste, domestic workers makes middle-class women’s reproductive labor possible.

- Andrew Kunze, Purdue University

*Advertising Seva: Devotional Labor and the Gift of Free Press in Swaminarayan Hinduism*

This presentation offers an ethnographic case study of Swaminarayan Hindu seva (devotional service) in advertising, which circulates sacred images and positive coverage of gurus in Gujarati newspapers and television. The experiences of two sevaks (devotee volunteers), called Aakash and Smit (pseudonyms), bear implications for scholarly conversations on devotional practice and advertising in two senses. First, by examining the everyday labors assigned to sevaks, I show the intersections of their seva with the work of advertising professionals. Second, by analyzing the devotees’ dynamics with spiritual authorities and relationships with Press personnel, I argue that seva creates a distinct form of advertising that visually expresses their devotion as a gift to the guru. While Swaminarayan devotees describe their practice as “press seva,” I conceptualize the practice as “advertising seva” to invite academic consideration of points where South Asian religious labor converges with the work of capitalist advertising, and where it diverges.

- Priya Kothari, University of California, Berkeley

*Between Marga and Sampradaya: Divinely Graced Labor in the Vallabha Devotional Community*

This paper focuses on polemical debates between two present-day gurus in the Vallabha Sampradaya and Pushtimarga (Path of Grace) around devotional service (seva), revealing
the complexities of reconciling the intensely private nature of devotion in the Pushtimarga with the performative politics of seva. One guru maintains that in reorienting seva from Krishna to the guru and their publics, pushti seva has diverged from the marga altogether and created separate injunctions for descendants and non-descendants. The opposing view embraces pushti seva as “graced” labor, central to institution building and participation in a broad, transnational Hindu Vaishnava milieu. Situated in this changing contemporary context, how is a Pushtimargi guru’s position in governing seva transformed? Drawing from ethnographic research in Western India and the United States, I tease out the tensions between marga and sampradaya illuminated by these debates and shed light on seva’s vital role in reshaping and sustaining Pushtimargi religious identity.

- Joel Lee, Williams College

*The Bhajan Singer and the Qawwal: Caste and the Labor of Performance*

Mehbub Ali and Dev Kapur (pseudonyms) are cousins who work in disparate but parallel sectors of the religious music industry in Lucknow—Ali as a qawwal performing for the death anniversaries of Sufi saints, Kapur as a bhajan singer performing jagarans at Hindu festivals. As devotional musicians, they are called upon to enact a complex form of religious labor, one requiring technical skill, the enactment of devotion, the mastery of tradition-specific aesthetic codes, and the elicitation of particular affective states in audience members. The labor of music is further complicated by caste. Hailing from a Dalit community, Ali and Kapur have had to adopt titles and styles crafted to enable their entry into musical traditions dominated by musicians from higher status castes, and from which Dalits are normatively excluded. In what ways is the performance of devotion simultaneously the enactment of a particular kind of caste subjectivity? Based on interviews with the musicians and participant-observation in performance contexts, this paper examines how caste as a ‘division of laborers’ (as Ambedkar famously put it) shapes the labor of devotional music.

Responding

Amanda Lucia, University of California, Riverside

Business Meeting

Jennifer Ortegren, Middlebury College, Presiding
Sarah Pierce Taylor, University of Chicago, Presiding

A20-135
Tantric Studies Unit
Theme: *Tantric Posthumanisms: New Perspectives from Śaiva and Buddhist Tantric Traditions*
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Glen Hayes, Bloomfield College, Presiding
In recent decades, the “posthuman turn” within Religious Studies, and more broadly across the humanities, has prompted the field to question many of our enduring assumptions about the human subject, including the status of the human as the exclusive locus of religion or religious experience. This panel aims not only to bring theoretical approaches to the posthuman into dialogue with Tantric Studies as a subdiscipline, but to make the case that the archives of Tantric thought and practice are particularly well suited to contribute new theoretical resources to the posthuman study of religion. Simultaneously bringing to light previously unstudied and understudied textual evidence from multiple Tantric traditions, the individual papers of this panel illustrate how Śaiva and Buddhist Tantra has often articulated a fundamental interpenetration between the human and non-human worlds that aligns closely with recent theoretical approaches to the posthuman in Religious Studies and in the humanities at large.

- Loriliail Biernacki, University of Colorado
  
  *Machine Life in a Tantric Panentheism*

  Recently, in *Scientific American Mind*, neuroscientist Christof Koch offers a vision of humanity’s future that would have been virtually unthinkable for most of humanity’s past, a brave new world of machine intelligence. This specter of machine intelligence has given rise to a host of fearful, alien images, from terminators to *Ex Machina* to *Her*. Yet, one wonders if our fear of machines taking over might be perhaps, more than anything, reflective of our peculiarly Western-shaped conceptions of a soul emotionally directing its human body and mind. How, instead, might the possibility of machine intelligence sit within a cosmology not foundationally shaped by a Cartesian homunculus? This paper examines the possibilities for artificial intelligence within a tenth – eleventh-century panentheist Tantric cosmology, where sentience is the expression of a single reality as deity, Śiva, which pervades throughout everything. Given this, is it possible for a computer also to exhibit sentience?

- Jason Schwartz, University of California, Santa Barbara
  
  *Honor Them for They are Not Natural Men: Nonhuman Rights in Pre-modern Śaiva Political Theology*

  In the audacious vision of the anonymous medieval commentary on the Śivadharmanvivaraṇa—the only surviving work of commentary in the tradition of non-brahman dharmasastra, which lies at the foundation of the tantric imaginary—the dignity and rights of the individual are grounded in a peculiar understanding of a common “non-humanity.” Succinctly, asserting that a lay Śaiva devotee has more in common with a piśāca, gana, or ghoul than a regular human being, the commentator argues that he or she is to be placed outside the governing strictures of the normative human world, including varṇāśramadharma. In this talk, I bring the Śivadharmavivaraṇa’s pre-modern and non-Western political theology into dialogue with writings of the ecological philosopher Timothy Morton’s *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*. I focus on Morton’s notion of spectral phenomenology, the recognition of how in lived experience we are
haunted by the non-human, including our encounters with the non-human within ourselves.

- James Gentry, Stanford University

*Networks of Materiality and Meaning in the Efficacy of Tantric Pills that Liberate through Eating*

This paper discusses the efficacy of Buddhist tantric pills, particularly their tendency to display signs of power and agency usually associated with sentience, by considering how brahmin-flesh pills that promise liberation through eating are represented across a range of polemical, liturgical, and narrative writings composed in Tibet between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries. Analysis draws inspiration from actor-network theory (ANT) to model an approach of tracing the human/non-human associations that constitute a pill’s trajectory of efficacious action. Following this methodology, it argues, calls scholars to seek the guidance of Tibetan arguments about this pill’s efficacy to bring critical attention to “anti-fetishist” assumptions implicit in the contemporary study of Tibetan tantric pills and, by implication, Tibetan medicine—assumptions which are differently reflected in the Tibetan writings considered here, and in the Portuguese colonial encounters with African religions that first gave rise to the notion of the “fetish.”

- Elaine Fisher, Stanford University

*The “Life-breath Liṅga”: The Non-human Agency of a Personal Object of Worship*

For certain Śaiva Tantric practitioners in the late medieval Deccan, a personal śivaliṅga was not only installed with the agency of Śiva himself, but was considered an animate material object in its own right, equipped with its own organs of sensation and interpenetrating with the life breath of the practitioner. Drawing on unstudied textual evidence that originated in the Kālamukha communities of the Andhra region, this paper examines our earliest surviving discussions of the prāṇaliṅga, the “life-breath liṅga,” or iṣṭaliṅga, as it was more commonly termed in later Vīraśaiva circles. As a material object, the prāṇaliṅga was conceived of as an agentive participant in ritual practice: borne on the initiate’s body at all times, the prāṇaliṅga itself was responsible for transmuting all food consumed into prasāda, a material instantiation of Śiva’s grace, and following initiation (dīkṣā), it could never again be separated from the initiate’s body and life breath. In short, the case of the prāṇaliṅga exemplifies how the agency of material objects in Śaiva tantric traditions could fundamentally delimit or reshape the bounds of human personhood.

**Responding**

Sthaneshwar Timalsina, San Diego State University

**Business Meeting**
This session takes up three papers dealing with agency, personhood, and solidarity beyond the merely human, in conversation with Mennonite theology, Afropessimism, and ecological reflection.

- Laura Schmidt Roberts, Fresno Pacific University

  *The World is Full of Persons, Only Some of Whom are Human*: Recasting Personhood and Relationality for Mennonite Ecotheology and Environmental Ethics

  This paper explores aspects of Mari Joerstad’s approach to and exegetical and ecological conclusions regarding Hebrew Bible personalist nature texts in relation to Anabaptist-Mennonite views of personhood, nonhumans, and the relationships between humans, nonhumans, and the divine. Joerstad’s work resonates with and presents real challenges to ecotheology and environmental ethics in this tradition in several ways, including the parameters of the community of disciples, the meaning of peacemaking and right relationships, and communal practices of discernment, accountability, support and decision-making. Discussion of Anabaptist-Mennonite understandings engages primarily Ched Myers on Watershed Discipleship and Duane Friesen/Bradley Guth’s Great Plains Land Ethic.

- Cesar Baldeomar, Boston College

  Beyond Imago Dei: The Prospects of Afropessimism and Epistemologies of the South for Theological Anthropology

  This essay first discusses the epistemologies and methodology guiding this project: epistemologies of the south that take seriously the body as a political site, and the decolonial perspective that will critically assess the dominant theological-anthropological scripts as contextualized and limited conceptions that cannot function separately from their exclusivist interpretation and application. The next section invites the audience to reenter the Valladoid debates in order to critically assess how talk of who is “human” shapes (mis)treatment of bodies. Calvin Warren and Frank Wilderson III’s reflections and arguments will also receive significant attention in this section to explore the question of nonbeing in the present and its implications for the future. Finally, the essay proposes a fugitive theology that is intentionally silent on God and what it means to be “human.” It is theological speech that skirts around the obsession with the body as a site for a comprehensive theological anthropology—not as an apolitical stance, but as a deeply
political form of epistemological and theological resistance. Lastly, such fugitive theology gestures toward an embrace of hopelessness, pessimism, and nihilism toward social institutions and rhetoric of hope and progress as steps to envisioning a future beyond the human.

- Ban Htang, Union Theological Seminary

**Entangled Agencies: Toward Deep Solidarities**

**Thesis:** The notions of entangled agencies of new materialist thought and of apophatic theology enrich each other and enhance *the capacity to feel, to grieve, and to respond* to the precarious conditions of the political, pandemic, and ecological crises.

This paper reads Karen Barad’s quantum entanglement and Catherine Keller’s apophatic entanglement together from an Asian woman’s perspective. Barad’s intra-action "signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies."[1] It rejects the notion of individuals as separated entities. Keller’s apophatic entanglement comes with its haunting and yet prophetic unsaying of the known earth. It invites us to learn our ignorance and unveils the unknowable. Reflecting on the entangled agencies, the paper seeks to reconfigure the role of human beings and enable them to embody deep solidarities across multispecies boundaries.


**Reviewers**

Michelle Voss Roberts, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

**Business Meeting**

Linn Tonstad, Yale University, Presiding

**A20-137**

**Wesleyan and Methodist Studies Unit**

Theme: *Post-Colonial Biblical Interpretation and the Wesleyan/Methodist Traditions*

Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Natalya Cherry, Texas Christian University, Presiding

The Wesley and Methodist Studies Unit looks forward to a lively panel discussion on postcolonial biblical studies. The session, led by diverse scholars from different parts of the global Methodist traditions, will explore: • Decolonizing biblical scholarship with various contexts and hermeneutics, particularly those of the Global South; • How to transform Wesleyan/Methodist theological education by decentering dominant biblical scholarship, embracing minoritized hermeneutics, and incorporating voices from margins; • How to incorporate global
perspectives on biblical interpretation to promote diversity/inclusion, equity, and justice.

Panelists

Dion Forster, Stellenbosch University
Jung Choi, Duke University
Alroy Mascrenghe, independent scholar

Business Meeting

Cindy K. Wesley, University of Northern Colorado, Presiding
Jung Choi, Duke University, Presiding

A20-138
Women's Caucus
Theme: New Books on Gender and Religion
Sunday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Deborah Fulthorp, Grand Canyon University, Presiding

This session presents women scholars who have published books in the discipline of women’s studies, gender, theology and religion in 2021-2022. This panel’s authors will provide an overview of their books and share their research in theology, biblical studies, or religious studies, with a focus on its intersection with gender, sexuality, feminist or queer studies. These scholars will also share their experiences regarding strategies and mechanics for getting books on gender and religion published, make suggestions on how to overcome publication challenges in the guild, and offer advice to those seeking publication of their own book manuscripts.

- Wil Gafney, Brite Divinity School

A Women's Lectionary for the Whole Church, Years A (Mathew) and W (standalone)

The scriptures are androcentric, male-focused, as is the lectionary that is dependent upon them. As a result, many congregants know only the biblical men's stories told in the Sunday lectionary read in their churches. A more expansive, more inclusive lectionary will remedy that by introducing readers and hearers of scripture to “women's stories” in the scriptures. A Women’s Lectionary for the Whole Church, when completed, will be a three-year lectionary accompanied by a stand-alone single year lectionary, Year W, that covers all four gospels. Year A features the Gospel of Matthew with John interwoven as is the case in the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) and Episcopal Lectionary.

- Shannen Williams, University of Dayton

Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle

In Subversive Habits, Shannen Dee Williams provides the first full history of Black Catholic nuns in the United States, hailing them as the forgotten prophets of Catholicism
and democracy. Drawing on oral histories and previously sealed Church records, Williams demonstrates how master narratives of women’s religious life and Catholic commitments to racial and gender justice fundamentally change when the lives and experiences of African American nuns are taken seriously. For Black Catholic women and girls, embracing the celibate religious state constituted a radical act of resistance to white supremacy and the sexual terrorism built into chattel slavery and segregation. Williams shows how Black sisters—such as Sister Mary Antona Ebo, who was the only Black member of the inaugural delegation of Catholic sisters to travel to Selma, Alabama, and join the Black voting rights marches of 1965—were pioneering religious leaders, educators, healthcare professionals, desegregation foot soldiers, Black Power activists, and womanist theologians. In the process, Williams calls attention to Catholic women’s religious life as a stronghold of white supremacy and racial segregation—and thus an important battleground in the long African American freedom struggle.

- Emily Dumler-Winckler, Saint Louis University

*Modern Virtue: Mary Wollstonecraft and a Tradition of Dissent*

Modern societies seem to be plagued with conflicts about basic beliefs, values, and ideals. What some call virtue, others count as vice. *Modern Virtue* argues that the cultivation of the virtues as well as contestation about them are part and parcel of the goods that Christian communities and democratic societies share in common. Influenced by religious dissenters in eighteenth-century England, Mary Wollstonecraft revolutionized ancient traditions of the virtues for feminist, abolitionist, and radical democratic aims. For this modern feminist, as for premodern Christians, moral formation requires putting exemplars to the test of critical examination—discarding some, adopting others, and emulating the virtues of each. With good reason, both modernity and virtue have cultured despisers. *Modern Virtue* provides an account of the virtues in modernity and, even, the virtues of modernity.

- Hadia Mubarak, Queens University, Charlotte

*Rebellious Wives, Neglectful Husbands: Controversies in Modern Qur’anic Commentaries*

*Rebellious Wives, Neglectful Husbands* brings into conversation the distinct fields of *tafsîr* (Qur’anic exegesis) studies and women’s studies by exploring significant shifts in modern Qur’anic commentaries on the subject of women. Hadia Mubarak places three of the most influential, Sunni Qur’anic commentaries in the twentieth century against the backdrop of broader historical, intellectual, and political developments in modern North Africa. Mubarak illustrates the ways in which colonialism, nationalism, and modernization set into motion new ways of engaging with the subject of women in the Qur’an. In contrast to assessments of the exegetical tradition as monolithically patriarchal, this book captures a medieval and modern *tafsîr* tradition with pluralistic, complex, and evolving interpretations of women and gender in the Qur’an. Rather than pit a seemingly egalitarian Qur’an against an allegedly patriarchal exegetical tradition,
Mubarak affirms the need for a critical engagement with *tafsīr* among scholars concerned with women and gender in Islam.

- **Sharon Davis, McCormick Theological Seminary**

  *The Trauma of Sexual and Domestic Violence: Navigating My Way Through*

  Recovering from the trauma of sexual and domestic violence is a process that can lead you to find your own strength. Shaped by a faith identity incongruent with her reality as a survivor of sexual and physical abuse, Ellis Davis became intimately familiar with domestic violence and the church’s reluctance to intervene. Then, using marriages as a touchstone for self-discovery only led her into increasingly violent relationships. Even while navigating the process to wholeness as a woman police officer, Ellis Davis was not assured an expedient process through the courts nor protection from male police officers. Determined to define her worth for herself, Ellis Davis shares with liberating vulnerability decades of blessings and betrayals as she self-actualized from being a victim of domestic violence and sexual traumas to becoming victoriously accomplished and deeply content. This book provides hope for survivors, pastoral wisdom for seminarians, cultural sensitivity for service providers, and is useful as a guide for faith-based study groups.

- **Kathleen McPhillips, University of Newcastle, Australia**
  **Naomi R. Goldenberg, University of Ottawa**

  *The End of Religion. Feminist Reappraisals of the State*

  Discussion of ground breaking book by the authors published in 2021, examining religion as a form of state craft and engaged in the politics of governance. This dissolves the political and mythic boundaries between "religion" and the state and utilises feminist accounts of where "religion" promotes gender inequality and violence against women and the secular state allows this to happen. Feminists who analyse religion have accepted this division as a fact and rather than as a social construction and we argue that "religion" needs to be de-mystified and seen as forms of the state that are actively engaged in promoting and protecting violence against women. The authors expand on this theoretical perspective and recount some of the powerful examples from the book.

- **Angela Parker, Mercer University**

  *If God Still Breathes, Why Can't I? Black Lives Matter and Biblical Authority*

  Drawing from her perspective as a Womanist New Testament scholar, Dr. Parker describes how she learned to deconstruct one of White Christianity’s most pernicious lies: the conflation of biblical authority with the doctrines of inerrancy and infallibility. As Dr. Parker shows, these doctrines are less about the text of the Bible itself and more about the arbiters of its interpretation—historically, White males in positions of power who have used Scripture to justify control over marginalized groups. This oppressive use
of the Bible has been suffocating. To learn to breathe again we must “let God breathe in us.” We must read the Bible as authoritative, but not authoritarian. We must become conscious of the particularity of our identities, as we also become conscious of the particular identities of the biblical authors from whom we draw inspiration. And we must remember that as long as God still breathes, we can too.

Responding

Kimberly Carter, California Institute of Integral Studies

A20-141
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Plenaries
Theme: Plenary Address: Ramón Cruz
Sunday, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM (In Person)
Mayra Rivera, Harvard University, Presiding

Ramón Cruz is the president of the Sierra Club, the first Latino to hold that position. Cruz holds degrees from American University in Washington, D.C., and Princeton University in New Jersey. He has over 20 years of experience in advocacy at the intersection of sustainability, environmental and energy policy, urban planning, and climate change. He has worked as deputy director of the state environmental regulatory agency in Puerto Rico, and held senior positions at the Environmental Defense Fund, the Partnership for New York City, and the Institute for Transportation & Development Policy. At the Sierra Club he has advocated for “listening to, and acting on, the moral clarity of those who have been the main victims of environmental crises but don't have seats at the decision-making tables. It involves deepening our understanding of how racism and other systems of oppression fuel environmental harm.”

Panelists

Ramón Cruz, Sierra Club

A20-142
Professional Development – Mentoring
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee and Status of Women in the Profession Committee
Theme: Women’s Mentoring Lunch
Sunday, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM (In Person)
K. Christine Pae, Denison University, Presiding
Amy Elizabeth Steele, Vanderbilt University, Presiding
Swasti Bhattacharyya, Harvard University, Presiding

The Status of Women in the Profession Committee and the Status of Racial & Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee are happy to announce the return of the in-person women’s mentoring lunch. The luncheon is open to female-identified members of AAR at any stages of
their professions and offers space for candid conversations about the challenging issues which the participants are facing. Topics for discussion will include the following: on the job market; working toward tenure; publishing; balancing between relationships and work; dealing with “presumed incompetence”; contingent faculty; careers beyond the academy; surviving through grad school; scholar-activism; normalizing discussions on mental health, collective care and support; infusing intersectionality and diversity into our courses and institutions; wild card discussions.

Panelists
Su Yon Pak, Union Theological Seminary
Ann Gleig, University of Central Florida
Juliane Hammer, University of North Carolina
Traci C. West, Drew University
Kate Ott, Drew University
Grace Kao, Claremont School of Theology
Margaret D. Kamitsuka, Oberlin College and Conservatory
Eboni Marshall Turman, Yale University
Monique Moultrie, Georgia State University
Kate E. Temoney, Montclair State University
Michal Raucher, Rutgers University
Heike Peckruhn, Daemen University
Rebecca Todd Peters, Elon University
Monica Coleman, University of Delaware
Aysha Hidayatullah, University of San Francisco

P20-237
Books under Discussion
African Association for the Study of Religion
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Isabel Mukonyora, Western Kentucky University, Presiding

In The Mission of Apolo Kivebulaya: Religious Encounter & Social Change in the Great Lakes c. 1865-1935, Emma Wild-Wood skillfully tells the story of Apolo Kivebulay in order to excavate religious encounter and change, social relations and processes, and cultural and political implications of Christianity in colonial east Africa. In doing so, especially with the addition of a sourcebook entitled The Archive of a Ugandan Missionary, Wild-Wood has reshaped the archive of Christianity in the northern Great Lakes region of Africa. Panelists on this panel will engage Wild-Wood’s text, methodology, and findings in a wide-ranging conversation with the author herself.

Panelists
Dr. Albert Jordy Raboteau II (1943-2021) impacted many fields in, and beyond, the study of religion. Raboteau's publications included the landmark *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South* (1978/2002), a now-classic study that emerged during the Black Studies movement as research that uncovered and took seriously the Black religious cultures that eluded the framework of institutional American Christianity; and, most recently, *American Prophets: Seven Religious Radicals and Their Struggle for Social and Political Justice* (2016). To honor Prof. Raboteau's foundational contributions to Black religious history and to the study of religions in the Americas, this co-sponsored special session gathers some of his former students who experienced his undergraduate teaching and graduate teaching/advising. This celebration of life will include panelist remembrances, reflections, and discussions of legacies. Following panelist remarks and conversations, the session will open up to audience reflections on the impact that Al Raboteau fostered in the academy.

**Panelists**

Leslie D Callahan, University of Pennsylvania  
Tracey Hucks, Colgate University  
Kelsey Moss, University of Southern California  
Judith Weisenfeld, Princeton University

A20-203  
**Body and Religion Unit and Comparative Studies of Religion Unit and North American Association for the Study of Religion**  
Theme: **Moving Body as Foundational to the Proper Study of Religion: A Response to and Celebration of the work of Sam Gill**  
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)  
Jeffrey Stephen Lidke, Berry College, Presiding

This roundtable brings together noted scholars representing a wide spectrum in the study of religion. Each will engage an aspect of Gill’s work as a lens through which to critically examine
the current state of the study of religion and offer detailed and practical principles and examples for guiding the field into the future. Sam Gill will respond to the panelists’ presentations attending to future possibilities for comparative and body-based studies of religion. He will also introduce, through examples, some of his multimedia—print and image—academic work.

**Panelists**

Hugh B. Urban, Ohio State University
Michael Zogry, University of Kansas
John Thibdeau, University of Rochester
Aaron W. Hughes, University of Rochester
Seth Schermerhorn, Hamilton College
Mary Corley Dunn, Saint Louis University
Jeanette Reedy Solano, California State University, Fullerton
Kimberley Patton, Harvard University

**Responding**

Sam Gill, University of Colorado

**Business Meeting**

Oliver Freiberger, University of Texas, Presiding
Ivette Vargas-O'Bryan, Austin College, Presiding

**A20-204 Bonhoeffer: Theology and Social Analysis Unit**

**Theme:** Crossing Boundaries: Bonhoeffer and Black, Womanist, and Liberation Theologies

Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Karen V. Guth, College of the Holy Cross, Presiding

The papers in this session explore the relationship between Bonhoeffer's theology and various liberationist discourses. The first paper identifies resonances between Bonhoeffer and James Cone on Christology; the second compares Bonhoeffer and M. Shawn Copeland on ecclesiology; and the third evaluates Bonhoeffer's liberationist status vis-a-vis central liberationist criteria.

- Michael Mawson, Charles Sturt University

*The Stumbling Block and the Lynching Tree: Reading Bonhoeffer’s Christology with James Cone*

Despite their very different contexts and styles, there are striking resonances between Bonhoeffer’s and James Cone’s reflections on Christology. This paper explores three of these resonances in particular: (1) Bonhoeffer’s and Cone’s shared diagnosis of and resistance to docetic, abstract Christological thinking; (2) their shared emphasis on Christ’s human suffering and humiliation; and (3) their insistence that encountering
Christ as the crucified one locates us in the world in a new way. The final part of the paper will suggest some ways in which Bonhoeffer’s and Cone’s reflections on Christology complement and repair one another.

- Htoi San Lu, Vanderbilt University

*Integrating Body and Community: Engaging Dietrich Bonhoeffer and M. Shawn Copeland’s Ecclesiological Approaches*

In line with the theme of crossing boundaries, this presentation examines the constructive ecclesiological approaches of Bonhoeffer and womanist theologian M. Shawn Copeland, primarily focusing on their understanding of the church as the body of Christ. Bonhoeffer’s approach stresses the sociological structure of the church and gestures towards the understanding of church-community as a collective person of Christ, constituted by ethical responsibilities. Copeland’s womanist approach centers the body as the site of divine revelation and reclaims despised bodies. Through her theology of embodiment, she emphasizes *basilia praxis* which she defines as “acts of justice-doing, empire critique, love and solidarity.” A dialogue between Bonhoeffer and Copeland’s work, specifically the concept of church-community and theology of body, offers nuances, fresh theological insights, and robust theological visions of the church. In combining the two, we may reimagine the church community and consider a constructive ecclesiology that can work for the betterment of diasporic churches.

- David Gides, University of Providence

*Parts for the System: Bonhoeffer and the Liberation Theologians*

Kelly and Kirkpatrick argue in “Bonhoeffer and Liberation Theology” from *Engaging Bonhoeffer* (Fortress, 2016), “Discussions of whether Bonhoeffer was a ‘liberation theologian’ are perhaps ultimately unimportant as they fall down to semantics and subjective opinion.” This essay challenges that assessment, arguing that there are criteria by which to provide an objective answer. Furthermore, an answer is important as it challenges the use of Bonhoeffer as a support for other movements. What are the initiating conditions for liberation theology? Is there an interpretive device explaining such conditions (ideological foundation)? Does theology start with orthodoxy or orthopraxy? Finally, are there theological categories in liberation theology indebted to, or influenced by, Bonhoeffer’s own treatment of commensurate categories? The final criterion provides the only convincing connection between Bonhoeffer and liberation theology. Difficulties in using Bonhoeffer in liberation theology are compounded by the fact these criteria cannot be separated in any coherent theological movement.

**Business Meeting**

Karen V. Guth, College of the Holy Cross, Presiding
Matthew Puffer, Valparaiso University, Presiding
A20-205
Buddhism in the West Unit and Buddhist Critical-Constructive Reflection Unit
Theme: Secularizing Buddhism
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Caroline Starkey, University of Leeds, Presiding

Secularizing forms of Buddhism are perhaps the most important development on the international horizons of Buddhism in the 21st century. Built on themes characteristic of Buddhist modernism, it has become an identifiable movement, and as a movement, it adds institutional organization and rhetorical systematization to the ideological forms of Buddhist modernism. This roundtable will focus on Secularizing Buddhism: New Perspectives on a Dynamic Tradition, Richard K. Payne, ed., which brings together 14 essays on a variety of topics from a variety of orientations. Most of the essays examine contemporary manifestations, including the ambivalent role of museums, the difference between unitary conceptions of the self and plural conceptions, the psychologization of Buddhism, racism in some forms of secularized meditation, and analysis of secularizing discourse. In addition, the volume also includes historical perspectives that frame present-day developments in relation to international developments in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Panelists
Funie Hsu, San José State University
David McMahan, Franklin and Marshall College
Pamela D. Winfield, Elon University
Charles B. Jones, Catholic University of America
Sharon A. Suh, Seattle University
Richard K. Payne, Graduate Theological Union

Business Meeting
Barbra R. Clayton, Mount Allison University, Presiding
Melissa Anne-Marie Curley, Ohio State University, Presiding

A20-206
Christian Spirituality Unit
Theme: Situating Spirituality: Articulating the Edges of the Known
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
David B. Perrin, University of Waterloo, Presiding

Our time has witnessed the emergence of new spiritualities akin to the development of a plethora of new spiritualities in the late Middle Ages. New times requires new expressions of the mystical hope that lies within and around us. This session presents a diverse range of the "voices of the transcendent" which -- hitherto -- have been little known.

• David De La Fuente, Fordham University
“The Soul of Theology” and the “Bodies” of Christ: Scripture, St. Paul, and M. Shawn Copeland’s Spirituality of Racial Justice

Scripture is “the soul” of theology, but it is also a site of struggle. As Denise Kimber Buell has argued, the “ethnic reasoning” arising out of Pauline literature has racist potential. Yet for many, St. Paul is a paradigm of Christian spirituality whose writings can inform anti-racist praxis. Taking the Pauline literature as a case study, this paper argues that empire criticism and theologies of racial justice are essential reading tools for linking scripture with a Christian theology and spirituality of racial justice, and that this type of criticism can help Christian reflection guard against its own racist potential. To demonstrate this, this paper explores the work of M. Shawn Copeland to illustrate how her deployment of race-critical, empire-critical and decolonial hermeneutics draws out the meaning of the body of Christ as the only body that can “take us all in as we are” in defiance of empire.

• Melisa Ortiz Berry, Bushnell University

Gender, Diversity, and Evangelical Spirituality

What if modern evangelicalism is not at its core a political beast, but a type of Christian spirituality? Through a study of a diverse group of twentieth century women, we see how women were influencing modern evangelicalism itself without necessarily holding traditionally recognized positions of power. To identify those locations of power within a movement without an institutional center, the dialogue of early church scholars regarding orthodox boundary lines and their gatekeepers have been useful for locating women’s agency and influence. Through this lens, the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of evangelical life and commitments reveal how the movement functioned as a type of biblical spirituality, which we can view through the shared spiritual commitments of author and publisher Henrietta Mears, vocalist and evangelist Mahalia Jackson, and celebrity politician Soong Mayling.

• Kristen Daley Mosier, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Divided Waters: How a via aquatica Encourages Ecological Conversion

The story of settler colonial expansion across the frontier and particularly the Colorado River basin is one of crossings and coercive baptisms. In the wake of death-dealing forces that continue to divide the waters of the Colorado River, how might the practice of Christian baptism turn our hearts to better see and know a given watershed, and draw human and nonhuman communities toward reconciliation? Applying a theme of crossings this paper will explore possibilities of life regenerated amidst the shadow of death, and how a spirituality of water, or via aquatica, may facilitate ecological conversion particularly when oriented to a watershed community of creation.

• Aizaiah Yong, Pacific School of Religion
Can We Be What We Are Looking For? A Call to Embracing and Recreating Multiple Worlds through the Practice of Radical Inter-in-dependence

This essay seeks to explore how the contemplative practice and pedagogy of radical inter-in-dependence can cultivate both critical consciousness and beloved community by promoting personal authenticity, embodied awareness, and collective imagination building. In this paper, I will interrogate the ways in which radical inter-in-dependence was my personal practice of interior support as an educator at the margins of my institution and then share how it impacted and ultimately reshaped my pedagogical practice inviting others to re-create relations of liberation together. In order to ground my inquiry, I examine how this pedagogy was engaged in a first-year graduate level seminar on spiritual formation that was made up of students from a wide variety of backgrounds, academic interests, and vocational pursuits. This paper will also provide further evidence that demonstrates the importance of why the study of spirituality should arise from spiritual experiences as well as intercultural and intersectional dialogue.

A20-207
Christian Systematic Theology Unit and Gay Men and Religion Unit and Queer Studies in Religion Unit
Theme: Celebrating and Challenging the Convulsions of, and Beyond, Queer and Trans Studies in Religion and Theology: Honoring the Work of Mark Jordan
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Brandy Daniels, University of Portland, Presiding

On the occasion of his retirement, this panel celebrates the work of Mark Jordan and his impact on queer and trans studies in religion through critical, creative, and constructive engagement with his scholarship.

- Kori Pacyniak, University of California, Riverside

*Queer Calling: Imagination & Becoming in the work and teaching of Mark D. Jordan*

Often pushing back against categories of identity that restrict sexuality, theology, and spiritually, Jordan’s work calls us into a new way of becoming, inviting us to liberate ourselves from the traumatic rhetoric that hold us captive and to imagine new ways of being and beginning, new possibilities and futurities not just for academia, but for ourselves and the world. Always aware of the power of words and rhetoric (especially those employed in theological spaces), Jordan’s work manages to not only impart wisdom and reveal some hitherto unknown knowledge, but also “equips the saints,” providing an encouraging framework for readers and future scholars to both build upon and expand Jordan’s work. Paying particular attention to the catholicity of Jordan’s writing and teaching, this project engages the ways has influenced readers and students, as well as explores the possibilities Jordan calls us into becoming.

- Cameron Partridge, Saint Aidan's Episcopal Church
Shapes for an Open Body: Celebrating and Transing the Formative Work of Mark Jordan

This paper celebrates the work of Mark Jordan, focusing on the concept of shapes and shaping, an imaginative, aesthetically and morphologically rich dimension of his writing on Christian thought and teaching. Focusing on Jordan’s contribution to queer readings of the body of Christ, both crucified and risen, the paper explores how Jordan’s readings can point to trans readings of the side wound archive.

- Siobhan Kelly, Harvard University

A Prelude After Jordan, or Camp Sodomy for Trans Studies

I hope to argue for the centrality of Mark Jordan’s work to trans studies in religion, drawing attention to two crucial components of his scholarship: writerly style and a focus on terminological instability. To open a felicitous dialogue between trans studies and his work, I attend to the use of “sodomy” in *The Silence of Sodom* and *The Invention of Sodomy*, revealing a complex and self-contradictory category that includes within it forms of gender-crossing and -ambiguity that have come more recently to mark transgender’s historical emergence. Jordan’s stylistics offer another path of convergence with trans studies, one taken to be the domain of gay men but that travels promiscuously through all manner of trans writing and performance: camp. Through reflection on the work of Mark Jordan, camp and sodomy reveal new alliances and paths of inquiry for trans studies in religion. While often seen as the domain of homosexual maleness, I hold to Jordan’s maxim that “A decisive responsibility for any genealogy of sexual terms is to represent their kinds of instability” (*The Invention of Sodomy*, 8), thus reframing both sodomy and camp within an expanded genealogy of trans studies.

- Peng Yin, Emory University

Queer Unlearning: Queer Theology as Apophatic Theology

Mark Jordan’s contribution to queer and trans studies in religion can be told in terms a series of saying and unsaying about divinity and human desire. The paper shows how Mark Jordan stands in continuity with the tradition of apophatic theology to develop a program of soul-shaping capable of undoing languages that shrink possibilities for queer living. Across the decades of work, Jordan sustains a steadfast commitment to undo the depleting effects of the caricature, stereotype, or slander of queer folx in the streets, of the power to sign legal papers and decide grievability by the modern states, and of the juridical forms of subjectivation sustained by Christianity forgetful of it richer past. What results is a fuller prospect for queer living, an experiment inviting others to join its incipient dance moves.

- Melissa M. Wilcox, University of California, Riverside
At the intersections of religion, theology, and class, various discourses merge, connect, and clash. This session will be divided proportionally into two segments, 4 presenters and then 2 presenters, with brief discussion after each set of papers. The papers cluster around two issues. First, do we find ourselves in the era of the Anthropocene or the Capitalocene? What is at stake in characterizing the ecological catastrophe as something caused by humans as such or as humans governed by capitalist regimes? How would responses need to be different — and what contribution might religion make — in the specific challenges of the Capitalocene? Second, how do different religious traditions approach the challenges of liberation in the present, given the newly emerging awareness of class under the rising pressures of neoliberal capitalism? How would liberation theologies for the twenty-first century address the various intersectionalities that emerge in view of the struggles of the global working majority?

- Adam Vander Tuig, Union Theological Seminary

*Anthropocene, Capitalocene, and Maneggiocene: The Insidious Ecocide of Modern Managerialism*

Environmental historian Carolyn Merchant concludes that “the concept of the Anthropocene subsumes the Capitalocene, but the Anthropocene is nevertheless implemented by the Capitalocene.” Merchant’s reasoning implies a meronomy—a classification hierarchy that organizes part-whole relationships. This paper argues that ever since the Great Acceleration, one system increasingly driving the Capitalocene—and therefore the Anthropocene—is what I call the Maneggiocene, or new regime of modern managerialism. This paper employs the work of Barbara Ehrenreich, Gérard Duménil, Dominique Lévy, and David Graeber to reveal the rise and bifurcation of the professional-managerial class and new modes of production that resulted. It shows how mainline churches, seminaries, colleges, and universities are implicated, and, together with Donna Haraway, it considers the historical relationships between managerialism and genocidal catastrophe. Finally, this paper situates the Maneggiocene securely as a principal, ecocidal component system of the Capitalocene in the larger mosaic of the Anthropocene overall.

- George Schmidt, Vanderbilt University
The Capitalocene and Its Eschaton: Visioning the Proletarianization of Ecology

Moving from the Anthropocene to the Capitalocene does not mean focusing on a particular group of individuals (capitalists) but rather attention to a process, the beyond-human assemblage of capital accumulation. Yet, implied in the naming of a geological epoch is the necessity for adaptive survival responses. In this sense, accepting the Capitalocene as the neologism for our current geological epoch assumes that Terran life must adapt to capital in order to survive. The Capitalocene, therefore, is not merely naming the perpetrator but obliquely demanding something of its victims while also transforming them. Rather than a deep ecology, this essay proposes a visioning through the Capitalocene by way of a deep dialectical materialism that extends eschatological ecotheologies into the realm of geologic time. In so doing, this essay hopes to reconceptualize the Capitalocene as an eschatological process, a passageway beyond itself toward ecological proletarianization.

- Hesron Sihombing, Iliff School of Theology

Digital Labor and Subjectivity in the Capitalocene: A Critique of Neoliberalism

Some theorists have focused on the conceptual framework of the Anthropocene in analyzing ecological catastrophe. This approach is ignorant of the experience of marginalized communities and the ecological dimension of the Global South. The methodology of this paper, instead, takes Capitalocene as its theoretical trajectory to examine the subjective formation of digital labor in the neoliberal exploitation of the Global South.

This paper argues that the formation of digital labor in the Global South cultivates neoliberal subjectivity, one that marks digital labor as material in connection to its ecological dimension, exploits humans and nature, and constructs a new proletariat class distinct from industrial working class. In discussion with Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, Carl Raschke, Jason Moore, Wendy Brown, and Joerg Rieger, this paper will uncover the dilemma between digital labor as promising career to eradicate poverty and as accelerator of neoliberal-capitalistic exploitation, and respond with “digital multitudes” using Levinasian “responsibility.”

- Michael Laminack, University of Denver

Neoliberal Political Subjectivity in the Capitalocene

How does neoliberalism reshape political subjectivity in the capitalocene? Why do working-class people support their continued oppression, including environmental degradation, under neoliberalism? This presentation seeks an answer to these questions through analysis of the Amway organization, an American multi-level-marketing (MLM) company that rose to a multi-billion dollar value in the 1980s and 90s. Amway serves as a prime case study for the relation between neoliberalism and religious practices—people desire their continued oppression under neoliberalism in part because neoliberalism bears
meaning at the level of culture and religion. The presentation utilizes a theoretical framework guided by the contributions of current scholars of neoliberalism in order to analyze Amway through the lens of contemporary political theory. The presentation utilizes personal experience (the author’s upbringing in Amway) and historical accounts of the history of Amway to define how Amway amalgamates neoliberal ideology with ideas and trends from American evangelicalism to reshape political subjectivity.

- Sharaiz Chaudhry, University of Edinburgh

*Islamic Liberation Theology in Practice: A Comparative Analysis of British Muslims’ Activism Against Class Inequality*

Islamic Liberation Theology, which seeks to change the material conditions of the marginalised, has failed to systematically address class and economic inequality. This paper seeks to begin this conversation and answer the question, how do those involved in praxis use Islam as a liberative tool in the British context?

It focuses on three London-based organisations, Nijormanush, Sufra NW London and Who Is Hussain and investigates how Islam influences the actions of its members. Their theology through praxis illustrates how they negotiate particular Islamic principles, such as justice and charity; Quranic verses; hadith; and the examples of religious figures, in their attempts to address these inequalities. It exposes tensions between orthodox understandings of religion and a more radical, anti-capitalist critique, rooted in Islamic principles. Furthermore, it lays the foundations for a new liberative theology that addresses class inequality and can be used to change the material reality of the marginalised.

- Connor Williams, Trinity College, Dublin

*The Need for a Labor Theology of Liberation*

In this paper, I address theologies of liberation and foreground the voices of laborers, labor activists, and labor justice groups. I limit my scope to the United States, since as it currently stands, laborers are too often forgotten in classrooms, articles, books, and academic settings that are committed to religious studies, even though labor is an essential place for philosophical and theological conversations of Justice to materialize. I will look at the full spectrum of labor (ranging from retail to reproductive labor), and address current politics, economics, power-structures, history of racism, healthcare, and the living conditions for many people in the United States, in my attempt to create an accurate representation of the realities that laborers experience. I engage with Gustavo Gutiérrez and James Cone’s theologies of liberation by analyzing their critiques and histories which formed both of their theologies of liberation, and focus on their relationship to labor.

A20-209

Cognitive Science of Religion Unit

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Theme: **Current Theories and Applications of the Cognitive Science of Religion**  
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)  
Hester E. Oberman, University of Arizona, Presiding

This session is intentionally broad in scope. We present the work of scholars who are using current cognitive theories and/or applied research in the study of religion, religions, or religious-related phenomena. Particular focus will be given to the application of current theories as well as both the engagement with and development of theories themselves.

- F. LeRon Shults, University of Agder

*Studying Close Encounters of the Psychedelic Kind: Insights from the Cognitive Science of Religion*

This paper will explore ways in which material theoretical developments, methodological testing strategies, and minefield navigation experiences in the cognitive science of religion (CSR) can provide insights and inspiration for the rapidly growing science of psychedelic experiences (SPE). The renaissance of the latter in recent years has already led to new models and explanations of the neurological bases of mystical as well as psychedelic experiences and new hopes for more effective therapeutic interventions and the promotion of human well-being. This relatively new (or recently renewed) discipline has also generated new hypotheses about the origins and maintenance of 'religion' in shamanic experiences of psychedelics, some of which are explicitly informed by CSR. However, a more robust mutual engagement between SPE and CSR holds great promise for strengthening both fields. Here I will focus primarily on the way in which insights from CSR can inspire SPE, especially in relation to a thematic area in which the interests of scholars in these disciplines overlap: experiences of 'entity encounters' in altered states of consciousness.

- Erin Kidd, St. John's University

*Liturgical Blocking*

This project examines bodily movement in Catholic ritual—in particular how the emerging theory of 4E cognition can inform our understanding of bodily movement as a critical moment in religious understanding. 4E cognition has been taken up by an interdisciplinary cohort of scholars in the cognitive sciences who attend to the way that cognition is *embodied, embedded, enacted, and extended*. It is a framework that directs our attention to human activity in the world as intrinsic to, rather merely expressive of, human meaning-making. As such, it is helpful in thinking about ritualized movement and its role in religious meaning-making. In this presentation, I track the prescribed bodily movement of a conventional Sunday Mass with an eye to how it enables and constrains a congregation’s religious understanding, particularly around the intersections of gender and power in conceptions of self, God, and world.
Caleb Froehlich, University of Edinburgh

Assessing Sacred Art and Spiritual Understanding at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe

Theologians and religion scholars have claimed that the arts are valuable for advancing knowledge and understanding of spiritual realities, but there remains a critical need to empirically verify these assertions. I directly address this need by exploring whether and how audience experiences with sacred art at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival extend their understanding of the spiritual. Drawing on descriptions of “understanding” in aesthetic cognitivism, I outline an epistemological framework and apply it, with insights from cognitive philosophy, to audience testimonies about their engagements with festival artworks. In doing so, I show that new spiritual insights were not inherently given, but pragmatically and reciprocally constituted in the interaction between audiences, artworks, and their material-social contexts. This analysis challenges more “immanent” models of cognitive significance and offers theoretical tools for thinking concretely about how people participate in an artwork’s cognitive functioning and how artworks, conversely, deepen people’s understanding of spiritual realities.

Sarah Bixler, Princeton Theological Seminary

Conversion as Bonding: Adolescent Attachment to God and Community in Anabaptist Perspective

Psychosocial bonding is one pattern of religious conversion present in Anabaptist faith communities. In this perspective, an individual’s experience of conversion is their recognition of an attachment bond with God and persons in the faith community, and the sign of baptism is the public response to this conversion. Informed by interpersonal neurobiology, this paper explores the neurological attachment processes and their impact on adolescent conversion in contemporary Anabaptist Mennonite contexts. In this view, religious conversion can be conceptualized in the Anabaptist tradition in terms of an attachment bond to God and community, whether a secure or insecure bond.

Business Meeting

Paul Robertson, University of New Hampshire, Presiding

A20-210
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Comparative Religious Ethics Unit
Theme: Climate Change and Climate Justice from a Comparative Perspective
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Jung Lee, Northeastern University, Presiding

This panel examines the potential contributions of comparative religious ethics on understanding the catastrophes of the past and present and its role in analyzing, historicizing, and envisioning alternative forms of life in the context of climate change. Specifically, the panel will consider the
response of normative traditions and particular faith communities to the climate crisis, how they are reimagining the environment and notions of nature, and the forms of mobilization that are being employed in the service of climate justice. To this end, the panel will consider reimagining nature through a hybrid ecological imaginary grounded in Animist and Christian discourses, applying Qur’anic financial prohibitions against usury in the context of Muslim climate ethics, examining the religious principles animating the concrete climate mitigation plans of Muslim majority countries, and exploring the themes of human self-relatedness and socio-ecological togetherness in the thought of Thich Nhat Hanh.

- James Waters, Florida State University

*Comparative Religious Ethics and the Reimagining of Nature: The Promises and Dangers of Hybrid Religious Ecologies*

Better than any academic argument, rapidly changing climates indicate that our dominant definitions of nature have failed us. We require new ecological imaginaries. One emerging discourse, Christian animism, promises one vision of nature that could help move religionists toward more healthful understandings of the environment. This approach argues for the mixing and compatibility of Animist and Christian religious ecologies. This presentation introduces this emerging discourse then asks whether such a hybrid religious ecology is compatible with the founding, anti-ethnocentric principles of CRE. It grounds this question in the literature via Grace Kao’s 2010 *JRE* study that reviews and weighs in on ecofeminist debates about the promises and dangers of interreligious approaches to environmental ethics. Afterward, I argue that Christian animism can indeed supply leaders and laypeople with greener visions of human and nonhuman nature, speak in an anticolonial register, and provide a blueprint for future constructions of hybrid interreligious ecologies.

- Sarah Robinson, Pacific Lutheran University

*Is Ecological Usury Changing the Climate?: Climate Debt and Ethics in Muslim Communities*

Qur’anic precedents and eco-halal principles can combine toward generating potential in Muslim climate ethics, applying Qur’anic financial prohibitions against usury. The driving ethical questions are: Can Islamic condemnation of *riba*, or usury, be understood not only as a matter addressed by contemporary financial institutions processing “Islamic” mortgages, but through a lens of intergenerational eco-halal ethics for climate futures? Can eco-halal ethics apply to the costs contemporary vulnerable populations and future generations may pay for current extraction and pollution of earth systems, which, according to Muslim environmental writers, are on loan by the Creator? More precisely, how can contemporary Muslim ethics adequately address the specter of global climate change? The study begins by defining application of usury to intergenerational climate debt, followed by brief study of empirical truths, economics, and religiosity, highlighting the salient example of *hajj* pilgrimage amid planetary warming interconnected with
religious and business practices in the Arabian peninsula.

- Jonathan E. Brockopp, Pennsylvania State University

*Muslim Responses to Climate Change: a preliminary analysis*

In this paper, I analyzing the climate mitigations plans of several Muslim majority countries, building on Anna Gade’s insights (*Muslim Environmentalisms*) that systems of patronage and prestige can easily blur the lines between religious and non-religious motivations. However, I also find that religious principles are far more likely to play a role is in the ethics of adapting to climate induced harms rather than in mitigating these harms. Furthermore, I argue that the potential of smaller Muslim countries to serve as an example to others of how to build a post-carbon economy helps to subvert the colonialist paradigm of making them dependent on outside resources, such as wealth, oil, and coal. Hopefully, the moral weight of these smaller countries can have an outsized impact, forcing larger countries to follow suit and prevent some of the worst harms expected from climate change.

- Victor Thasiah, California Lutheran University

*Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh on Environmental Justice*

Climate destabilization, environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, mass extinction, and associated human harms – disproportionately experienced by marginalized communities – are relational problems. They reflect detrimental and interconnected ways we relate to our bodies, other humans, and the planet; and call for both critical accounts and new visions (or the renewal of older visions) of human self-relatedness and socio-ecological togetherness. This paper examines and interprets Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh’s conception of, and practices pertaining to, these resonating relations set out in his last book published before his death in January 2022, *Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet* (2021). Hanh’s four earlier, major books on ecology are also taken into account. The paper concludes by proposing that the emerging environmental justice studies sub-field of critical environmental justice studies provides a fitting and productive context for considering Hanh’s view on these relations and assessing his overall approach to contemporary environmental concerns.

**Business Meeting**

Shannon Dunn, Gonzaga University, Presiding

**A20-211**

**Contemporary Pagan Studies Unit**

**Theme:** *Is the Medium the Message? : Witchcraft, Social Media and Personal Mutability*

Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Christopher Chase, Iowa State University, Presiding
Religious power has always taken on various roles for both individuals and the communities they are embedded within. This is no less true in the protean and mutable worlds of both magic and social media. Presenters explores issues at the intersection of historical linguistics and algorithmic contexts in the creation of social and personal identities in popular and emergent media. Both offline and online events and creations illuminate how witchcraft power is mapped onto digital bodies with analog antecedents in the context of the no longer new century of the common era.

- Mary Hamner, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

#Witch: Contemporary Witchcraft, Teenagers, and the Impact of Social Media on a Developing Religious Tradition

The growth of contemporary witchcraft on social media has led to seemingly stark divisions in wider Pagan and occult communities as new practitioners build their own spaces, largely isolated from established movements, longstanding organizations, and adult-sanctioned mentorship. When most information comes from fellow adolescents on TikTok and Instagram posts rather than books or in-person teaching, and when movement influencers are more likely to be YouTube stars than local community leaders, authors, or event organizers, how are scholars to understand current trends? Turning to a community of young people on the new platform Amino as a case study, and relying on current scholarship in linguistics and media studies, this project examines the changing emphasis on social media where it pertains to the spiritual explorations of teenagers. How do young people create community, establish norms, and redefine tradition from their phones, with minimal adult oversight, and what implications do these developments have on witchcraft as a whole?

- Marcelitte Failla, Emory University

Cultivating Inherent Power: The Black Witch, Ontology, and African-Derived Religion

While shuffling tarot cards, in a blue jumpsuit reminiscent of the Yoruba deity, Yemoja, Black witch, Ifá initiate, and Hoodoo practitioner, Omiyinka Ire reminds her students that the power behind divination lies not in the cards but is embodied in the soul. Based on four years of ethnographic research, this presentation explores the Black witch movement most noticeable across social media. It examines the relationship between ontological power like Omiyinka Ire’s clairvoyant sight and African-derived religious traditions. I suggest a symbiotic relationship between the Black witch’s innate powers and Africana religious structures that provide the protocol and training necessary to develop her abilities. Ultimately, I argue that this symbiotic relationship produces a spiritual ontology unique to the Black witch, cultivating her confidence in an inherent power not entangled with institutions of the nation-state while also strengthening her African cultural and ancestral connections.
Chris Miller, University of Waterloo

“Like and Follow for More!”: Social Media Infrastructure and Religious Transformations on #WitchTok

Pagans are one of many communities to establish an active presence online. While scholars explore religion(s) on such platforms as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter, there is comparatively less research on TikTok. Every platform has unique conventions: character limits, user demographics, and algorithms shape interactions. Although sharing similarities with other platforms, I explore how TikTok’s infrastructure shapes how Pagans engage with religion.

After outlining the features which shape interaction, I explore three facets of religion that transform online: accessing information, establishing authority, and the pervading aura of consumerism. WitchTok fosters a space where novices learn, others assert expertise, and the broader community establishes conventions. The democratization of information intersects with how authority transforms. Various factors allow new, often young individuals to assume influential positions. Finally, TikTok foregrounds entanglements between religion and commercialism. From accounts promoting products to influencers monetizing their very presence, I analyze how consumerism intertwines with religious authority.

Business Meeting

Giovanna Parmigiani, Harvard University, Presiding

A20-212
Critical Approaches to Hip-Hop and Religion Unit
Theme: See You at The Crossroads: Communities and Meaning Making in Hip Hop Culture
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Elonda Clay, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Presiding

This session seeks to engage communities and community experiences residing in intersectional spaces. These spaces include but are not limited to religious, social, cultural, and gendered spheres. The intended outcome is to explore the crossroads and meeting places of these different contexts as they are integrated through an engagement with Hip Hop culture. In the process, attempts will be made at defining and assessing meaning-making in both U.S. and internationally. The papers in this session will take up primary research on the cultural spaces of Latinx Hip Hop and Pentecostalism in Los Angeles as well as the intersectional spaces of Hip Hop and Islam in Germany.

Jeta Luboteni, Boston University

"Sounds like a Paradox:" Islam, Hip-Hop, and the KMN Gang
This paper analyzes the lyrics of four German rappers, members of the music group “KMN gang.” This group, in their joint music and solo careers, and their associated acts, make use of the African-American Art form of Hip-Hop to “talk back” to the German state, which Others and discriminates against them, based off their (racialized) religion. Their emphasis on Islam in their lyrics shows it is both a sincerely held belief and an inscribed identity. In this way, it serves as a site of de-colonial resistance, even if this is complicated by participation in criminal activities.

- Jonathan Calvillo, Boston University

*Rhyme and Resonance: From Latinx Pentecostalism to Latinx Hip Hop in Los Angeles*

In this paper, it is argued that in the greater Los Angeles area, a unique resonance exists between local histories of Latinx Pentecostalism and Latinx Hip Hop. Los Angeles is largely recognized as the starting point of the modern Pentecostal movement, especially as tied to the Azusa Street revival. While it is not the starting point of Hip Hop, Los Angeles quickly became a global hub of Hip Hop cultural production. Latinx populations were present in Los Angeles and witnessed the processes by which the city became a hub of both Pentecostalism and West Coast Hip Hop, two movements that are indebted to the leadership and innovation of Black people. Scholars have argued that Latinxs were not only passive participants but also active innovators in these movements, even at early stages.

**Responding**

Christopher Driscoll, Lehigh University

**Business Meeting**

Justin Smith, Azusa Pacific University, Presiding
Daniel White Hodge, North Park University, Presiding

**A20-213**

**Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Unit**

**Theme: Speculative Technologies**

*Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)*

Katja Rakow, Utrecht University, Presiding

This roundtable explores technologies of speculation as a new analytic in the study of religion. It is time: the “crypto-boom” is transitioning to a bust, the wins of confident bitcoin millionaires are making way for the losses incurred by those who believed mistakenly. Slinging us toward windfalls or crises, technologies awaken the imagination. They point toward the futures their usage might launch. Scholars in the social sciences usually dismiss technologized speculation as a cognitive fallacy: the tendency to assume, erroneously, that certain tools can present a future that is fixed and knowable. How might scholars of religion theorize this tendency, its misses and its triumphs? Speculative technologies reveal the human ingenuity and determinative skill
needed to thrive in an unpredictable world. This roundtable presents a range of case studies, from contraceptive devices to oil drills, to facilitate disciplinary reflection on the uneven terrain between destiny, fortuitous foresight, and technological possibility.

Panelists

Samira Mehta, University of Colorado
Omri Eliasha, City University of New York
Alison Renna, Yale University
Suzanne Van Geuns, University of Toronto
Heather Mellquist Lehto, University of Toronto
Judith Ellen Brunton, University of Toronto

Responding

John Modern, Franklin and Marshall College

A20-214
Daoist Studies Unit
Theme: On Whose Terms?: Daoist Studies and the Study of Judaism, Collaborative Efforts to Redress Categories of Religion
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Jordan D. Rosenblum, University of Wisconsin, Presiding

Any introduction to Religious Studies class teaches that it is within the purview of the scholar to define the category of religion. However, scholars of non-Christian centered religions must fit “other” religious phenomena through normalizing filters born from Christian orientated perspectives that define the field. Such is still the case in Daoist Studies and the Study of Judaism, where the dominant discourse of “Religion” shapes the very definitions of “Judaism” and “Daoism.” This roundtable is the first to address the problem of categories from the joint perspectives of Daoist Studies and the Study of Judaism. Pairs of experts from both fields share their perspectives on concepts like “body,” “image,” “human,” and the challenge of normative categories. Rather than reify comparative models that sterilize the study of “other” religions, our goal is to circumvent such categories by revisioning critical terms within emic vocabularies and open the discourse of Religious Studies.

Panelists

Michael Naparstek, University of Tennessee
Cara Rock-Singer, University of Wisconsin
Lily Vuong, Central Washington University
Debra Ballentine, Rutgers University
Gil Raz, Dartmouth College
Tobias Zuern, Reed College

A20-215
Dying to Go to the Pure Land: Accounts of Suicide among Pure Land Practitioners in the Tang Dynasty

While it is clear that many practitioners of early Pure Land practice in Tang China were anxious about their final moments and whether or not they had done enough to realize their rebirth in the Pure Land, records indicate that there were others who were more than ready to end their life on earth in hopes of expediting their journey to Sukhāvatī. Religious suicides are regularly featured in the narrative of eager Pure Land practitioners. Both monastic and lay individuals are featured in these religious suicide narratives, indicating that it was not isolated to any one group. Suicide narratives appear in the earliest Chinese accounts of Pure Land rebirth anthologies, and continue to show up in Japanese rebirth accounts (ōjōden) centuries later. The conspicuous presence of suicide in Chinese Pure Land literature prompts questions about the significance of these stories, and why they continued to circulate so frequently throughout the Pure Land community.

Murder at the Palace: Conversion, Violence, and Politics in Islamic Java

This paper focuses on how Javanese Muslims have remembered the story of a murder committed by the first major king of the Mataram Sultanate (1587-1755), the dynasty that Islamized Java. This king is said to have murdered his non-Muslim son-in-law, and both the killing and the ways the victim is memorialized in official and popular commemorations reflect deep ambivalence about the act. Focusing on a nineteenth-century version of the story, I exhibit these ambivalences in the context of the legitimacy of violence in Islam, especially in relation to non-Muslims. By bringing studies of social memory in conversation with the tools of political theology, I show that the story’s way of reckoning with this specific death holds in tension conflicting normative visions of Islamic Java and the significance of Java’s pre-Islamic heritage in it.

The Sacrifice upon the Altar: Mother of Holiness Phoebe Palmer as a Triumphant Agent of Death

This paper considers how American Holiness evangelist Phoebe Palmer (1807-74), in her 1843 spiritual narrative The Way to Holiness, cast her children’s deaths within a religious arc of redemption. The paper traces how Palmer centered her two sons’ deaths as religious milestones, crucially omitted her first daughter’s traumatic death in a fire, and
utilized her second daughter’s conversion to portray herself as a triumphant missionary agent. By shedding light on an understudied aspect of Palmer’s life, I analyze how she rhetorically instrumentalized, criticized, and moved beyond the material culture of death. I thereby critically reflect on the constructed whiteness of Palmer’s mourning body, through which she could claim religious morality. My paper thus argues that religious beliefs not only served as an outlet for mourning white mothers but as a tool to make sense of their grief and gain the agency to overcome death as the final enemy.

- Andrew Monteith, Elon University

“Timely Suicide Might Have Saved the World”: The Eugenics Movement and Ableist Moralities of American Public Protestantism

The American eugenics movement wed public Protestant moralities with social transformation, identifying “immorality” as a mark of degeneracy, a feature considered comorbid with cognitive and physical disabilities. Eugenicists considered disability to be a biological curse that needed to be excised from society in pursuit of a better future; only by extinguishing its responsible hereditary lines could the United States hope to survive intact. By treating moral degeneracy and physical/cognitive disabilities as two sides of the same coin, eugenicists shaped a public narrative that worked alongside and bled into public Protestantism. Sterilization programs are the most infamous product of the eugenics movement, but the conflation of disability with immorality also produced social effects beyond this. Eugenicists curated a shared discourse about who was fit enough to marry, who could be trusted, and who should be removed and isolated from society.

Business Meeting

Amy Defibaugh, Temple University, Presiding
Candi K. Cann, Baylor University, Presiding

A20-216 Hindu Philosophy Unit
Theme: Kumārila on the Intrinsic Validity of Cognitions: A Philosophical Roundtable
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Parimal G. Patil, Harvard University, Presiding

What makes a cognition valid, justified, or true? This roundtable will focus on one of the most important treatments of this question in classical Indian philosophy: Kumārila’s argument for svatah-prāmāṇya, or the “intrinsic validity” of cognitions, at Śloka-vārttika II.33-61. Participants will explore and debate the merits of several different interpretations of Kumārila’s argument by later Mīmāṃsakas as well as by Vedāntins. The goal of this format is to create a space for lively and rigorous discussion, rather than traditional paper presentations. A handout with the original Sanskrit and an English translation of selections from Kumārila’s text will be provided.

Panelists
Panelists examine the rhetoric of martyrdom in stories, monuments, and politics.

- Travis Ables, Regis University

  The Constant Urgings of Her Flesh: Martyrdom Rhetoric and Technologies of Shame in the Twelfth Century

  The twelfth-century correspondence of Abelard and Heloise is indebted to traditional Christian tropes of martyrdom and persecution. Abelard styled himself a martyr for providence: having suffered persecution for his theological writings and for his love affair with Heloise, he characterized this suffering as an endurance of providence and compared it to the atoning death of Christ. In his letters, he admonishes Heloise to embrace this same suffering by the purgation of her youthful desire for him. Grounding his rhetoric in traditional themes of imitatio Christi originating in the martyrdom traditions, Abelard develops a devotional script of compassion for Christ to accomplish this spiritual exercise. Heloise’s response employs the textual strategies of affective devotion to reframe this martyrological rhetoric, but together the two writers contribute to an emerging technology of shame that reframes monastic spirituality as a martyrdom of desire.

- Aaron Hollander, Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute
  Jalane D. Schmidt, University of Virginia

  Martyrdom and Monumentality among the Confederate Dead

  This presentation is a collaboration between two scholars whose divergent areas of expertise are coordinated to yield new insight into a problem of urgent contemporary significance: how hagiographical (and specifically martyrrological) imagination surrounding the fallen soldiers of the Confederate States of America intervenes in and contributes to contemporary social division in the USA. Focusing on the widespread
construction of, gravitation around, and interpretation via public monuments dedicated to the Confederate dead, we consider the adoption of martyrological strategies for resisting political reconciliation and assimilation following the Civil War, sanctifying spaces and monumentalizing fallen heroes as an imaginal matrix within which a contemporary counterpublic could be sustained and fortified. So doing, we demonstrate that the long endurance and reconstitution of pre-modern Christian imaginaries (including specific visual and discursive signifiers from the martyr tradition) provides cultural and political fuel – and obscuring cover – to white nationalism in the contemporary United States.

• Tara Baldrick-Morrone, Wake Forest University

Modern-Day Martyrdom: Operation Rescue and Anti-Abortion Activism in 1980s and 1990s America

In this paper I consider how the rhetoric of violence, gender, and martyrdom was used to persuade middle-class white Americans to participate in grassroots anti-abortion activism. Specifically, I analyze the media produced by Operation Rescue, a mid-1980s anti-abortion activist group, and Randall Terry, its founder. I demonstrate how Operation Rescue makes use of masculine and martyrological language to insert themselves into an imagined community of persecuted Christians, seeing their activities as analogous to second-century martyrs like Polycarp and later Protestant martyrs in the sixteenth-century work Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. As a community bound together by "biblical" gender roles and imagined persecution, Operation Rescue legitimized their activism through a framework of violence at the same time that they co-opted the Civil Rights-era language of nonviolent civil disobedience.

Business Meeting

Lloyd Barba, Amherst College, Presiding
Roy Fisher, Loyola Marymount University, Presiding

A20-218
Indian and Chinese Religions Compared Unit and Religion, Affect, and Emotion Unit
Theme: History of Emotions in India and China
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Jay Garfield, Smith College, Presiding

This panel explores the history of emotions in religion in both India and China, from a range of disciplinary perspectives, including sensory studies, literary analysis, material culture, ethics and aesthetics by addressing the following topics: the affective atmospheres that lone Buddhist meditation practitioners faced in natural environments; 15th-century Indian texts for nascent Jain poets on poetic conventions and poetic virtuosity; (syn-)aesthetic metaphors for emotion in Hindu Goddess traditions; the religious paradoxes in the sentiment of love in early Indian Sanskrit kāvyas; and how early Chinese Buddhist divinatory ritual shaped the emotions of its practitioners for spiritual progress.
Affective Atmospheres: Acoustic and Alone

Tibetan Buddhism thrives in sensory and material practices, often performed in social groups which produce affective atmospheres, leading to an embodied understanding of Tibetan Buddhism. But what happens when a practitioner is alone in the wilderness, attuning to the elemental sounds of the natural world? In the foundational 11th-12th Century Tibetan Buddhist text, *The Unimpeded Sound Tantra*, affective atmospheres are being created by lone practitioners in natural environments. I propose to explore questions of what makes affective atmospheres without the social contexts from which they primarily are produced, what is the role of non-human agents and religious understandings of them in the production of these atmospheres? And how can we understand the kinds of transmundane affects that emerge from them?

Emotion as a Karmic Modification: Rasa in Ajitasena’s *Alaṅkāracintāmaṇi* (15th century)

In the fifteenth-century around the town of Puttūr in Karnataka, the Jain king Kāmirāya ruled over the Baṅga principality that was known by the name of Baṅgavāḍi. Ajitasena, a Jain monk from the Digambara Senagaṇa lineage, served at the court of Kāmirāya and composed texts for nascent Jain poets on poetic conventions and poetic virtuosity. In one such work titled the *Alaṅkāra-cintāmaṇi*, Ajitasena explains the arising of aesthetic emotion in terms of the Jain karmic doctrine, a unique philosophical stance that is not found in other texts on poetics authored by Jain monks. Ajitasena states that for the aesthetic emotion to be revealed, the karmas that impede knowledge and will must partially subside and be eliminated, which allows for the spectator to perceive new knowledge through senses and mind. This paper suggests that Ajitasena’s conception of *rasa* identifies the nature of aesthetic emotion with that of real-world emotion.

Hot and Cold, Fragrant and Pungent: Hindu (Syn-)Aesthetics of Divine Emotions and Bodies

Throughout the history of practices and ideas called “Hinduism”, deities have been encountered as beings with bodies and emotions, sensually interacting with their human devotees or blending with them altogether. Local traditions link the “hot temper” of a goddess to the “hot disease” (fever, pox or cholera) she might cause in a human body; the “cooling” of the diseased body blends with the “cooling down” of her rage with milk; and the afflicted human body becomes a body of the Goddess herself. In central Himalayan villages, Goddesses believed to be hot-tempered, bloodthirsty and “wild” (*ugra*) live side by side with those considered mild, vegetarian and “cool” (*saumya*). The “heat” of anger, among other (syn-)aesthetic basic metaphors for emotion, can be traced back into *bhakti*
poetry and into Sanskrit compendia of myths, wherein milk and other bodily fluids of Hindu goddesses and gods appear as symptoms or symbols of emotions.

- Mercy Dutta, Jawaharlal Nehru University

*Kāvyas and the Construction of the Love Spectrum: The Early Indian Case*

Early Indian Sanskrit kāvyas, particularly those composed from the mid-first millennium CE onwards, display a conscious engagement with the sentiment of love. These texts engage with myriad kinds of love and thereby present to us what I call the ‘love spectrum’. When read carefully, the kāvyas underline that love was understood as a paradoxical emotion, that is, while love was viewed as being obstructive to the attainment of salvation (mokṣa) it was simultaneously held as central to the forging of social relationships and group affinities. Thus, as delineated by the creative compositions extreme passionate love (raga) can be a cause for disease (rājayakṣma) and loss of self or madness (unmāda). However, separation from one’s beloved is at the same time a cause for grief (śoka) and destruction of the physical self (dehāpāta).

- Esther-Maria Guggenmos, University of Erlangen-Nuremberg

*Shaping Emotions in Chinese Buddhist Ritual*

This paper is meant as a reflection on the influence of basic concepts of ritual in Early China on Chinese Buddhist ritual. It takes as an example an individually practiced Chinese Buddhist divinatory ritual that shaped the emotions of its practitioners and by doing so enabled spiritual progress. The channeling and shaping of emotions are central to Early Chinese ritual in general. In how far is ritual in both cases meant to shape bodily experiences that are in accordance with socially accepted imaginations of a morally correct behavior? And which world view is lying behind such assumptions? In a second step, I will link the findings to recent discussions on the concept of "atmosphere" in the aesthetics of religion. I hope that by doing so, this will enrich the discussions around the concept of "atmosphere" and serve the comparative perspective on the history of emotions between India and China.

A20-219
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
*Latina/o Religion, Culture, and Society Unit and Religion and Migration Unit*
Theme: From Catastrophe to Belonging: Exploring the Aftermath of Forced Migration
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Án Angel Gallardo, Southern Methodist University, Presiding

Inspired by, and rooted in, the bold vision and action of the U.S. Sanctuary Movement beginning in the 1980s, and the New Sanctuary Movement, this interdisciplinary panel of scholars build upon the established record of the movement’s agents and impact. New archival sources, re-imagined analytic lenses, and re-evaluated geopolitical linkages, all draw upon the 40-year legacy of Sanctuary as religio-political movement to examine the breadth of what was produced
in the wake of the US's catastrophic policies in Central (and Latin) America and consider its significance in the 21st.

- Rady Roldan, Boston University

_Diego Mendoza Lacán, Unitarianism, and the Recentering of the Sanctuary Experience in New England_

Diego Mendoza Lacán, who was known by the pseudonym of “Manuel González,” came to the US as an undocumented immigrant from his home country of Guatemala. Manuel was a painter and writer, whose painting “Guatemala Burning” was used to promote the cause of the Sanctuary Movement. He lived in sanctuary for a year in the facilities of Community Church of Boston, a Unitarian Universalist congregation located in Boylston Street, Boston. The story of the first Sanctuary Movement is often narrated from the perspective of the communities of faith that undertook the effort of providing sanctuary for displaced asylum seekers from Central America. This presentation seeks to recenter the narrative by recovering the figure and agency of Diego Mendoza Lacán as an immigrant activist who, in partnership with Boston Unitarians, challenged the immigration policies of the Reagan era with practices of civil disobedience traceable to Guatemala.

- Adam Waters, Yale University

_Latin American Liberation Theology and the Making of the 1980s Sanctuary Movement_

Drawing on an array of movement sources, this paper explores how and why U.S. activists in the 1980s Sanctuary Movement rooted their work in Latin American liberation theology. Reflecting their theological backgrounds and their travel abroad, movement leaders and sympathetic theologians invoked liberation theology frequently and looked to it for models for building consciousness about and solidarity around the Central American refugee crisis. Indeed, while the factions of the movement could disagree strongly about how sanctuary ought to be practiced, they largely shared an understanding that it should respond to the concerns raised by the liberation theologians. This would begin to change, however, as the rifts between the factions deepened. Uncovering the central place of liberation theology within the discursive and strategic worlds of the Sanctuary Movement serves more broadly to highlight how important Latin American theological innovations were in making U.S. Christian left internationalism in the late 20th century.

- Michael Woolf, Harvard University

_Sanctuary Everywhere!: The Other Sanctuary Movements of 2022_

As a strategy, sanctuary is a persuasive response to catastrophe as well as a window into different publics and their imagined cataclysms. This paper explores three sanctuary movements – California’s abortion sanctuary proposal, the Sanctuary Cities for the
Unborn Movement, and the Second Amendment Sanctuary Movement – arguing that they share fundamental characteristics with previous sanctuary movements. Whether the catastrophe is the overturn of Roe v. Wade, or its entrenchment as law, sanctuary fundamentally responds to a state of emergency by proposing new legal frameworks and practices. Sanctuary movements are not necessarily progressive, as this paper demonstrates, and they create a fissure between conceptions of law, justice, and rights that makes agreement about fundamental ideas more difficult. As such, they are both a cause and symptom of our fractured polity. Yet, as previous sanctuary movements demonstrate, such a fissure can be generative, opening up new space for the marginalized – or not.

- Matilde Moros, Virginia Commonwealth University

*Testimonio: A Decolonial Method Against Catastrophe*

The Sanctuary Movement of the 1980’s offered the method of testimonio as an example of saberes, or other knowledges. In telling survivors version of reality, sharing the violence experienced by communities but lived in individual bodies is also a decolonial feminist methodology in which one’s humanity and ontological belonging is reconstituted. I plan on sharing what testimonio is and how the notions of justice and rights as well as church authority opened the way for another type of concepts, such as solidarity and otros saberes as ways to make sense of reality rather than through manipulating catastrophe and that this method can move narratives of war toward a more nuanced and possible world future.

**Reviewers**

Ruben Rosario Rodriguez, Saint Louis University

**A20-220**

Books under Discussion

**Law, Religion, and Culture Unit**


Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Brook Wilensky-Lanford, University of North Carolina, Presiding

A roundtable discussion of Sincerely Held: American Secularism and Its Believers (University of Chicago Press, 2022), by Charles McCrary. This new book, the latest in the Class 200 book series edited by John Modern and Kathryn Lofton, performs a timely intervention in the idea of “sincerely held religious belief.” McCrary’s book excavates the deep cultural history of this now-ubiquitous legal fiction, most notoriously associated with the Hobby Lobby verdict. Sincerely Held is an expansive genealogy of “sincerely held religious belief”: its legal history, but also the specter of frauds and hucksters against which it was constructed, and ideas of secularization and deinstitutionalization it presupposes, including the fiction of the bounded liberal (white, male, Protestant) individual. A panel of junior and senior religion scholars will discuss the surprising
historical roots and dire future implications of the “sincerity test,” from legal, ethnographic, theoretical, transnational, and historical perspectives, with McCrary as respondent.

Panelists

Steven Green, Willamette University  
Sonia Hazard, Florida State University  
Lucia Hulsether, Skidmore College  
Samah Choudhury, Ithaca College  
Kevin Rose, University of Virginia

Responding

Charles McCrary, Arizona State University

Business Meeting

Spencer Dew, Ohio State University, Presiding  
Leslie Ribovich, Transylvania University, Presiding

A20-221

Native Traditions in the Americas Unit

Theme: Indigenous Futures - Crisis, Prophecy, and Futurism  
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)  
David Walsh, Gettysburg College, Presiding

This panel considers Indigenous Futurism, arenas where communities struggle with what it means to live into a precarious future. We begin with a consideration of the importance of prophecy within the nineteenth century Ghost Dance, and the way this movement responded to an era of uncertainty with futuristic visions. A second paper considers how notions of the future shaped mid-20th century discourse around “pan-Indianism,” and an increasingly static notion of what constitutes “tradition.” Other examinations consider weather forecasting as relational negotiation, a culturally significant means of anticipating and responding to unpredictable futures. Similarly, our final paper considers the way “the sacred” as an aspirational and speculative ideal moves political activists toward a hopeful future—even within a time of deep unease. Together, the papers provide new perspectives for considering the ways Indigenous traditions—prophetic, speculative, and activist—seek to provide orientation, guidance, and hope in the midst of precarity.

- Tiffany Hale, Barnard College

  Ashfalls, Eclipses and Epidemics: Chaos and Early Ghost Dance Prophecies

  This paper examines connections between early Ghost Dance prophecies and the arrival of unstable conditions in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
Sydney Beckmann, University of Arizona

The Pan-Indian Problem: Implications for the Understanding of Tradition

Some scholars have described resistance as the core tenant of pan-Indianism. Others express apprehension for the way it creates homogenization of Indigenous cultures and perpetuates stereotypes and appropriation. This paper is an intervention into the conversation between these two areas of scholarship. Rather than discuss the issues of appropriation, it will use pan-Indianism as a lens to explore the concept of tradition itself. It will examine the branch of anthropology known as “acculturation studies” which was the field of scholarship in 50s and 60s in which pan-Indianism was initially discussed. It will argue that, in defining pan-Indianism, this scholarship also solidified static concepts of tradition. Through the exploration of this time period, this paper will call attention to the strategic employment of tradition within the academic developments of pan-Indianism to maintain colonial power structures as well as the effects this has on our understanding of American Indian religious traditions.

Jorge Legoas, Queen's University, Kingston

Epistemologies of what is to come: Indigenous weather forecasting between divination and planning

In this presentation, I analyze the way Indigenous people of the Americas anticipate the next year’s rainfall by interpreting a series of signs in the sky during the ongoing year. The knowledges and gestures associated with these traditional forecasting practices have usually been understood in terms of the classical division between pragmatic techniques and magic rituals. In my presentation, I go beyond this simplistic Modern division and address instead human and nonhuman agents participating in hybrid practices that share an observational, prospecting and performative character. Based on this, I put forward the idea of empowered agents finding a way to deal with what does not exist yet: un/predictable environments to come, which affect their daily lives.

Matt Sheedy, University of Bonn

Indigenous Futurism, Activism, and Media Representation

In this paper, I outline a variety of interpretations of Indigenous Futurism, with an emphasis on the relationship between land and the climate crisis. Next, I turn to look at the concept “defend the sacred” and its uses in mainstream and social media following the Idle No More movement, the stand-off at Standing Rock, and the ongoing conflict involving the Wet’suwet’en Nation, who continue to defend their ancestral land in Northern British Columbia. Here I will explore the relationship between Indigenous Futurism and how its speculative and aspirational ideals translate into contemporary political action. Lastly, I pay particular attention to how legacy media interpret and reflect Indigenous-centered discourses, and how the language of “the sacred” is variously
taken-up, sanitized, or ignored.

Responding

Felicia Lopez, University of California, Merced

Business Meeting

Andrea McComb Sanchez, University of Arizona, Presiding
Suzanne J. Crawford O'Brien, Pacific Lutheran University, Presiding

A20-222
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Open and Relational Theologies Unit, Religion and Disability Studies Unit, Sacred Texts, Theory, and Theological Construction Unit
Theme: Grief, Trauma, and Care in Times of Catastrophe
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
David Scott, Iliff School of Theology, Presiding

This panel brings together perspectives on the intersection of disability, catastrophe, and trauma, exploring such questions as: What distinct insights are available when catastrophic events are experienced and analyzed from within a disability perspective? What kinds of responses to trauma are needed to adequately grieve, mourn, and flourish? How do disability perspectives (from within and without religious communities and their sacred texts) imagine and practice a different world and collective future in which mutual care in vulnerability is possible? Which histories, theologies, cosmologies, or theories of grief and flourishing in times of catastrophe need to be centered? In grappling with these questions, panelists will suggest transformative practices of witness, hope, resistance, and care.

- Skyler Jay Keiter-Massefski, Yale University

*Finite Bodies, Finite Worlds: Cultivating Resistance in a World that Ends*

Queer/trans bodies exist within an empire of immi/a/nent death – a catastrophic climate that is compounded by race, class, and ability in the context of American culture. In such a state, where can hope and the motivation for resistance be found? This paper takes up a queer-crip reading of Kathryn Tanner’s eschatology ‘for a world that ends’ to suggest that such a theology opens up opportunities to think about abolition, revolt, and insurgent world-building as embodied and experiential eschatological possibilities, or signs of life that resist and seek to radically transform the current conditions of life. Through a spatial (rather than temporal) eschatology, possibilities for communal care, mourning rituals, and a life course not determined by trauma are elucidated with a focus on the potential of flourishing for all people – not only those with certain racial/economic/bodily privileges.

- Samuel Youngs, Bryan College
The Damage of Doctrine - Understanding Theologized Trauma

This study argues that it is now possible, and ethically needful, to speak of “theologized trauma,” a new category of ecclesial and scholarly attention that focuses on how religious doctrine can function to support (or conceal) de-humanizing, threatening, or even catastrophic activity which results in traumatization. The call for this attentiveness emerges powerfully from the witness of psychiatric disability, particularly from trauma survivors and sufferers of PTSD. While Marlene Winell’s work on “religious trauma syndrome” has foregrounded religious authority structures and abuse enacted in their shadow, the subject matter of theologized trauma is uncovered specifically under the aegis of religious doctrine, that is, specific theological beliefs. This paper introduces and calibrates the notion of theologized trauma, empowering us to recognize how theological discourse can generate or reinforce traumatizing and catastrophic circumstances. Augustinian iterations of Christian hamartiology are then explored as a test-cases of theologized trauma.

- Courtney Wilder, Midland University

God With Us: Trauma, Freedom, and Theology of Disability

The classical description of God’s powers – omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience – is somewhat unstable, as various strands of theodicy explore, and it positions God as totalizing. There is limited room for human consent or agency in response to the actions of an all-powerful God, and the possibility of a God with whom human beings are in deep mutual relationship is diminished.

However, if God is recognized primarily as the God of presence, new dimensions emerge for the divine-human relationship. A God who is present with human beings, a creator who is also a creature, suggests a God who can be in relationship of mutual consent with people. Disability theology offers insight into God that addresses central questions of suffering and the nature of God, and opens the door to a relationship with God grounded in consent and solidarity rather than power. This in turn provides opportunities for healing from trauma.

- Tim Middleton, University of Oxford

Witnessing Catastrophe: A Theology of Ecological Trauma

This paper seeks to bring the distinct insights of Christian trauma theology to bear on our current ecological crisis. My basic claim is that the approach taken by trauma theologians to instances of human suffering can be helpfully extended and applied by eco-theologians in the face of contemporary ecological catastrophes. What the category of trauma achieves is an acknowledgement of the seemingly incomprehensible severity and scale of current ecological suffering, whilst also resisting the urge to explain such suffering in terms of its origin or its solution. The literature on trauma points towards the practice of witnessing as a central component of trauma response—and I argue that the same is true
in the ecological realm. Specifically, from the perspective of Christian theology, I suggest that Christ serves as one such witness to ecological trauma.

A20-223
Philosophy of Religion Unit
Theme: New Directions for Theorizing Race and Sovereignty in Religious Studies
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Eleanor Craig, Harvard University, Presiding

This panel takes its cue from recent scholarship in Black studies and decolonial theory that emphasize “sovereignty” as an animating force of racialization. Sovereignty here will name a moving analytic of power that includes but is not irreducible to conventional forms of state power or governmentality. The papers assembled here aim rather to attend to the polymorphous ways in which “sovereignty” shows up in formations of racism and colonialism, as well as in the histories and practices of racialized peoples. Through an emphasis on the religious, sacred, or theological content in each case, these papers offer new pathways for theorizing at the intersections of race and sovereignty in religious studies.

- Devin Singh, Dartmouth College

Obligated Flesh: Servitude, Debt, and Racialized Carceral Capitalism

This paper explores religious dimensions of racialized carceral capitalism by examining the theological conflation of guilt and debt used to entrap bodies and extract labor. It theorizes guilty, indebted labor as constitutive of the traditions of sovereignty taken up in the West, which offer justifications for racial slavery and structure the moral-theological economy that pervades Christian history from late antiquity onward. It considers how the sovereign merger of guilt and debt contributed to the carceral imagination in the West in which punishment might be redemptive in the sense of compensating for a debt incurred. Finally, it considers how such dynamics were racialized by the mobilization of moral guilt ascribed to particular bodies, a guilt that could be converted into debt in order to provide one of several grounding logics to justify unremunerated, expropriated labor. In so doing, this paper foregrounds the racial-theological legacy of “the Curse of Ham,” illustrating the ways that it structures logics of antisemitism and later antiblackness that emerge coterminously with Jewish and Black subjection.

- Joseph Winters, Duke University

Sovereignty, Excess, and Black In/alterity

While sovereignty has been used to sanction State-sponsored violence or the terror that antecedes and accompanies State formation, it has also been taken up and reclaimed in traditions of resistance to racism, coloniality, etc. My essay suggests that this doubleness has something to do with the fact that sovereignty registers an excess, a moment of the unassimilable that cannot be incorporated or easily instrumentalized. And yet, this sense of unassimilability is constantly betrayed by the ways in which sovereign power gets
fastened to imperial designs and operations. In what follows, I do not attempt to resolve this tension or problem but to simply think within it by drawing on figures like Schmitt, Foucault, Quashie, and Da Silva. I conclude by suggesting a move away from the grammar of sovereignty and a sovereign “I”. Rather I turn toward an interrelational poetics to theorize Black subjectivity.

- An Yountae, California State University, Northridge

*Becoming Archipelago: Place, Territoriality, and the Sacred*

Glissant presents original philosophical challenges to traditional epistemological and ontological grammar of Western philosophy that often alienates the thinking subject from place. While modern Western “Man” seeks universality through sovereign domination of colonial territory, Glissant’s poetics offer a sacred geography of place that emphasizes animating new realities and possibilities of the land rather, than claiming it.

- Danube Johnson, Harvard University

*Oedipus colonus at Lébos*

In this paper I explore the racial limitations of Oedipal representations of sovereignty that Frantz Fanon perceives in Freudian psychoanalysis, with particular attention to his references to Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Hamlet* in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and his recently published play *Parallel Hands* (1949). I do so in conversation with David Marriott’s *Whither Fanon?* (2018) which considers Fanon’s engagement with *Hamlet* separately from Fanon’s engagement with the Oedipal complex, but in this paper I suggest that they should be thought of in tandem, highlighting how they co-constitute the political-theological dramatization of colonial sovereignty that occurs in *Parallel Hands*.

- Panashe Chigumadzi, Harvard University

*Ethiopianism and the Possibilities of Black Sovereignty*

This paper considers the 19th and 20th century set of movements known as Ethiopianism and explores the implications of the fact that its mission toward Black national sovereignty was at once political and religious. The author pays particular attention to the historical moment in which certain Ethiopianists at first joined, then clashed with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (the A.M.E. Church) in the late 19th century. Through recent work in Afro-pessimism, the author also asks whether the ontological structure of nation-state sovereignty is itself too replete with anti-Blackness to support the aspirations of Ethiopianism.

**Business Meeting**

Stephen Bush, Brown University, Presiding
A20-224
Religion and Cities Unit and Religion, Genocide, and Holocaust Unit
Theme: Community Engaged Research: Lessons from the Good Life Project
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Fatima Bamba, American University, Presiding

This roundtable features five scholars from across the US who participated in the Center for the Study of Religion and the City at Morgan State University collaboration, “The Good Life Project,” launched in 2021. Scholars and activists working at the intersections of religion, theology, and forms of justice-centered work, documented how urban communities pursue justice and foster healthy relationships between themselves and their environment—a pursuit that is implicitly and explicitly informed by a history of mass atrocities, such as the extermination of Indigenous Peoples and American Slavery. The discussion will include overlapping concerns of the Project collaborators and scholars of genocide and mass atrocities—such as frameworks of mutual responsibility and care ethics among community members, institutions, non-human life, and land rights. Roundtable participants will also discuss the ethical standards of Community-Based Research processes that promote non-exploitative relationships.

Panelists

Adriana Nieto, Metropolitan State University of Denver
Kate DeConinck, University of San Diego
Teresa Smallwood, Vanderbilt University
Nathan Jérémie-Brink, New Brunswick Theological Seminary
Daisy Ocampo, California State University, San Bernardino

Responding

Sarah K. Pinnock, Trinity University

A20-225
Religion and Economy Unit
Theme: Gendering Religious Labor in Asian Communities
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Gwendolyn Gillson, Illinois College, Presiding

What is religious labor? How is it gendered and gendering? How does it look and feel? What does it produce, if anything? How is it valued and recognized? Processes of gendering labor within religious contexts are entangled with everyday moral economies and realities molded by local and global capitalistic networks. Gender often influences the ways work is organized, valued, and experienced. It shapes how people recognize and understand their own and others’ labor while challenging individuals and communities to imagine alternative views for the processes of work. Religious frameworks provide opportunities for revealing how places, institutions, and people’s embodied practices shape the complexities of how that labor is
imagined and experienced. This roundtable will investigate how individual and collective bodies and the things they produce are transformed through gendered and gendering realities by exploring labor at the intersection of religion and gender within contemporary Asian contexts.

Panelists

Lindsey DeWitt, University of California, Los Angeles
Dana Mirsalis, Harvard University
Kati Fitzgerald, Yale University
Natasha Heller, University of Virginia
Napakadol Kittisenee, University of Wisconsin
Zi Chen, Cambridge University

Responding

Paulina Kolata, Lund University

Reviewers

Karen Baker-Fletcher, Southern Methodist University

A20-235
Religion, Attire, and Adornment in North America Seminar
Theme: Women, Power, and the Meaning(s) of Religious Dress
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Marie W. Dallam, University of Oklahoma, Presiding

This session brings together four papers that explore the role(s) of religious attire in the lives of women in various settings and historical periods. Themes include abundance, freedom, commodity, exchange, the relationship between the spiritual and material worlds, and the harnessing of spiritual power via clothing.

- Lisa Poirier, DePaul University

Building Indigenous Futures with Beaded Belts, Bags and Chucks

Seventeenth-century wampum belts given by Wendat refugees to Catholic nuns, nineteenth-century beaded bags and “whimsies” made by Haudenosaunee women for the tourist trade at Niagara Falls, and twenty-first century bespoke beaded Converse sneakers all strain against settler-colonial and academic taxonomies. Beadwork objects produced or enhanced by indigenous women in North America possess multidimensional meanings and multiple functions that transcend and problematize the categories of “arts and crafts,” as well as “sacred objects vs. commodities.”

Beading remains a traditional activity for indigenous people of many North American nations, and their techniques as well as the images and symbols they employ reflect
ancestral connections as well as contemporary individual and collective identities. The material objects created and embellished represent and participate in systems of relationship and exchange that challenge the discourses they inhabit.

- Deborah Whitehead, University of Colorado

"Everybody Gets a Box of Stuff, and What Did You Do With It?": LuLaRoe and the Rhetoric of Freedom through Fashion

Drawing on material from the “LuLaRich” series, LuLaRoe corporate materials, and online communities of current as well as disaffected former retailers, this multimedia presentation will explore the religious dimensions of the company’s rhetoric of “creating freedom through fashion,” as well as how the concept of “the box” comes to symbolize the binaries of abundance vs. scarcity, freedom vs. constraint, and gift vs. choice that underlie its transcendent promises of salvation through clothing.

- Jeremy Rapport, College of Wooster

Clothing Spiritual Reality: The Sartorial Styles of Mary Baker Eddy

Using imagery from three key periods of Eddy’s life, this paper explores how Eddy’s clothing choices and personal appearance reflected both her evolving understandings of the relationship between the material and spiritual worlds and her own changing position in those worlds.

- Andrea Johnson, California State University, Dominguez Hills
  Leah Payne, George Fox University

Power Before Thrones of God and Man: Women, Adornment, and Public Life in White American Pentecostalism

Using examples including televangelist Paula White-Cain and Kimberly Davis of Rowan County, Kentucky, this paper explores how white Pentecostal women use clothing and other accoutrements to illustrate and enact Pentecostal theologies of holiness and power.

Responding

Martha L Finch, Missouri State University

A20-226
Religion, Media, and Culture Unit
Theme: Rituals, Genres, and the Technological Infrastructure of Religious Media
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
William Chavez, University of California, Santa Barbara, Presiding

This papers session brings together a diverse range of scholars examining how religious meaning
and experience coheres (or not) through rituals, genre, and technological infrastructure in various media forms. Examining media as diverse as serialized manga, an international Netflix television phenomenon, video games, White homesteading Instagram, and TikTok algorithms, the panel explores how the technological infrastructure of various media forms enacts different ritual possibilities for viewers/players/engagers and generates new genres of religious narrative and identification.

- Jeremy Schulz, Independent Scholar
  Triss Ingels, Boston University

"Death Reborn Revolution": Trans-Formative Future and Sailor Moon

Sailor Moon has found a special place in queer and trans culture. Both the original Japanese dub and the adapted subtitled versions provide unique entry points to consider Sailor Moon through theoretical and theological lenses. Emphasizing chosen family, power in transformation, and responsibility to fight injustice, Sailor Moon serves to instill theological messages that have proven critical to Trans life and survival, what we call a Trans-Formative Theology. The title of our paper, “Death Reborn Revolution,” inspired by Sailor Saturn’s final power which brings forth apocalypse and ruin as a desperate act of defiance and hope, points to the centrality of this paper as one which explores Transformation through the consideration of Trans death and futurity. By applying a Trans-Formative theology, we seek to engage the intersection of death, rebirth, and revolution critically and empathetically as they relate to personal transformation and futurity, what we call a Trans-Formed Future.

- Hee-Kyu Heidi Park, Ewha Womans University, Korea
  Myung-Sahm Suh, Ewha Womans University, Korea

Consecration of Game & Gamification of the Sacred: Understanding ‘Squid Game’ as a Sacrificial Rite

This paper examines the mutual penetration of the sacred and game in today’s pop culture in South Korea and beyond, wherein the powers of finance and media crucially shape people’s socio-economic lives. To do so, we would like to take the hit TV drama series, Squid Game — widely known as the most-watched show on the global OTT platform, Netflix, as of December 2021 — as the cultural epitome that exhibits the double operation of consecrating game and gamifying the sacred. Critically engaging with theories of ludology, sociology, and structural psychoanalysis, we argue that the conceptual deployment of ‘game’ in this TV show not only departs from the conventional understanding of ‘play’ as a free human activity with no bearing on the practical life but also effaces the tripartite distinction between the sacred, the profane and play.

- Caroline Matas, Princeton University

Defending the Homefront: Sacred White Evangelical Motherhood and War Rhetoric
This paper explores the phenomenon of white Christian American women depicting themselves as homesteaders on Instagram. I argue that Instagram serves as a crucial site for fomenting nostalgia that is distinctly white, distinctly Christian, and distinctly apocalyptic. The diffuse but passionate community of white Christian women that flock to the romanticization of 19th century homesteading, homeschooling, and homemaking share not just aesthetic preferences but a sense that they are preserving and nurturing a faithful remnant of “true” Americans. Instagram—as both hyper-specific “place” and “no place at all”—facilitates ever-deeper entrenchment in micro-cultures that enshrine specific traits as evidence of divine chosenness and push users toward increasing reliance on fellow members of the subculture to guide and affirm everything from their home decor to their family planning choices. Integral to the success of this micro culture is its participants’ constant sense of besiegement—often communicated through the rhetoric of war.

- Lily Zwaan, Independent Scholar


In recent years, scholars of religion have begun examining the religious dimensions of videogames, from religious iconography to the recreation of sacred journeys. This paper attempts to draw attention to the approach suggested by S. Brent Plate and others, that the experience of playing games is in itself religious, and that video games allow us to examine the religious dialectic of anarchic free-play play, _paidia_, and structured rule-based gameplay, _ludus_. Super Smash Brothers Melee provides a rich site for scholars of religion to observe the interplay of _paidia_ and _ludus_, through the development of gameplay conventions, the continual creation and recreation of community structures, and the mental state of competitive players. The experiences of competitive Melee players suggest that the religious dialectic of _paidia_ and _ludus_ is both cyclical and transformative. Melee players exercise their agency through both free play and game play, and the creation of their own rules.

- Eric Chalfant, Queen's University, Kingston

_“I Don’t Chase. I Attract:” TikTok and the Algorithms of New Thought._

This talk theorizes the popularity of manifestation practices borrowed from the history of New Thought on the digital platform TikTok. Deploying methodological tools from the field of media archaeology to prominent viral manifestations, this talk argues that the trend represents the emergence of a significant new dimension of New Thought made possible by algorithms and algorithmic culture. New Thought’s law of attraction – the idea that external events can be dictated by conscious thoughts – resonates with a digital platform in which the content one attracts is determined by an invisible algorithm that seems to read the mind of the user. Tracing the contours of the law of attraction on TikTok uncovers the implicitly religious ways that we think about algorithms (the metaphysics of digital media) as well as how the logic of algorithms has begun to shape the ways we think about religion (the physics of the divine).
Desmond Mpilo Tutu (7 October 1931 – 26 December 2021) was a renowned South African Anglican bishop and theologian, known for his work as an anti-apartheid and human rights activist. His intellectual legacy is tied to many struggles – Black contributions to the Anglican Church and South African liberation struggle; critiquing homophobia in Christianity and supporting LGBTQIA+ struggle, and his fervent support for the Palestinian struggle against Israeli apartheid. This roundtable brings together a group of diverse international scholars from various faith traditions and is centered around the theme of Tutu’s thought on apartheid in Israel/Palestine as well as broader transnational solidarity.

Panelists

Michael Battle, General Theological Seminary
Anne Joh, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
Farid Esack, University of Johannesburg
Rebecca Alpert, Temple University
Daniel Bannoura, Bethlehem Study Center
Hilary Rantisi, Harvard Divinity School

Business Meeting

Santiago H. Slabodsky, Hofstra University, Presiding

In the accounts of missionaries, social reformers, and converts alike, one finds representations of race and caste as impervious to change, even when so much else changed in the course of conversion and religious reform. Racial and caste identities were sometimes seen as rooted in bodies and other times in the individual’s social bonds with others in larger social units. But either way, discourse about conversion served to construct caste and race as fixed features of the self, inherent and unchangeable. These supposedly fixed features defined the many layers of self-hoods for converts and social reformers, circulating in vernacular concepts and language that became standardized over time. This discourse both strengthened the fixed categories of race and caste as ways in which converts demarcated their belonging to Christianity and Islam as Indian religions, and created a shared conceptual basis for new identities and senses of
• Afsar Mohammad, University of Pennsylvania

_The Idiom of Conversion: Local Sufi Narratives and the Making of a Casteless Being_

This presentation is about how an alternative language of conversion works in various Sufi texts composed and circulated in Telugu during various phases. Beginning with Mohiuddin Badshah, Akbar Begum, Umar Ali Shah’s works dated to 1897 and 1930s, this discussion is extended into further recent writings by various contemporary poets who explicitly debate on caste matters. My focus is more on how these writings engage with the question of colonial politics, religious divide and caste politics. Despite many interpretations about how Sufism deals with the heightened expressions of spirituality, my discussion offers evidence for a down to earth idiom of discourse that complicates the public sphere of modern Islam, revivalist movements and identarian matters. In essence, this poetry functions more like a tool of an everyday resistance from Dalits and the lower-caste Muslims against the devotional paradigms modeled by the dominant caste groups.

• Torsten Tschacher, Free University of Berlin

_Diagnosing ‘Ignorance’: Conversion, Race, and Reform among Muslims in Madras and Ceylon_

What impact did notions of race have on perceptions of religious ignorance among Muslims of Madras Presidency and Ceylon? As Madras Presidency Muslims came to be seen as predominantly ‘Indian’ in terms of race, their ‘ignorance’ was perceived as the result of superficial conversion. In contrast, Ceylonese Muslims came to seen as the descendants of Arabs whose religious knowledge ‘degenerated’ under European persecution. The manner in which coastal Muslims were racialized appears to have prefigured different approaches to address the charge of ‘ignorance’ in religious matters and ‘reform’ Muslim societies. In Ceylon, reform aiming at recovering knowledge of Islam that Muslims were deemed to have ‘forgotten’. In the Madras Presidency, reformers emphasized Muslims’ integration with wider non-Muslim society, advocating for Islamic knowledge to be made available in ‘pure’ Malayalam and Tamil. The racialization of Muslim society in Madras and Ceylon consequently prepared the ground for different programs of Muslim reform.

• Deepra Dandekar, Free University of Berlin

_From Humble Hut to Heavenly Palace_

This paper analyses the vernacular (Marathi) autobiography of Rev. Y.T. Aghamkar ‘From Humble Hut to Heavenly Palace’, published in 2005. Hailing from Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Rev. Y.T. Aghamkar was born in 1918 in the village of Vihigaon, in an impoverished district prone to repeated droughts and administratively neglected.
Aghamkar describes a difficult and lonely childhood spent in relative poverty. Gaining education at the mission in Vihigaon, and helped by missionaries, the autobiography describes the double poverty of growing up as a non-Brahmin and a Christian in colonial India. Aghamkar’s narrative is a detailed description of a humble, yet courageous journey of caste emancipation through conversion, and my presentation analyzes his autobiography to explore how the story of his journey is also an embedded trajectory about caste. I argue that while conversion constituted a mechanism of caste emancipation, it also stabilized caste as a social reality and experience for converts.

- Eliza Kent, Skidmore College

**The Racialization of Sin and Salvation: Pandita Ramabai and the Discourse of Conversion and Social Reform**

This paper examines the life of Pandita Ramabai (1858-1922) in the context of debate among Christian missionaries, converts and Hindu social reformers about change and its limits that increasingly saw race and caste as impervious to change. People could and did debate the value ascribed to racial and caste differences, but the fact that these layers of the self that could not change was increasingly asserted as axiomatic. Ramabai gained fame as a reform Hindu advocate for women’s education, but her conversion provoked controversy. Later, she led a non-sectarian Christian institution for impoverished women. Here, I examine her conflicts with Anglican mentors, who suspected her conversion as inauthentic, and a similar wave of skepticism that met the proto-Pentecostal experiences of young women in her Mukti Mission, to argue that debates about the nature of religious change in colonial India were entangled with concepts of race and caste.

- Megan Robb, University of Pennsylvania

**Becoming Elizabeth: The Christian Conversion of a Mughal Lady in the 18th century**

In late 18th century South Asia an elite Mughal woman from Purnea named Sharaf un-Nisa (1758-1822) lived with and bore children by the first Company Supervisor of Purnea, Gerard Gustavus Ducarel (1745-1800). Sharaf un-Nisa then moved to England, married Ducarel, and took on the name Elizabeth Ducarel, living in Britain for the rest of her life. Although scholarship has established the importance of ambivalence and hybridity in native women’s negotiation of their cohabitations with colonial officials, approaches that assume these women oscillated between states of domination and resistance have only limited utility in accounting for the life of Sharaf un-Nisa. Sharaf un-Nisa became British, and Christian, by developing relationships with social institutions that emphasized hierarchies of complexion, language, and comportment. This article accounts for this on-going process of “becoming Elizabeth” through analysis of an unusually rich archive of multilingual, material vocabularies – textiles, jewelry, paper-making, and personal correspondence.

**Responding**
A20-229
Ritual Studies Unit
Theme: Sacred Geography, Narrativity, and Imagination in Recent Pilgrimage Studies
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Michael Houseman, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Presiding

This panel looks at three recent publications within the study of ritual, sacred geography, and pilgrimage. Kathryn Barush's Imaging Pilgrimage (2021), Marion Grau's Pilgrimage, Landscape and Identity (2021), and André Brouillette, SJ's The Pilgrim Paradigm (2022). Special focus is on the ways pilgrimage is imagined, life stories are framed, pilgrimage and landscape are understood by pilgrims and other actors.

Panelists
Marion S. Grau, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society
Kathryn Barush, Santa Clara University
André Brouillette, Boston College

Business Meeting
Michael Houseman, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Presiding

A20-230
Schleiermacher Unit, Theology and Religious Reflection Unit, and Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Unit
Theme: Exploring Theological Genres
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Taraneh Wilkinson, University of Cincinnati, Presiding

Systematic theology and the notion of systematicity have come under significant criticism in recent years, with many scholars noting the limitations and strictures of modern theological systems. This session considers the various genres or literary forms that theological writing takes and the potential impacts such theological genres might have.

- Samuel Needham, University of Toronto

*Hot Takes: The Future of Theological Genres*

Short-form theology, often seen as a community of persons providing “hot takes” on Twitter and elsewhere, should be encouraged and established as a substantive area for theological reflection. This is the case neither because hot takes are “good, actually,” nor because short-form theology actually amounts to hot takes. Rather, the dialogical work of short-form theology fosters a dialectical move between Marshall McLuhan’s "hot and cold" media categories: an open-ended community of scholars who can both efficiently...
describe their thoughts while at the same time encouraging engagement from relevant peers.

I argue that short-form theological reflection should be established as a firm theological genre on its merits: as a unique genre in which “hotness” and “coolness” are dialectally related in a helpful way, and as a site which can faithfully rise to Tillich’s call for correlating theology. I conclude by calling for the establishment of short-form theology as its own genre.

- Caleb Hendrickson, Carleton College

*The Picture in the System: "The Picture of Christ" in Schleiermacher and Tillich and the Ekphrastic Task of Theology*

This paper examines the notion of the "picture of Christ" in Schleiermacher's and Tillich's systematic theologies (focusing on Tillich's 1925 Marburg dogmatics). It argues Schleiermacher and Tillich forge a model in which "the picture of Christ" comes to indicate the medium of Christian religious consciousness, through which the content of faith is received. Underscoring the idiom of "the picture" and calling attention to Schleiermacher's and Tillich's correlated emphases on intuition and perception, it suggests that this model reorients the theological task toward the work of ekphrasis, i.e. the representation of "the picture of Christ" as held in faith, through vivid, poetic description. This pictorial-poetic view of Schleiermacher’s and Tillich’s theologies illuminates a linkage between sermonic and dogmatic forms of reflection in their corpuses. However, I argue that it does not imply a diametric opposition between systematic and poetic modes of theological reflection (as is sometimes found in the discourse surrounding “theopoetics.”)

- Jeanne Stevenson-Moessner, Southern Methodist University

*The Discarded Image in Schleiermacher's Theological System-Building*

While theologian Karl Barth was a guest lecturer at the University of Bonn 1946-1947, he found in the rubble of war ruins a bust of Friedrich Schleiermacher. In similar ways, I am lifting an old image in Friedrich Schleiermacher’s writings out of the dust of theological forays. As a feminist theologian, I find in the image an organicity, interrelation, and interdependency that is often amiss in the theological system-building in a global context not only from 1800 to 1914 but into the present day.

Ironically, the attacks on this image of interconnectedness in Schleiermacher’s *Brief Outline of 1811* centered on the consensus that it was too hierarchical. This controversial image, the analogy of a tree, represented Schleiermacher’s conceptualization of theology. This image was removed in 1830. Yet, the organicity of the tree analogy challenges the limitations and strictures of modern theological systems that cannot answer the questions of their relatedness.
**Reviewers**

Michelle Voss Roberts, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto
Kristin Johnston Largen, Wartburg Theological Seminary

**A20-231**

**Sociology of Religion Unit**

Theme: **Robert Wuthnow and the Sociology of Religion in America**

Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Rebecca Catto, Kent State University, Presiding

This roundtable panel considers the work and legacy of Robert Wuthnow, one of the foremost sociologists of religion in America. Wuthnow is the author of more than forty books and numerous articles about religion, spirituality, civil society, faith communities, and American culture. His scholarship has reshaped several fields in the study of religion and in cultural sociology, including on themes such as religious diversity, spiritual seeking, socio-political fracturing, immigration, experimentation in religion, the religious lives of young adults, spirituality and the arts, faith-based services, religion in small towns, civil society, and public religion. In this panel, several eminent sociologists of religion discuss Wuthnow’s influence and continuing relevance in the sociology of American religions. After the panelists present their reflections, Robert Wuthnow will respond.

**Panelists**

Wendy Cadge, Brandeis University
Nichole Phillips, Emory University
Elaine Howard Ecklund, Rice University
Brian Steensland, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis

**Responding**

Robert Wuthnow, Princeton University

**Business Meeting**

Dusty Hoesly, University of California, Santa Barbara, Presiding
Elaine Howard Ecklund, Rice University, Presiding

**A20-201**

Professional Development

**Status of Women in the Profession Committee**

Theme: **Responding to Changes from the Pandemic: Instituting New Ways to Organize, Work, Collaborate, and Research**

Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Sarah Imhoff, Indiana University, Presiding
What changes are we experiencing in our cultural contexts, institutions, and personal lives because of the past two years of pandemic, loss, and social upheaval? How do we ethically assess these changes and our response to them? This panel examines the ethical considerations that we need to engage in for actively embracing or resisting the changes that have emerged and are moving toward becoming a more permanent part of our experiences. From the perspectives of institutional leadership, scholarship, teaching, programming, and personal experience, panelists will reflect on the following questions: • How have we survived during the pandemic? • In what ways have our survival mechanisms made us feel ethically compromised or ethically empowered? • What are the ethical principles that ground our labor pains? • What are the ethical principles that ground how we hospice something into quiet passing?

Panelists

Ann Gleig, University of Central Florida
Jacqueline Hidalgo, Williams College
Zayn Kassam, Pomona College
Boyun Lee, Iliff School of Theology
Lisa M. Allen, Interdenominational Theological Center

A20-232
Study of Islam Unit
Theme: Graduate Student Session
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Kristian Petersen, Old Dominion University, Presiding

This session will allow Islamic studies graduate students to present synopses of their dissertation research and to engage one another with questions, critiques, and conversation about their research.

• Yasmine Flodin-Ali, University of North Carolina

Hats and Manuscripts: The Racialization of Muslims through Material Culture

My paper examines the racialization of Muslims in the United States through their association with and use of objects, particularly clothing and written works. I examine four Muslim groups from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century: enslaved Muslims, the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA), the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, and the Islamic Mission of America. Echoing across time and space within the archive of material culture, the hats worn by the leaders of the MSTA, Ahmadiyya and Islamic Mission drew upon collective memories and representations of enslaved Muslims, while also offering their own interpretations of Muslim identity. I also trace the ways that the written production by these groups, and the manner in which they were created, interacted with, and distributed, created new forms of self-understanding. I demonstrate that the creation of racial categories is not a unilateral process, in some
instances stereotyped depictions of Muslims were reappropriated for liberatory purposes.

• Iskander Abbasi, University of Johannesburg

Islamic Liberation Theology and Environmental Stewardship

Social inequality and ecological catastrophe are two of the main problems facing humankind today. In the world of Islamic Studies, two discourses have emerged in the last half century to confront these two problems – that of Islamic Liberation Theology (ILT) and Islam and Ecology. In sharing with other theological and secular approaches to the question of ecological justice, Muslim environmentalist discourse has centered itself around the idea of stewardship, or *khilāfah*, as the main modality of humans for acting ethically on the earth. A number of verses in the Qur’an point towards humans being the so-called stewards and successors of God on the earth (*khalīfah fi al-’ard*). This dissertation will examine the concept of being a steward on the earth (*khalīfah fi al-’ard*) through an Islamic liberation theology lens in order to argue for a more radical shift in Muslim approaches to ecological justice.

• Syed Eisar Haider, University of Notre Dame

Local expressions, global arenas: Shia Muslim pilgrims in Iraq

Olivier Roy theorizes – from a macro perspective – that in the face of globalization and secularization, religion attempts to become autonomous in a global space and separates from local culture and politics. Global pilgrimage is a conspicuous instance of global religious practice. How does pilgrimage change the understanding of local religion and culture for pilgrims? Using ten semi-structured interviews of Pakistani Shia pilgrims to Iraq for the *Arba’een* pilgrimage, I argue that in this case, pilgrims do not change their understandings substantially because of three factors: one, the nature of religious practice is steeped in a local idiom of affective expression and is difficult to separate local culture from religious practice; two, the structure of pilgrimage participation is made possible by local institutions (family, congregations) and structure the practice in global space; three, pilgrims orient their meaning-making processes towards their localities, and thus local networks mediates any change.

• Allison Kanner-Botan, University of Chicago

Mad Love: Islamic Thought and the Politics of Desire in the Legend of Layla and Majnun

Analyzing the moment of translation from disparate Arabic anecdotes to a Persian romantic epic, I argue that Nizāmī’s (d. 1209) Laylī o Majnūn employs the inherited figure of Majnun to posit a novel theory of love as an ethical commitment between relational selves—selves that contain within them seemingly disparate categories such as man and woman, human and animal, madness and sanity. Laylī o Majnūn extends this conception of love as an ethical commitment beyond romantic attachment by illustrating how reconceptualizing relationality leads to a vision of a more just society. Using a
variety of disciplinary interlocutors, from medieval Islamic poets, philosophers, and mystics to insights from gender studies, animal studies, and disability studies, my dissertation articulates how this theory of love arises from reading Laylī o Majnūn against the rich body of material on love in premodern Islam and how it helps us think about gender, disability, and animality today.

- Laura Stauth, University of Göttingen

*Going Live from Home: gendered and religious debates on indecency in post-revolutionary Egypt*

My chapter studies virtual landscapes and media outlets in post-revolutionary Egypt as a means of crafting gendered selves within neo-liberal processes of religious and ethical individualization. It focuses on contemporary female tiktok influencers within a nexus of class, gender, and religious dynamics and the crackdown from state authorities these influencers faced since their videos went viral in 2019. It argues that the influencers’ perception as threatening to moral and public decency offers a window into how class and religion are being renegotiated within post-revolutionary Egypt. Thereby, it asks: How does the public gaze entering homes’ private spheres trouble the public-private divide along with official expectations around femininity? To substantiate my argument, it situates the "tiktok cases" within a glocal digital media-landscape. The final section places the tiktok cases within a debate on how ethical, gendered, and religious processes of individualization in post-revolutionary Egypt shape and are shaped by digital landscapes.

- Sana Patel, University of Ottawa

*Hybrid Islam: How Young Muslims Practice Islam in Online and Offline Spaces*

Reviving the Islamic Spirit (RIS) is an annual convention that takes place in Toronto with over 20,000 attendees every year. My doctoral research explored why young Muslims (aged 18-40) in Canada and the United States are attracted to this event. After conducting 50 interviews and observing RIS as an attendee between 2018-2021, I found that it is the sense of belonging and sense of community, along with celebrity *imams* that attract young Muslims to this convention. I use the theoretical framework of lived religion to dissect the diversity of young Muslims at RIS and how they choose to practice Islam in their everyday lives. I also found that young Muslims are influenced in their offline religious practices by what they find in online spaces, such as celebrity *imams* on social media, and by performing *ijtihad* through religious sources that they find online. COVID-19’s impact on the religious behaviours of my interviewees is also discussed in my findings.

**Business Meeting**

Zaid Adhami, Williams College, Presiding
Elliott Bazzano, Le Moyne College, Presiding
A20-233
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Teaching Religion Unit and Transformative Scholarship and Pedagogy Unit
Theme: Teaching Critical Religious Studies
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Beverley Foulks McGuire, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Presiding

This roundtable discusses Teaching Critical Religious Studies, a volume published by Bloomsbury Press in September 2022, that considers how knowledge is constructed, both in theory, and in practice. Each contribution to this volume speaks to how the Study of Religion theorizes about domination, oppression, and control inherent within our discipline, while not creating conversations around teaching the practical import of these theories. As a result, we think against power, but teach with it. Each contributor addresses this disjunction between theory and practice in the classroom, sharing practical approaches to teaching religion, using theory. We draw on critical, engaged, and transformative pedagogy that adopts a collaborative approach to learning where students and instructors co-create and construct knowledge together. Recognizing that our embodied selves are structured by inequality, we also attend to the power effects of knowledge, and the way we might “reduce the carcerality” of our classroom and teaching.

Panelists
Jenna Gray-Hildenbrand, Middle Tennessee State University
Hussein Rashid, Islamicate L3C
M. Cooper Minister, Shenandoah University
Katherine C. Zubko, University of North Carolina, Asheville
Jill DeTemple, Southern Methodist University
Martha Smith Roberts, Denison University
Annie Blazer, College of William and Mary
Joseph Tucker Edmonds, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis

A20-234
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Tibetan and Himalayan Religions Unit
Theme: Catastrophe and Prophecy in Tibetan Religious Contexts
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Jue Liang, Denison University, Presiding

This panel’s six papers explore how Tibetans, Bhutanese, and Mongolians have engaged various religious, social, and natural catastrophes through the technologies of prophecy and ritual. The papers show how fundamental Buddhist prophecies such as those of the "Kauśāmbī narrative" and the Kālacakra Tantra have been adapted to specific catastrophic contexts from 9th-century Tibet to 20th-century Mongolia. They also explore the dynamics of “hidden lands” and utopian visions of state-building in the 17th century, as well as the evocation of apocalyptic prophecies in the face of the catastrophic events of the 20th century in Tibet and Mongolia. Drawing on historical, biographic, epic, ritual, and astrological sources, each paper explores how prophecies...
are deployed and remembered, and how people respond to their locations within religious, social, and/or natural catastrophes.

- Vesna Wallace, University of California, Santa Barbara

*Other People’s Prophecies and Subversive Reinterpretations*

This presentation aims to demonstrate the processes of adaptation and transformation of the *Kālacakratantra*’s prophetic narrative in the course of its transmissions from one religious tradition to another and from one culture to another (from India and Tibet to Mongolia). The permutations of an eschatological narrative that will be discussed reflect not only their historical, social, and doctrinal contexts, but also the undoing of other people’s prophetic discourses through the ongoing and subversive reinterpretation and cultural signification. As we trace the development of the Kalkī-related eschatology from the *Mahābhārata* to its transformations in other Indic and Mongolian sources, we find that through recontextualization and creative production of new meanings, this eschatological narrative gradually grew from a brief, versified reference to elaborate prophetic accounts written in prose. Like the prophecies of other religious traditions, the eschatological narrative comes to us in the form of a revelatory dialogue.

- William McGrath, Manhattan College

*Outbreaks of Widespread Disease in the Cataclysmic Prophecies of Tibetan Buddhism*

Outbreaks of widespread disease feature prominently in the cataclysmic prophecies of Tibet. Toward the end of the Tibetan empire (ca. 600–850), the *Prophecy of the Khotanese Arhat* and related works predict the spread of a pox disease during the Semblance of the True Dharma period. In treasure revelations like the *Vase of Ambrosia*, Padmasambhava prophesies disease outbreaks during the future Degenerate Age of the present (14th c.). This paper argues that the eschatological prophecies of the Tibetan imperial period entail limited instructions for postponing the extinction of the Buddhist order, and instead convey a fatalistic acceptance of its impermanence. By contrast, the outbreak narratives of fourteenth-century Tibet generally present the diseases of the Degenerate Age as having definite moral, demonic, and even medical causes, each of which future generations can continue to dispel by means of Padmasambhava’s prophetic instructions.

- Jetsun Deleplanque, University of Chicago

*Millenarianism, Utopia, and the Founding of the Bhutanese State*

The biography of Bhutan’s founding figure, Zhabs drung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal (1594-1651), composed by his close associate Gtsang mkhan chen ’Jam dbyangs dpal ldan rgya mtsho (1610-84), reveals the extent to which the Bhutanese theocracy was founded and articulated within a millenarian framework. A central element of the enunciation of the Bhutanese state is the conception of Zhabs drung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal as an
emanation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara incarnating in human form during a
degenerate age for the purpose of bringing about a new fortunate eon in the region. This
paper investigates the linkages between the millenarian project of Zhabdrung Ngag
dbg  rnam rgyal and the conception of Bhutan as a physical utopia in the writing of
Gtshang mkhan chen, paying particular attention to the ways in which the natural world is
understood as a participant and arbiter of the Bhutanese theocracy.

• Matthew King, University of California, Riverside

_Trülku Drakpa Gyaltsen, Dorjé Shukden, and the Time of Revolutionary Inner Asia_

This presentation explores the much-suppressed prophetic system associated with the
allegedly murdered rival of the 5th Dalai Lama, Trülku Drakpa Gyeltsen (1619-1656).
Considered by some to have incarnated as the much-maligned protector deity Dorjé
Shukden, for over three centuries Drakpa Gyeltsen’s prophecies organized competing
forms of Géluk scholastic affiliation in wide circulation between Central Tibet, Kham,
Amdo, Beijing, Mongolia, and Siberia. This presentation shows how the literary and
performative traditions of Drakpa Gyeltsen’s prophecies were used to historicize the
 abundances associated with the arrival of the Géluk to northern and eastern Inner Asia in
the 17th century, and then to contextualize what was lost during the apocalyptic transition
from Tsarist and Qing imperialism to a bloody revolutionary modernity after 1911.

• Natasha Mikles, Texas State University

_Between Two Apocalypses: Catastrophic Millennialism and Narrative Modeling in the
Gesar Epic_

Applying the theoretical work of Burton Mack and Catherine Wessinger to the final
episode of the Gesar epic, this paper argues for narrative eschatology’s role in framing
the reader as a participant in the apocalyptic end of the Dharma. An apocalypse
embedded with a prophecy for a future, greater apocalypse of the Buddhist teachings
themselves, the final episode of the Gesar epic sandwiches the reader between two
cataclysms—the narrative of Gling’s end in the historical past and the destruction of all
Buddhist Dharma in Tibet’s future. In this way, the narrative’s inside and outside are
collapsed and the reader becomes an apocalyptic participant awaiting the coming battle
and return of Gesar. Reflecting contemporary hopes and apprehensions, narrative
eschatologies work to provide a mythic script that orients the reader towards their
contemporary world and create a sense of time in which to meaningfully dwell.

• Naljor Tsering, École Pratique des Hautes Études

_rGya nag skag bzlog: The Chinese Way of Deflecting Disaster or Deflecting Chinese
Disasters_

The _rGya nag skag bzlog_, “the Chinese ritual deflecting disasters”, is a very popular
Tibetan daily folk ritual dedicated to the avoidance of disasters. Traditionally, it is
regarded as coming from the Chinese, but was adopted in both the Tibetan Buddhist and the Bon traditions. By comparing the different versions of this ritual, the present paper introduces a lesser-known Tibetan concept of cataclysm upon which this ritual is founded—sKag or Keg, namely “disaster”. This term covers a wide range of catastrophes resulting mainly from the conflict in conceptual relationships. While the conflict can be either cyclic or oppositional, the relationships can pertain to astrological, social, moral, and cosmological orders, among which many are of Chinese origin, such as the five elements and the eight trigrams. The present paper shows how the Buddhist and the Bon traditions choose to incorporate these foreign elements in developing their own ritual narratives.

Responding

Brandon Dotson, Georgetown University

A20-236
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Women's Caucus
Theme: Overcoming Catastrophes: Diverse Ways of Agency, Healing, Human Flourishing and the Importance of Inclusive Ritual and Just Material Liturgies
Sunday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Ulrike Auga, Humboldt University, Berlin, Presiding

Counter-discourses are needed to overcome today’s catastrophes such as lack of reproductive, sexual and health rights, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and the increase in gender-based/sexual violence during pandemics. This session presents different ways of gaining agency, healing, and human flourishing from medical, social, and cultural foci as well as worshipping with inclusive imaginaries. Themes include African women’s theologies and Mariology, and grounded theory-theology in virtual space of a neo-pentecostal church. Liturgies’ importance and singing for healing, restoring memory and human flourishing are emphasized. An Australian perspective underlines the new singing of the Responsorial Psalm in the Post-Conciliar Catholic mass and draws on wisdom from indigenous communities to current scientific knowledge. An Indian Jain tradition’s contribution shows how the chanting of 1008 names is glorifying the goddess Padmāvati’ and how worshipping a female divinity enhances the religiosity for the goddess, and generates collective belonging and a female soteriology.

- Telesia Musili, University of Nairobi

Re-reading the Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38) Through the Lenses of African Women's Theologies

Christianity should be a liberating and transformative resource in the defense of women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights. Yet, Christianity being patriarchally grounded often invalidates the equal dignity and worth of women and girls. This paper seeks to re-read the annunciation story through the lens of African Women’s theologies and ethics to unearth how scriptural texts and cultural values intersect to inhibit or affirm women’s
rights regarding sexual and reproductive health. The Church’s focus on Mary’s virginity as the rationale for perfect womanhood has resulted in control and shaming of women’s sexuality. I ask, what needs to be done to ensure women’s agency so that they feel empowered to reconfigure cultural and Christian values so that their sexual and reproductive health needs are attended to? A re-reading of the annunciation welcomes differing contexts and allows women to shape their choices and behaviors in accordance with their contexts.

• Fiona Dyball, Charles Sturt University


The sung Responsorial Psalm was restored to the Catholic Mass by the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council, contributing to opening the riches of Scripture more fully for Catholics. This paper presents a forthcoming study of the practices and resources used and desired by Catholic parishes and schools in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne to sing the Responsorial Psalm as part of the Liturgy of the Word in the post-conciliar Catholic Mass. Creative work coming from the study will add up to seventeen new musical settings of Responsorial Psalms to the repertoire. This research will contribute significantly to the small existing body of pastoral field studies on Catholic liturgical music in Australia since Vatican II. It will be the first Australian study of the practices and resources used and desired in relation to the singing of the Responsorial Psalm in the post-conciliar Catholic Mass in Australia.

• Loreen Maseno, Maseno University, Kenya

*Pentecostal Women in the Virtual Space: A Grounded Theology from Kenya*

Facilitating virtual church services is a major historical shift and a Kenyan reality that has the potential to transform every aspect of our lives either negatively or positively. This paper explores the usefulness of grounded theology, with the goal of engaging creative and original findings on Pentecostal women's engagement in the virtual space within a neo-Pentecostal Church, Christ is the Answer Ministries (CITAM) Ngong. Methodologically, this paper emphasizes how grounded theology is compatible with grounded theory as a method for discovering hidden patterns and meanings and as a way to unearth stories informing the everyday lives of Pentecostal women in the virtual space. In this essay, grounded theology, therefore, relates the sociocultural beliefs, misinterpretations and misconceptions to the transcendent, as generated from fieldwork in CITAM Ngong Church. Further, it shall demonstrate the potential of theological creativity in the virtual space from the bottom-up, as opposed to a top-down approach.

• Venu Mehta, Claremont School of Theology
Female Worship in the Male-Centric Theology: Devotion to the Jain Goddess Padmāvatī

Approaching with the feminist lens, the paper highlights how a Jain goddess’s constructed identity presents a theological tension in Jainism, a religious tradition rooted in India. The paper focuses on the vernacular literature dedicated to Padmāvatī and written between the eighteenth century to contemporary time by Śvetāmbar Mūrtipūjak (temple-dweller) Jains in the Gujarati language. Padmāvatī is the yakṣī or female attendant deity of the twenty-third Tīrthaṅkara Pārśvanātha. Classified as a śāsana-devatā or guardian deity, Padmāvatī is believed to help protect the teachings of her Jina, Pārśvanātha. While the vernacular literature explicitly portrays Padmāvatī as an object of worship, such a portrayal presents a paradox. A paradox in the sense that: while not being one of the Tīrthaṅkaras (“ford-makers”), the principal objects of worship, she is still accorded extraordinary veneration.

Responding

Teresa Forcades Vila, Monastery Montserrat Barcelona

A20-333
New Program Unit
Anglican Studies Seminar
Theme: 2022 Meeting of the Anglican Studies Seminar, Part 1
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, Claremont School of Theology, Presiding
Scott MacDougall, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Presiding

During this first of two 90-minute sessions at the 2022 AARSBL Annual Meeting, seminar members and any other interested parties (warmly invited!) will gather to discuss three pre-circulated papers. These will include: (1) a paper by Carla Roland Guzmán on the beginnings of the Anglican Church in Mexico, its connections to (or disconnections from) the U.S. Episcopal Church, and the proposed use of the Mozarabic rite within it; (2) a paper by Hilary Bogert-Winkler on the complex historical antecedents of the ways in which the Church of Ireland continues to embrace a Protestant identity—both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland—in ways that are markedly different from other Anglican churches in Britain and North America; and (3) a paper by Lora Walsh detailing the historiographical methods to be taken into consideration when conducting research into operative ecclesiologies in the Anglican context.

- Carla Roland, General Theological Seminary

Historical Antecedents of the Anglican Church in Mexico and the Proposed Use of the Mozarabic Rite

Carla Roland Guzmán will present a paper on the beginnings of the Anglican Church in Mexico, its connections to (or disconnections from) the U.S. Episcopal Church, and the proposed use of the Mozarabic rite within it.
• Hilary Bogert-Winkler, University of Connecticut

*Historical Antecedents of the Church of Ireland and Protestant Identity*

**Hilary Bogert-Winkler** will present a paper on the complex historical antecedents of the ways in which the Church of Ireland continues to embrace a Protestant identity—both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland—in ways that are markedly different from other Anglican churches in Britain and North America.

• Lora Walsh, University of Arkansas

*Historiographical Methods for Examining "Operative Ecclesiologies" in Anglican Studies*

**Lora Walsh** will offer a paper detailing the historiographical methods to be taken into consideration when conducting research into operative ecclesiologies in the Anglican context.

A20-300
Professional Development - Employment

**Applied Religious Studies Committee**

Theme: **Beyond the Academy: Pursuing Jobs Off of the Tenure Track**

Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Sara Kamali, Kamali Consulting, Presiding

Are you a graduate student or an adjunct or full-time faculty member interested in careers off of the tenure-track path? This discussion specifically centers on how to leverage the skill sets developed in graduate school and teaching positions to fulfilling jobs outside of higher education that engage many publics beyond the academy. Join the panelists in conversations about network-building, pursuing positions outside of the classroom, and the challenges and lessons learned in navigating the gig economy.

**Panelists**

Yuria Celidwen, Independent Scholar
Kate Soules, Boston College
Robert P. Jones, Public Religion Research Institute

A20-334
Full Papers Available

**Artificial Intelligence and Religion Seminar**

Theme: **Explorations and Issues in Artificial Intelligence and Religion**

Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Tracy J. Trothen, Queen's University, Kingston, Presiding

This is a seminar discussion about issues that arise from the application and conceptualization of
artificial intelligence to the domain of Religion. Papers will be available for review before the session.

- Joyce Konigsburg, DePaul University

*Artificial Intelligence and the Vatican: Complementary Perspectives to Resolve Climate Change*

As the Earth heats up, the search for better climate change solutions likewise intensifies. In fact, the United Nations asserts that the climate crisis is a code red issue producing global catastrophes, which demand immediate action. Catastrophes also bring together strange bedfellows. Artificial intelligence provides scientists with potential solutions to global warming. However, AI and machine learning algorithms create a substantial carbon footprint and several ethical challenges. The Vatican and other religious organizations offer ethical perspectives to technological problems. Scientists often scoff at religion and its theological methods while religion, particularly Roman Catholicism, has a history of being wary or dismissive toward scientific discoveries. Nevertheless, religion and science, often framed as faith and reason, are two unexpected allies working together to resolve climate change and bring about climate justice.

- Randall Reed, Appalachian State University

*Digital Jesus*

This paper reports the results of the Digital Jesus project, which created a dataset of all of Jesus sayings in multiple translations and then applied it to a large language model (A.I.) called GPT-3. GPT-3 Jesus was then asked a series of questions, some of which related to the time of Jesus, but many of which were related to contemporary issues. This study sought to determine how an A.I. fine-tuned to the words of Jesus might respond.

- David Zvi Kalman, Shalom Hartman Institute of North America

*What is the Correct Metaphor for Artificial Intelligence?*

As artificial intelligence develops, forming a moral intuition around its use and abuse will become ever more important; in the absence of such intuition, decisions about AI are unlikely to be challenged by popular sentiment or outrage. Moral intuitions, however, are difficult to cultivate without mental models, and AI is currently stuck between several potential models that have radically different implications for the technology's appropriate role in society. Using sources from Jewish history, this paper considers six different potential relationships to AI that might be used to bootstrap thick understandings onto this new technology.

A20-304
Buddhism Unit
Theme: Methods, Theories, and Disciplinary Formations in the Study of Buddhism
How do our methodological choices challenge (or perpetuate) established understandings of Buddhism? Reflecting on the future of Buddhist Studies, the Collective Buddhist Studies Manifesto has called for the expansion of the theoretical and methodological parameters of the field in order to center neglected and marginalized perspectives. Last year’s AAR panel on privilege in Buddhist Studies and in Buddhism considered the ways in which institutional, disciplinary, and identity-based hierarchies shape not only careers but also the production of knowledge. Both of these conversations explored aspects of disciplinary formation in Buddhist Studies and called for revitalization through greater methodological pluralism and institutional inclusivity. This group of scholars, working across historical periods and geographical contexts, answers these calls by offering concrete examples of how new research areas make new methodological approaches necessary, and, equally, how the intentional application of diverse methodologies creates new ways of knowing Buddhism.

Panelists

Amy P. Langenberg, Eckerd College
Ann Gleig, University of Central Florida
Wendi Adamek, University of Calgary
Nalika Gajaweera, University of Southern California
Kai Shmushko, Tel Aviv University
Victoria Montrose, University of Southern California

A20-335
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Buddhist Pedagogy Seminar
Theme: Teaching Buddhism: Environment, Violence, and Role Play
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Beverley Foulks McGuire, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, Presiding
Jonathan Young, California State University, Bakersfield, Presiding

This panel examines the teaching of undergraduates about Buddhism regarding the environment, violence, and using role play to enact Buddhist history. Ellen Posman proposes that teaching about Buddhism and environmental concerns can allow for more critical discussions of the relationship between Buddhism and indigenous religions. Julie Regan discusses the “forest experiments” assignment that includes readings and activities to address topics on personal healing, racial injustice, and environmental problems. Geoffrey Barstow challenges students’ assumptions about Buddhism as a peaceful religion by showing samurai glorified as enlightened warriors and asks students to investigate how the ideas of emptiness can be justified for interpersonal violence. Noel Hubler and Joel Dubois adopt “Reacting The Past Simulations” to have students role-play events in Buddhist history, which deepens their understanding of practices chosen by different traditions. In sum, this panel reflects on specific methods of teaching past and contemporary issues of Buddhism.
• Ellen Posman, Baldwin Wallace University

_Blurring the Buddhist-Indigenous Lines in Environmental Work_

Teaching material on Buddhism and the environment can highlight deeper issues within the study of Buddhism. This paper will examine pedagogical materials used in classes to interrogate the relationship between Buddhism and indigenous religions regarding environmental action. It notes the ways that the rhetoric and rituals of grass-roots environmental activism in Asian Buddhist communities resonates more with indigenous spirituality than with the language of eco-Buddhist philosophy in a way that is notably different in a Western Buddhist context in which collaboration with Native American religions is the norm rather than hybridization of indigenous and Buddhist sensibilities. This phenomenon in turn raises questions for the relationship between normative and popular Buddhism and between theory and practice in Buddhist environmental action. In this way, environmental action can be a useful inroad to larger questions about Buddhism and about religion pedagogically.

• Julie Regan, La Salle University

_Touching the Earth & Making Connections in the Woods_

Buddhist perspectives on interdependent origination provide an opportunity for students to consider new ways of seeing the world and their place within it. But how do Buddhists adapt such philosophical ideas into practices that confront our disconnection from one another and our environment? My talk will describe an assignment which introduces students to contemporary adaptations of forest traditions that emerge from the Buddha's practice in wooded groves. I will discuss three distinct forest experiments, based on developing course readings from early Buddhist, Mahayana and Engaged Buddhist traditions, which can be combined into a single group or individual field trip or three separate ones spaced out over the semester. Finally, I will share some of the distinct ways students have documented, reflected and shared their insights about how such practices illustrate Buddhist philosophical principles and may be used to address personal healing, racial injustice, and environmental problems.

• Geoffrey Barstow, Oregon State University

_Teaching Buddhist Violence via the Samurai_

It is not unusual for students to enter my classes with an assumption that Buddhism is always non-violent. In order to counter these impressions and introduce students to a more complex understanding of Buddhism’s relationship with violence, I focus on images of Japanese samurai. By using readings and films that glorify the samurai as enlightened warriors, I ask students to investigate how Buddhist ideas about emptiness can be used to justify interpersonal violence. In the end, I hope that students leave the class with a better awareness of the fact that religious ideas (in this case emptiness) can be interpreted and implemented in different ways, some of which may seem discordant.
with other values held by the tradition. The end result, I hope, is that students start to see Buddhism as a lived tradition practiced by real people, rather than some abstract ideal.

- J. Noel Hubler, Lebanon Valley College
  Joel Dubois, California State University, Sacramento

*King Ashoka, Emperor Wuzong, and the Dalai Lama Walk into a Classroom: Using historical simulations to teach Buddhism.*

We have developed several Reacting to The Past (RTTP) Simulations to teach various stages in the development of Buddhism in several cultural and historical settings. RTTP is a consortium hosted by Barnard College that has supported the development of historical simulations for use in college classes. We have adopted the RTTP format for teaching Buddhism by engaging students in reading primary texts and debating central teachings of Buddhism and their application in practice. We do so by creating simulations of moments of decision where different traditions offer alternative interpretations, paths, and arguments. We will explain simulations we have developed including ones set in King Ashoka’s Court, Tang China during the Huichang Persecution, a 4th Century Sarvasativada monastery, 12th Century Burma, 17th Century Tibet, and Meiji Japan. We will explain the methods used, student take-aways and feedback, as well as presenting resources available for instructors interesting in adopting the pedagogy.

**A20-305**
Professional Development – Pedagogy and Teaching

*Childhood Studies and Religion Unit*
Theme: Teaching Childhood and Religion: A Roundtable
Sunday, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM (In Person)
Andrew Walker-Cornetta, Georgia State University, Presiding

This roundtable explores the experience of planning and teaching courses on childhood and religion. Whether the course focuses on children, adolescents, or literary and historical constructions of childhood, combining the study of childhood with the study of religion can produce popular yet challenging courses. Our panelists speak to a variety of teaching settings, methodological frameworks, and religious foci, but they look forward to sharing their own teaching experiences and to participating in a robust discussion afterwards. AAR attendees who already teach in this area, or who are interested in teaching in this area, are warmly invited to attend.

**Panelists**

Wendy Love Anderson, Washington University, Saint Louis
Susan Ridgely, University of Wisconsin
Karen-Marie Yust, Union Presbyterian Seminary
Business Meeting

Sally Stamper, Capital University, Presiding

A20-306
Chinese Religions Unit and Daoist Studies Unit and Indian and Chinese Religions Compared Unit and Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit
Theme: Situating Medicine and Religion in Asia
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
C. Pierce Salguero, Pennsylvania State University, Presiding

This roundtable proposes that Asian forms of Medicine and Religion have emerged as a new field in its own right, and initiates dialogue about scholarly practice. With the worldwide spread of Asian health and self-cultivation practices, Religion and Medicine has recently emerged as a new critical nexus. Scholars work on this question in multiple time periods and academic disciplines, from philology to anthropology to neurology. Even nation-states have newly sought to reassert the robustness of these knowledge systems at national and international levels. Using a novel presentation format, each participant will use a common argument structure to discuss how medicine and religion have been situated in Asia, addressing legacy scholarship, primary sources, and useful methodological approaches. Presenters will discuss medieval Chinese pharmacology and alchemy, strange tales from Song China, the Ramayana and modern-day North Indian bioprospecting, and the medicalisation of yoga from the nineteenth century to the present.

Panelists
Michael Stanley-Baker, Nanyang Technological University
Yan Liu, Harvard University
Suzanne Newcombe, Open University
Hsiao-wen Cheng, University of Pennsylvania
Anthony Cerulli, University of Wisconsin

A20-336
Constructive Muslim Thought and Engaged Scholarship Seminar
Theme: Approaches and Methodologies in Constructive Muslim Thought
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Sam Houston, Stetson University, Presiding

In the second year of the "Constructive Muslim Thought and Engaged Scholarship" seminar, the organizing group continues to work towards better understanding and defining the nature and substance of this still developing and distinctive field. For this particular session, the participants have been invited to join a roundtable conversation aimed at exploring the various approaches and methodologies available for this scholarly work. Drawing upon their own research, each panelist will share and discuss their work as it relates to constructive Muslim thought, broadly conceived. Questions of interdisciplinarity and contradisciplinarity will explored as the session
considers an array of approaches and methods, including ethnography, textual analysis, archival research, various modes of theology, among others. All seminar attendees are encouraged to join the conversation after the invited participants have shared their opening remarks.

Panelists

Kirsten Wesselhoeft, Vassar College
Basit Iqbal, University of California, Berkeley
Sarra Tlili, University of Florida
Oludamini Ogunnaike, University of Virginia

Business Meeting

Martin Nguyen, Fairfield University, Presiding
Najeeba Syeed-Miller, Chicago Theological Seminary, Presiding

A20-337

Full Papers Available
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Contextualizing the Catholic Sexual Abuse Crisis Seminar
Theme: Clergy Sexual Abuse: Catastrophe, Trauma, and Trust
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Kathleen Holscher, University of New Mexico, Presiding

This papers in this year's seminar engage "trauma" and “catastrophe” (and their analogues) as a lens for studying the global dimensions of clergy sexual abuse. The language of catastrophe, crisis, and demise open possibilities for foregrounding survivors’ perspectives while simultaneously shifting us towards a more comprehensive view of clergy abuse. This session seeks to identify prospective avenues for future research. What new frames appear, for example, when we compare Catholic abuses across multiple continents? Do laypersons and priests still trust one another? And in what ways does catastrophe occlude or distort the dimension of survival, tenacity, and endurance in survivors' experience?

- R. Marie Griffith, Washington University, Saint Louis

*Containment, Compromise, Catastrophe: Women Employed by the Church to Manage the Crisis*

Since the 1990s, the church has employed a number of women to address the sexual abuse crisis. Their roles have mostly played out in the realms of advice and advocacy: staffing diocesan offices for child protection, for instance, or serving on commissions organized by local officials up through the Vatican. Some have also assisted in the creation of policies and procedures aimed at preventing, reporting, and responding to abuse. Women in such roles have had to work within bounds that church authorities deem appropriate. This paper explores several such women, those occupying the fraught position betwixt Catholic hierarchs and their accusers. When and how have they
collaborated in the church’s efforts to contain the crisis? What methods have they used to support and/or advocate for victims and survivors, and how has their role compromised such advocacy? What can we learn from these stories about the crisis and its catastrophic cover-up?

- Alana Harris, King's College London

*Lessons from the Side-lines? Interdisciplinary Insights on Trauma and Survivor Testimony*

Drawing on an in-progress collaboration with critical psychologists, psychiatrists, neuroscientists and health practitioners studying the nexus between intimate partner violence and mental health, this paper explores what scholars of sex abuse in the Catholic church can learn from longstanding debates in the ‘psy disciplines’ when analysing trauma and foregrounding lived experience. This multi-disciplinary perspective is invaluable in contextualizing scholarship about the religious ‘sexual abuse crisis’ – still in its relative infancy – by offering an established and comparative framework for conceptualising the transformative power but also pain for survivors (and scholars) in breaking the silence and taboos surrounding abuse.

Foregrounding the UK’s [Survivors’ Voices Charter for Engaging Abuse Survivors in Research](https://www.bps.org.uk/), alongside scholarship on ‘holding’ dialogue which may also cause distress - but need not therefore re-traumatize or damage – this paper offers conceptual tools and practical strategies for partnering with ‘survivor activists’ seeking healing and justice.

- Brandon Vaidyanathan, Catholic University of America
  Tricia Bruce, University of Notre Dame
  Cella Masso-Rivetti, New York University
  Christopher Jacobi, Catholic University of America

*Priests, Trust, and Crisis: Findings from the National Study of Catholic Priests*

How are Catholic priests affected by the clergy sexual abuse crisis? This paper seeks to explore the cultural and religious changes spurred by the clergy sexual abuse crisis in contemporary American priests’ everyday work and ministry in parishes, dioceses, and religious orders with a specific focus on changes in trust. Based on in-depth interviews with and a nationally representative survey of priests across the United States in 2022, we find that crisis impacts priests’ everyday interactions and ministry, priests’ relationships with their bishops and superiors, and the cultures of parishes, dioceses, and religious orders. Hearing directly from active Catholic priests about their understandings of “crisis in the Church” brings into relief the myriad ways that trust has changed in the context of the clergy sexual abuse crisis in American Catholicism.

**Business Meeting**

Brian Clites, Case Western Reserve University, Presiding
Within Orthodox Christian communities there are numerous traditions of sacred music. From liturgical chant and poetic hymns, to bells and choral arrangements, Orthodox Christianity has many musical expressions. This session features three papers that focus on Orthodox composers of the past (Romanos the Melodist) and the present (Arvo Pärt), and reflects on the theological, liturgical, and musical effects of their contributions.

- Nathan Williams, University of Toronto

*Arvo Pärt, Icons of the Voice, and Orthodox Musical Ecumenism*

This paper explores the theological aspect of the music of Arvo Pärt, who is among the most widely performed of living composers. Pärt, a native of Estonia and a convert to Orthodoxy, has become one of the most recognizable figures in contemporary classical music and one whose personal faith commitments are well known. This paper will proceed in three parts. First, it will situate Pärt’s music within Orthodox theology as iconographic (rather than, say, liturgical). Second, it will articulate the theological conversation in which Pärt’s musical icons are interlocutors, that is, the theology of voice, human and divine. Third and finally, it will name Pärt as contributing to a theological aesthetics that could undergird efforts toward Christian unity, both in dialogue and doxology.

- Jillian Marcantonio, Duke University

*Quiet but Pervasive: The Holy Spirit in the Hymns of Romanos the Melodist*

Romanos the Melodist, the sixth-century poet and cantor, wrote remarkable hymns for the Constantinopolitan faithful which thankfully have been preserved through the centuries. Drawing on the work of other scholars of late ancient liturgical poetry and across the poet’s corpus, this paper examines the role of the Holy Spirit in both the texts themselves and their larger liturgical context in the Byzantine world. Hymns such as *On the Three Children, On the Theophany*, and *On the Pentecost* along with the Marian *kontakia* will be central for this discussion. Both the explicit mentions and the implicit references to the Holy Spirit demonstrate the quiet but pervasive Spirit within Romanos’ corpus. A performance analysis of these hymns alongside the textual investigation provides a window into the theological imagination of Romanos and the faithful within his congregations.
Michelle Stearns, Seattle School of Theology and Psychology

*Being Conformed to the Good: How Arvo Pärt’s Tintinnabuli Compositions can help to elucidate Gregory of Nyssa’s view of Epectasis*

This paper will explore how music can help us understand Gregory of Nyssa’s view of *epectasis*. At stake in this conversation is how God meets us in our state of alienation and call us back into the unity of life and relationship for which we were created. Gregory of Nyssa, in particular, holds that the Christian is called by the grace of the Father to proceed (and grow in capacity) more and more into the life of the triune God, as we are conformed to God’s absolute good through the work of the Holy Spirit and the enduring reconciling work of Jesus.

To accomplish this, we will enlist Arvo Pärt's *tintinnabuli* music to adumbrate Nyssa’s view of *epectasis*. Pärt provides a complex musical model of how we are nourished by God’s goodness, journey into the life of the Triune God, and conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

**Responding**

Peter Bouteneff, Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary

A20-308

**International Development and Religion Unit**

**Theme:** *International Development, Religion and Power*

Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)

John Rees, University of Notre Dame, Australia, Presiding

Recent discourses within international development theory and practice around localization and decolonization emphasise the importance of shifting power to the local level as a counterbalance against a colonialist and bloated international aid system. With religious actors playing an increasingly visible role in global development policy and practice, it is timely to reflect upon the role of religion in challenging the damaging power relations in the aid system that further entrench inequality and poverty.

- Blayne Harcey, Arizona State University

*Locating Lumbinī: the United Nations, Development, and Buddhism in the 20th Century*

This paper takes up a collection of problems concerning the modern manufacture of the Buddha’s birthplace at Lumbinī in the rural Terai region of Nepal. Since its rediscovery at the hands of colonial archeologists in the waning years of the nineteenth century, Lumbinī has emerged as a site of origins in modern Buddhist revival and reform movements. Beyond the site’s archeological and ritual significances, utopian imaginations about reclaiming the Buddhist “Holy Land” have given way to modern infrastructural and social development—guided by the United Nations and her
subsidiaries. As a site with multiple significances—pilgrimage center, tourist destination, and world heritage site—the Buddha’s birthplace makes an intriguing, and fruitful, case study for how Buddhist actors and institutions have been folded into the project of international development.

- David Howlett, Smith College

*Sharing the Gospel of the NGO: Filipino Catholics, American RLDS, and the Protestantization of a Global Denomination, 1972-1994*

In the 1970s, the creation of NGOs in the Philippines by the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints opened the denomination to new vocabulary, doctrines, and practices – the “gospel” of the NGO. RLDS-sponsored NGOs were led and staffed by radical Filipino Catholics who were veterans of community organizing NGOs formed to resist the Marcos regime. These NGO employees worked to educate RLDS denominational leaders and American laity on their radical development praxis. As an upshot, the RLDS Church in both the Global North and the Global South came to look more and more like other ecumenical Protestants who, in the post-World War II era had embraced a cosmopolitan ethic of Christian care, cross-cultural friendships, and humanitarian missions. Thus, Protestantization within the RLDS Church ironically went hand in hand with the ideological “evangelism” conducted by Catholic Filipino NGO employees on American RLDS members.

- Emma Tomalin, University of Leeds
  Olivia Wilkinson, Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities

*NGO-isation, local faith actors and ‘legitimate’ humanitarian action in South Sudan*

In this presentation we explore findings from ethnographic research carried out alongside a humanitarian project called ‘Bridging the Gap (BtG): The Role of Local Faith Actors in Humanitarian Response in South Sudan’. BtG aimed to better understand the barriers that stand in the way of engagement between local faith actors (LFAs) and international humanitarians (IHs) and to introduce learning opportunities (e.g. training and workshops) to address these. It can be seen as part of broader processes to decolonise and localise humanitarian response. Our aim in this paper is to share perspectives from the LFAs who participated in BtG about what it means to become ‘legitimate’ humanitarian actors that are recognised and trusted by the international system and why this is an important goal for them.

**Business Meeting**

John Rees, University of Notre Dame, Australia, Presiding

A20-309

**Interreligious and Interfaith Studies Unit**

Theme: The Triple-Edged Sword of Inclusion: Retelling History, Weaponizing Interfaith, and Navigating the Public Square
This panel explores key issues related to “inclusion” in Interreligious Studies and Engagement—utilizing an intersectional approach that looks beyond religious difference. The way we tell our (his)stories has implications for racial and religious hierarchies. Integrating DEI within interreligious work meets a variety of challenges—including the public perception that religion is by nature exclusionary. And the language of inclusion is also being weaponized by the far right—deploying interreligious “dialogue” to advance white supremacy and related ideologies. The response will begin to synthesize these analyses so we can deconstruct the multifarious framing of “inclusion” in interfaith space.

- Erika Tritle, Coastal Carolina University

*Challenging White Christian Supremacy by Telling Interfaith History*

Our understanding of Christian history and how we tell it matters as we come to terms with a range of ideologies built on white supremacy, including Christian nationalism, Christian Zionism, and Christian antisemitism. I suggest that all of these ideologies can be related, at least in part, to habits of telling the history of Christianity teleologically from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth and parochially, apart from symmetrical conversation with and awareness of non-Christian people on their own terms. Interreligious studies can contribute to this project in terms of scholarly collaboration and through the spirit of conversation that it encourages, such that whether we come as scholars, practitioners, believers, skeptics, or some combination thereof, we can humbly open ourselves to rethink traditions and their histories, the metaphors that shape our understanding of them, and the identities that we and others attach to them.

- Jeremy Fricke, Tri-Faith Initiative

*Cooperation in the Face of the Apocalypse: How the Far Right Has Co-opted the Model of Interreligious Dialogue*

This paper analyzes the role and impact of interreligious dialogue in online neo-Fascist communities. I argue that interreligious dialogue among the political far-right is used in ways to co-opt core ideas around inclusion to consolidate power across religious lines around an apocalyptic view on the environment (eco-fascism), antisemitism, and/or masculinity. Interfaith and interreligious dialogue is often seen as a politically moderate or progressive project, intended to create communities where people of all religious backgrounds may be equitably treated in society. Interweaving ethnographic research through online communities and critical theory, I will demonstrate the ways that certain methods of interreligious dialogue are easily used in these far-right communities for countering stated goals of traditional interreligious and interfaith inclusion projects. At its core, this is a theoretically-framed ethnographic work on the far-right’s use of inclusive rhetoric and interfaith dialogue to consolidate power in the face of an apocalyptic future.
Andrew Davies, University of Birmingham  
Maryyum Mahmood, University of Birmingham

On the Basis of Faith: Inclusion as Ideology, Narrative and Culture in the Public and Interreligious Engagement of Birmingham’s Edward Cadbury Centre

This paper will seek to identify some key lessons from the work of the Edward Cadbury Centre, Birmingham, UK, as it sees to promote equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in faith-based organisations and address the perception in many public policy contexts that religion is an obstacle to EDI. The presentation will highlight the development of the Centre’s strategic commitment to EDI, which began life as an ideology, evolved into a central element of its core narrative and now, the Centre would claim, underpins and shapes its culture, by examining the development of the Centre’s work in the last five years, considering particularly its approach to the professional development of faith leaders. Frank discussion of their journey is intended to help other organisations reflect constructively on the strengths and weaknesses of their own current approaches to the promotion of diversity as a strategic outcome of interreligious and intrareligious engagement.

Responding

Anne Hege Grung, University of Oslo
This panel sheds light on the construction and usefulness of literary excess in Jain literature. While scholars have touched upon the work of literary excess in Jain narrative, the topic has not gained substantive engagement among scholars, most probably because the admission of Jain authors’ penchant for literary excess—from extensive, encyclopedic lists to aesthetic and emotional saturation—threatens to undermine the dominant view of Jainism as reserved and austere. However, excess is everywhere in Jain narrative; indeed, one could argue that it is a staple of Jain literary production. The papers in this panel, then, aim to describe not only the varied methods by which Jain authors created excess in their texts, but, more importantly, to explain why such excess was important.

- Gregory Clines, Trinity University

“Sport is of Four Types:” Exhaustive Characterization in Raviśeṇa’s Padmapurāṇa

This paper examines Raviśeṇa’s 78-verse description of Queen Kaikeyī in his 7th-century Sanskrit Padmapurāṇa. Raviśeṇa’s description of Kaikeyī goes into minute detail of her artistic proficiencies. Thus, he constructs an exhaustive list of courtly arts and their subgroups. This paper seeks to explain why Raviśeṇa includes such a detailed description of Kaikeyī. arguing that, for Raviśeṇa, the importance of this list of skills is threefold. First, the exhaustive list of proficiencies helps to construct the character of Kaikeyī as exceptional. Second, it projects an anticipated audience for Raviśeṇa’s work: people with the capacity to appreciate knowledge. Finally, third, the description of Kaikeyī encourages the reader to leave behind the specific narrative in which it is placed, to appreciate not just Kaikeyī as an exemplary princess or courtly figure, but to celebrate the ideal of courtly decorum more broadly.

- Itamar Ramot, University of Chicago

Vernacular Excess: Making a Jaina Text Local

A reader of many early Jaina texts easily notices the presence of excessive enumerations, a literary technique that produces a comprehensive and encyclopedic account of the cosmos, and to deliver the Jina’s words as universal teaching. But literary excess also served later Jaina authors who wrote in vernacular languages and tried to understand how their regional concerns relate to the wider trans-local Jaina community of their times. In this talk, I examine specific instances of literary excess in Vṛttavilāsa’s fourteenth-century retelling of the Investigation of Dharma (Dharmaparīkṣā) into Kannāḍa. I argue that the author employs literary excess grounded in mundane and locally bound taxonomies and vernacular alliteration in order to localize this Jaina text, which was
already told before in supra-regional languages such as Sanskrit and Prakrit. In this way, he negotiates the relationship between his local identity, as a Kannada author, and his trans-local identity, as a Jaina individual.

- Seema Chauhan, University of Oxford

*Keep Calm and Carry On Practising Restraint: Jain Narratives about Excessive Hindus*

Recent scholarship demonstrates that premodern Jainas should not be stereotyped as stoic ascetics. Jaina literature indulges in descriptions of emotions and actions as a way of reflecting on what it means to be a Jaina soul embodied in an ostensibly Jaina universe. But what happens when Jainas reflect on their positionality in a world filled with religious others? This paper argues that premodern Jaina narratives reinstate a binary between excess and restraint when they represent Jainas vis-à-vis Śaiva and Śākta Hindus. Through a reading of two episodes from Jinasena’s *Harivaṃśapurāṇa* and Hariṣena’s *Bṛhatkathākośa*, the papers explains how both narratives juxtapose the excess of sexual desire and violence embodied by the Śaiva-Śākta other with the restraint embodied by the immutably calm Jaina. It thus suggests that Jaina literary representations of excess and restraint allow Jainas to convey a doxographical point regarding the validity of Jainism over Śaiva-Śākta traditions.

- Morgan Curtis, Harvard University

*Exceeds Expectations: Poetic Excess and Inversion in the Cīvakacintāmaṇī*

The *Cīvakacintāmaṇī* by Jain author Tiruttakkatēvar is thought to have had a significant influence on subsequent long poetic narratives (*kāppiyam*) written in Tamil. While it does contain material that marks it as somehow “Jain,” what about it accounts for its larger popularity? In this paper, I will argue that the text’s influence and popularity can be understood, in part, as a function of its manifold relationship to excessiveness. Through a close reading of a few key scenes in the text, I show how Tiruttakkatēvar expertly and excessively plays with and inverts expectations, suggesting that one consistent impact of this kind of excess is the invocation of humor that would speak especially to a learned audience. This generation of humor not only makes the text more pleasurable to engage with but also contributes to the overall flow of the narrative.

- Aleksandra Restifo,

*Shame: The Work of Emotion in Medieval Jainism*

This paper explores the nature of the emotion concept of shame in Jain contexts. Shame was envisioned as a social emotion, associated with fear of rejection and public humiliation. This study argues that there were at least two responses to shame: finding your courage and losing your mind, the latter being the cause of excessive emotion. In a play titled “Truthful King Hariścandra” by the monk Rāmacandra, the king commits a crime that offends a sage, who curses and banishes him. The king experiences shame,
which becomes a catalyst for his ritual of purification, a trial in which he develops great
courage in the face of suffering. In contrast, in a Śvetāmbara canonical text, laywomen
and nuns experience emotions of shame so intense that they lose their mind. This paper
shows that in both cases the fear of banishment is at the root of the emotion of shame.

Responding

James Ryan, California Institute of Integral Studies

P20-340
Karl Barth Society of North America
Theme: God and Human Creatures
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Cambria Kaltwasser, Northwestern College, Iowa, Presiding

God and Human Creatures

- Daniel Rempel, University of Aberdeen

The Witness of Disabled Creatures: Karl Barth and Disability Theology in Conversation

In the final completed volume of the Church Dogmatics, Karl Barth argued that the
controlling principle of Christian existence is one's witness to Christ, the one in whom the
witness participates. Responding to the act of God pro me in human history, the
responsibility of the Christian is no more than witnessing to this act of God in the world
on our behalf. Following Barth, this paper argues that people with intellectual disabilities
operate as witnesses in the sense that Barth conceives. Through critical interaction with
prominent disability theologians, this paper argues that Barth's theology of witness
provides a liberative mode of being a Christian for people with disabilities. Not only does
Barth's theology of witness conceive of a way in which people with intellectual
disabilities can live distinctly Christian lives, it also imagines a way where people with
intellectual disabilities can teach us about God.

- David Lilley, Murfreesboro, TN

Perception and Fidelity: Rest in the Anthropocene

Church Dogmatics volume III offers an unparalleled depth of insistence that rest is one of
the acts God does—that it is perhaps the act God has done in creation—and that sabbath
rest forms the lens through which all other creative acts and the creatures produced by
them must be seen. This paper takes this frequently underappreciated Barthian insistence
seriously as it considers the non-human creation. It articulates perception and fidelity as
key features of Barth’s sabbath account for his Doctrine of Creation as a whole, and
brings these to bear upon life in this stage of the Anthropocene. It clarifies their particular
significance for today’s social-ecological disaster by navigating the biblical terrain of
another such disaster, the Babylonian exile. The paper thus seeks to bring Barth’s
writings, scripture, and ethical existence today into fruitful conversation as each mines greater riches from the other.

- Michael Brain, Wycliffe College (University of Toronto)

_The Light and the Darkness: Karl Barth on Christ's Twofold State and the Two Sides of Creation_

Karl Barth’s doctrine of creation is famous for describing the connection between creation and covenant. Yet some scholars argue that Barth subtly undermines created reality by relating it so closely to the eternal, pre-temporal decree of election. I challenge these claims by examining the light and shadow sides of creation in _CD III_ in view of Barth's doctrine of reconciliation. I argue that Barth understands the light and shadow sides of creation from within the twofold state of Christ in humiliation and exaltation, such that creation itself exists within the historical, atoning work of Christ. He increasingly views the light side of creation through the exaltation of the Son of Man, while he frames the shadow side in the context of God's subjection of himself to _das Nichtige_. Barth does not evacuate creation into eternity, but finds that creation exists within the twofold state of God the Son in history.

A20-311
Kierkegaard, Religion, and Culture Unit
Theme: _Kierkegaard and the Press, Then and Now_
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Nigel Hatton, University of California, Merced, Presiding

This session addresses Kierkegaard’s relationship to newspapers and members of the press during his lifetime and his significance for analyzing various trends and forms of traditional and emerging media today. In our age social media, multimedia production, the digital turn, and corporate media consolidation have radically altered the ways in which societies and individuals receive and interact with journalism, news coverage, ideas, opinion, and critical discourse. How did Kierkegaard negotiate his relationship with the press, journalism and critical discourse in the 19th century? How do Kierkegaard’s methods, approaches and ideas apply to the new sets of relations, platforms and technologies in the 20th and 21st centuries? The new pressures on journalism and the journalists, and the new venues for the expression of public opinion, have implications and consequences that call for a reconsideration of Kierkegaard and his unique relationship to and commentary on newspapers and the press.

- Tekoa Robinson, Villanova University

_Kierkegaard, Social Media, and Despair_

Screen activities have been linked with higher levels of depression/suicide. This paper considers how engagement with technological media, most especially what Nicholas Carr terms our “intellectual tools,” are reshaping our brains by the specific ethic implicit in the medium itself. It argues that the “intellectual technological ethic” at work in the Internet,
and especially in social media, is reflective of the despair in defiance and the despair in weakness as explored in *Sickness Unto Death* and encourages individuals to engage in leveling practices as described by Kierkegaard in *Two Ages*. It concludes that using rhetorical strategies similar to the ones employed by Victor Eremita in *Either/Or* and by Kierkegaard in *The Moment* may aid people in becoming conscious of their current mode of existence and thus proposes ironically employing technology for depicting the current forms of despair at work in technological media by invoking the edifying themes of misery and guilt.

- Joseph Westfall, University of Houston, Downtown

*Authorship and Accountability: Kierkegaard and Anonymity in the Press*

In this paper, I examine Kierkegaard’s first extended foray into the press: a heated exchange with liberal reformer Orla Lehmann over freedom of the press in Denmark. Although both men contributed their articles anonymously until the very end, Kierkegaard’s criticism is largely of Lehmann’s anonymity—not of his views on press freedom. I argue that this teaches us much about Kierkegaard’s views on both anonymity and the press, including his understanding of when anonymity (or pseudonymity) is appropriate and when it is not. I then suggest some ways in which his views remain applicable today, especially with regard to anonymity in the online press and social media, and anonymous conspiracy movements like QAnon.

- John Haman, University of Dubuque

*Kierkegaard, Lippmann, and the Phantom Public in a Digital Age*

This paper approaches the philosophy of Søren Kierkegaard through the perspective of the field of media studies where he is largely ignored. This paper argues against this oversight by placing Kierkegaard into dialogue with Walter Lippmann, one of the most prominent media theorists in the 20th century, within the contexts of public opinion, the press, new media, and democratic citizenship.

**Business Meeting**

Lee Barrett, Lancaster Theological Seminary, Presiding
Jennifer Veninga, Saint Edward's University, Presiding

**A20-312**

**Liberation Theologies Unit**

Theme: *Honoring the Life and Work of Dr. Paul Farmer, MD*

Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Nixon Cleophat, Bloomfield College, Presiding

The untimely death of Dr. Paul Farmer in February 2022 marked the passing of a tremendously charismatic activist, advocate, and medical anthropologist. Farmer co-founded the global health
justice group Partners in Health during the mid-1980s, and by doing so helped change the terms of debate about health care in areas of poverty. Why Farmer's work is most significant is in his use of liberation theology in framing and explaining the ethos of radical health care equity. This roundtable will bring together religious studies scholars, theologians, and health care activists to pay tribute to Farmer's relevance to religious studies, religious ethics, and theology.

Panelists

Alison Lutz, Church Divinity School of the Pacific
Beth Eddy, Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Rachel Sophia Baard, Union Presbyterian Seminary

Responding

Claudio Carvalhaes, Union Theological Seminary

A20-338
Mahabharata and Classical Hinduism Seminar
Theme: Jewels, Jnana, and Justice: Soteriological Methods in the Mahabharata
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Bruce M. Sullivan, Northern Arizona University, Presiding

This session contains three papers. The first examines two instances of the sodasarajakiya, 16 stories of kings, told to Yudhisthira, and argues for closer attention to their narrative context. On the basis of recent work on upakhyanas, the author offers that what might be dismissed as mere interpolation in fact serves The Mahabharata's broader ethical and soteriological concerns. The second challenges the de regueur dichotomization of Brahmanical and sramana traditions in scholarship, and offers as counterpoint an analysis of Samkhya discourse in The Mahabharata. The third studies the iconic showdown between Asvatthaman and Arjuna at the end of the war, through the metaphor of competing jewels. It queries whether there aren't sectarian messages embedded in the scene, with Asvatthaman the bejewelled votary of Siva, and Arjuna that of Visnu.

• Surit Mishra, Villanova University

Cosmic Order and Human Action in the Mahābhārata

Two versions of the Šoḍaśarājakīya, The Tale of Sixteen Kings, occur in the Mahābhārata (Bk. 7, App. 1, no. 8 and 12.29.16–128). Hiltebeitel (1976) briefly analyzes the episode for trifunctional elements and Reich (2012) argues that the two versions trace two trajectories of textualization; as evidence, she notes that the former is vastly interpolated. But more can be said about it than these text-historical details. Drawing on recent work on the upākhyaṇas (Adluri and Bagchee 2016), this paper argues that the appended Šoḍaśarājakīya offers a meditation upon ethical concerns that are central to the Mahābhārata as a whole: namely, the futility of prioritizing kāma and artha in the face of mortality; and performing one’s svadharma as a contribution to the sacrificial-
cosmological order and ultimately as a preparation for soteriological realization. Thus, though seemingly a superficial interpolation, the Ṣoḍaśarājakīya fits intimately into the literary-philosophical vision of the epic.

- Nathan McGovern, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater

**Situating the Mahābhārata and Its “Proto-Sāṃkhya” Teachings within the Context of a Brahmanical Reaction to the Śramaṇic Worldview**

Recent scholarship on the Mahābhārata has increasingly sought to frame it as a response to the threat to Brahmanism posed by foreign invasions and rulers, including Aśoka Maurya, who patronized “non-Brahmanical” groups such as the Buddhists. While these existing readings of the epic have advanced our understanding of it by situating it in a firm historical context, they continue to rest on a problematic assumption of a fundamental dichotomy between Brahmanical and śramaṇic traditions. The Mahābhārata, with its “proto-Sāṃkhya” teachings, was the *magnum opus* of a project of reaction to śramaṇic intellectual currents that had arisen from within Brahmanism.

- Shubha Pathak, American University

**The Gemhearted Hero and His Gemheaded Foe: A Materiophilosophical Method for Interpreting the Mahābhārata’s Aversion of Universal Catastrophe through Arjuna’s Vaiṣṇava Nivṛtti and Aśvatthāman’s Śaiva Pravṛtti**

What could have been the most memorable Mahābhārata crisis does not actually occur. Thanks to divine sages Nārada and Vyāsa, Aśvatthāman (a vessel for Śiva as destructive time) and Arjuna (cousin to and devotee of Viṣṇu manifestation Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva) drop their missile duel before conflagrating the cosmos, and initiate an event chain eventuating in the epic’s recounting to the patron of the snake sacrifice occasioning the poem—Parikṣit’s son, Janamejaya. Yet, the Mahābhārata maintains its intersectarian polemics by tendentiously contrasting the snake gem added metaphorically to Arjuna’s heart and the snaky gem subtracted literally from Aśvatthāman’s head. This study, adopting a materiophilosophical approach, distinguishes those gemstones’ respective representations of Arjuna’s affection for Viṣṇu (culminating in otherworldliness [*nivṛtti*] Arjuna attains upon being released from reincarnation) and Aśvatthāman’s unawareness of anything in Śiva’s vicinity (ensuing through Aśvatthāman’s thisworldliness [*pravṛtti*], effected as he wretchedly wanders the earth and is reborn in nonheavenly realms).

**Business Meeting**

Arti Dhand, University of Toronto, Presiding

A20-313

Books under Discussion

**Middle Eastern Christianity Unit**

Theme: Book Review Panel Discussion of Mitri Raheb's *The Politics of Persecution: Middle*
Eastern Christians in an Age of Empire (Baylor University Press, 2021)
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Deanna Womack, Emory University, Presiding

A book review panel of The Politics of Persecution: Middle Eastern Christians in an Age of Empire by Mitri Raheb. This book examines and interrogates the uses and abuses of the dominant portrayals of Middle Eastern Christians as a homogenous, helpless group ever at the mercy of their Muslim enemies. The book offers a much needed critical revision casting the history of Middle Eastern Christians not so much as one of persecution but as one of resilience.

Panelists
Gary Burge, Calvin Theological Seminary
Atalia Omer, University of Notre Dame
Elizabeth Prodromou, Tufts University
Candace Lukasik, Washington University, Saint Louis
Mourad Takawi, University of the Incarnate Word

Responding
Mitri Raheb, Dar al-Kalima University

A20-339
New Directions in the Study of Religion, Monsters, and the Monstrous Seminar
Theme: Latinx Shapeshifters, Popular Ghosts, and the Globalized West: Pushing Disciplinary Boundaries
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Kelly Murphy, Central Michigan University, Presiding

This panel focuses on the abstract idea of cosmology centered around the assumption of the unreality of monsters within the academic cosmos. Each of the three studies explores the study of monsters and related assumptions, and invites new methodological engagement ranging from phenomenological, philosophical, to monster theory. The presenters examine a range of texts that feature alien encounters, shapeshifting humans, studies of Wendigo, Leviathan, and more. These papers contribute to the many yet unrealized possibilities for the academic study of religion if scholars learn to take the idea of monster seriously.

- James W. Perkinson, Ecumenical Theological Seminary

Dueling Monsters: What Mythic Monstrousness Can Reveal About Globalized Western Culture

This paper unfolds as a thought experiment in monster theory. What if the lack of a vibrant tradition of monster mythology is symptomatic of a globalizing Western culture aggrandizing itself into quite real monstrousness—and thereby precipitating monstrous reciprocation on the part of wild nature (hurricanes, fires, floods, etc.)—but increasingly
unable to respond to its own hyperinflation because, after all, “monsters don’t really exist”? The paper will make use Engler’s interpretive approaches to monster theory along with Long’s work with Otto’s mysterium tremendum et fascinans, Deloria’s writing about land-taboos, Kimmerer’s engagement with Windigo, and Day’s probing of Leviathan to outline the possibility that monsters in myths inculcate terror as limitation. The piece will argue that the stakes in such a recognition is not primarily the potency of the monster-myth itself, but rather the broader eco-cultural lifestyle-context on which it rests and to which the monster-figure (obliquely) points.

- Stefan Sanchez, Rice University

*On Humanity, Nature, and Shapeshifting*

This paper uses the underexamined phenomenon of metamorphosis, or human transformation into an animal, otherwise known as shapeshifting, to examine the role of monstrosizing in determining, as well as transgressing human comfort and identity. The paper seeks to show the relationship between naturalized dichotomies such as human-animal and god-world, as well as how they are transgressed by the experience of and fascination with metamorphosis in human history and culture. Written accounts of metamorphosis both in folklore and by experiencers will be used to build an understanding of the phenomenon, as well as the identity conditions which it modifies and transgresses. Following this will be an examination of philosophical and historical implications of these transgressions. Finally, the paper will offer suggested changes to methodology and outlook in studying the monstrous, as well as the humanities in a more general sense.

- Richard McCarty, Mercyhurst University

*The Phenomenological Reality of Monsters and their Cosmological and Ethical Implications*

This paper proposes that by deploying a phenomenological methodology to the study of religion and monsters, it is possible to suspend judgement about whether or not monsters actually exist, and to better explore how monster phenomena and narratives present themselves to us (by given believers, experiencers, and communities). The phenomenological method allows scholars of religion to navigate the representational and interpretational approaches to monster studies, with an open invitation to treat monster narratives as real, so that scholars of religion can offer accounts of how these narratives and experiences shape religious frameworks (in terms of cosmologies and concepts of ultimate reality), as well as moral concepts (in terms of how monster narratives and experiences shape what people value in the here and now, and why).

**Business Meeting**

Natasha Mikles, Texas State University, Presiding
New Religious Movements Unit

Theme: New religious movements and entheogens
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Donald Westbrook, San José State University, Presiding

This panel examines the intersection of new religious movements and entheogens. Among other things, the papers presented here consider the phenomenological and legal dimensions of using psychedelic drugs for religious purposes.

- Laurie A. Cozad, Merrimack College

*High on God*

The International Cannabis Church is another cannabis contender in a long line of cannabis churches, including but not limited to, the Church of the Universe, the Church of Cognizance, The Hawai'i Cannabis Ministry, and Temple 420. When I embarked on examining these churches, I was guided by J.Z. Smith's directive to make unorthodox religions "intelligible". (Smith, 1993) This necessitates that if a group claims to be religious, we have a professional obligation to interpret them within a religious framework. What is most interesting to me as we look at Cannabis Churches are the ways in which these groups are evolving, how best to explore the core motivations of their members, how these churches impact the ways in which we understand what constitutes religion; and the means by which to advocate for them most effectively if their religious practices land them in jail.

- Christopher Senn, Rice University

*In Acidum Veritas: Timothy Leary as Entheogenic Prophet*

For thousands of years, humanity has experienced chemically induced altered states of consciousness and understood their encounters according to their own local mythologies. During the twentieth century, advances in chemistry made it possible to isolate the psychoactive compounds in many of these traditional entheogens and mass produce them. Timothy Leary was aware of many of these traditions and used them to authorize himself as a prophet within an imagined perennialist lineage.

This paper explores how Leary conceived of himself as a modern-day prophet and utilized the lens of the mythologies prevalent in his own contemporary Western culture to spread a spiritual message. Furthermore, it examines how Leary believed that his own eight-circuit model of consciousness could be used to understand the mystical experiences that have been had by mystics throughout history.

- Dusty Hoesly, University of California, Santa Barbara

*The Universal Life Church and the Growth of Cannabis Churches: Psychedelic*
**Spirituality, Spiritual Entrepreneurship, and the Failure of Religious Freedom in America**

The 1960s onward has been a period of fertile growth for spiritual entrepreneurs who have created churches centered on the religious use of cannabis and other psychedelic substances. These ministers and their congregants claim that sacramental use of psychedelics brings them closer to the divine, and they employ a “freedom of religion defense” when prosecuted for drug crimes. While several scholars have documented the rise of psychedelic churches over the past sixty years, none has examined the role of the Universal Life Church (ULC) and its relationship to these emergent religions. The ULC has chartered dozens of cannabis churches, and many people have become ULC ministers to establish legally-defensible grounds for the religious use of cannabis. Using archival research, I examine the stories of these ULC cannabis churches, their ministers, and legal cases. I argue that such cases reveal the limits of religious freedom for minority religions.

- Brad Stoddard, McDaniel College

**What's Drugs Got to do With it? Entheogenic Communities and the Law**

This paper explores entheogenic communities in the United States, paying particular attention to the attorneys and church leaders who create these communities by replicating the few communities that American courts have already sanctioned.

**Business Meeting**

Joseph Laycock, Texas State University, Presiding
Jeremy Rapport, College of Wooster, Presiding

**A20-315**
**North American Religions Unit**
Theme: **On and Beyond Positionality: A Conversation**
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Laura S. Levitt, Temple University, Presiding

Religious studies scholars have long been concerned with the insider/outsider question, setting up a binary that disqualifies or disavows those with open ties to their interlocutors. This conversation proposes that all scholars approach their work through what Donna Haraway terms limited locations and situated knowledges. We affirm that it is vital to discuss the structural implications of how we are positioned and how we position ourselves within the broader power dynamics of the field, the academy, and the culture of the US. This roundtable will propose models for thinking about and beyond positionality--moving from the individual to the collective and the personal to the structural.

**Panelists**

Rachel Lindsey, Saint Louis University
On the occasion of the publication of the Cambridge Companion to Christianity and the Environment this panel offers contributions by established and emergent scholars on one of the determinative existential issues of our time. Religion, and particularly Christianity, has played, and continues to play, a determinative role in shaping the human-nature relationship. Christianity has variously understood the environment as a gift to nurture and steward, as a book of revelation disclosing the divine mind, as a wild garden in need of cultivation and betterment, and as a resource for the creation of a new Eden. These ideas have been equally characterised as the source of our environmental crisis, and as the way out of it. Both the new volume and the panel bring together the work of leading international scholars on the subject from a diversity of fields to offer a comprehensive and systematic reflection on the complex relationship between the legacy of European Christianity and the environment that moves beyond disciplinary boundaries. On the occasion of its publication, both contributors and respondents will consider this volume and the wider topic of European Christianity and the Environment.

Panelists

Jörg Lauster, University of Munich
Jacob Sherman, California Institute of Integral Studies
Willemien Otten, University of Chicago

Responding

Lisa Sideris, University of California, Santa Barbara
The authors discuss how they use psychoanalytic theory to confront political and social realities of racism and white supremacy, and its implications for praxis: On the one hand, using psychoanalysis in dialogue with postcolonial and antiracist theory, as women of color use religious practices for the sake of healing and empowerment; and on the other hand, reading conscious and unconscious motivations that draw people through religious practices to believe and embody conservative right-wing messaging, and when and how to counter such messaging through dialogue.

Panelists

Pamela Cooper-White, Union Theological Seminary
Phillis Isabella Sheppard, Vanderbilt University

A20-301
Sessions Honoring AAR Award Winners
Public Understanding of Religion Committee
Theme: 2022 Martin E. Marty Award for the Public Understanding of Religion
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Evan Berry, Arizona State University, Presiding

This session will celebrate the work of the 2022 Marty Award recipient. The panel of distinguished speakers will discuss the following themes:

• The power of social media to carry scholarly voices into difference spaces
• The relationship between academic writing and social media
• The history of "religion twitter" and growth of digital public scholarship
• Curation, authenticity, and humanity as guiding concepts

Panelists

Anthea Butler, University of Pennsylvania

A20-318
Quaker Studies Unit
Theme: Quakers in Asia and Africa
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Laurel D. Kearns, Drew University, Presiding

This session will continue the examination of the relationship between Quakers and communities in the global south, particularly Asia and Africa. By looking through a critical and a constructive lens, these papers and responses will take both a historical and a forward aiming vision in order to better understand the depth and breadth of Quakerism.

• Oscar Lugusa Malande, Friends Theological College
Quakerism and African People: Examining the influence of Quakerism on African Religion

Quakerism and African religion have continued to impact the formation of African Christians' Quaker life. Either way, the two religions continue to inform and influence how African Quaker Christians live and practice their faith. In this context, the area of research in this writing is to examine the continuities of Quakerism exhibited in African religion among African Christian Quakers. The Maragolis, as one of the earliest African recipients of Quakerism, will be used as the case study. Some of the areas of study will focus on religious leadership, membership into a religious community, place of worship, and the rites of passage. A phenomenological method of studying religion will be used in this study, coupled with interviews, personal experiences serving among Maragoli Friends in Kenya, and reference to available scholarly materials related to Quakerism and African religion.

- Andrew Taylor, College of St. Scholastica

Toward A Postcolonial Revaluation of Liberal Quaker Missions in China

Although Friends have long been viewed as champions of the marginalized, Quakers and historians of Quakerism have recently revalued the Society’s complicity in a variety of imperialist endeavors. This paper shows how Quaker missionaries to China from across the religious spectrum yoked Quakerism to discourses of scientific and moral progress in order to position Quakerism as a harbinger of western civilization. This paper uses Chinese-language archives and sources to show how Quaker missionaries presented Quakerism to the Chinese public and how that message was received at evangelical missions in Liuhe, Jiangsu Province, and at more liberal missions in Sichuan Province. The essay concludes by showing the current perception of Friends in Chinese academia and popular culture, both of which have forgotten the presence of Quaker missionaries and take the Quakers as exemplars of human rights, to illustrate the subtlety by which dominant powers are able to narrativize themselves as liberatory.

Responding

Gale Kenny, Barnard College

Business Meeting

Jennifer Buck, Azusa Pacific University, Presiding
David Harrington Watt, Haverford College, Presiding

A20-319
Books under Discussion
Religion and Food Unit
Theme: Author Meets Readers: Psyche A. Williams-Forson's Eating While Black: Food Shaming and Race in America (University of North Carolina Press, 2022)
Psyche A. Williams-Forson’s *Eating While Black: Food Shaming and Race in America* focuses on the intersections of race and racism, food culture, nutrition and science, media, and socioeconomic factors within African American foodways. This session asks how religion and theology scholars can read and respond to her work. Williams-Forson's previous book, *Building Houses out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, & Power*, has become one of the most important texts in the study of African American foodways. How will *Eating While Black* add to the conversation? Panelists include: Sakena De Young-Scaggs, theologian, philosopher, and Afrofuturist; Derek Hicks, historian and scholar of American culture, politics, and race; and Scott Alves Barton, food studies scholar, chef, and public educator. Psyche A. Williams-Forson responds.

**Panelists**

Sakena Young-Scaggs, Stanford University  
Derek Hicks, Wake Forest University  
Scott Barton, New York University

**Responding**

Psyche Williams-Forson, University of Maryland

**A20-320**  
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe  
**Religion and the Social Sciences Unit**  
Theme: *Race and Religion: Engaging Trauma, Inequality, and Catastrophe*  
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)  
Roger Baumann, Hope College, Presiding

How do intersections of race and religion shape engagement with trauma, death, structural inequality, and catastrophe? Drawing on social science methods and cultural analysis, this panel examines the impact of evangelical/conservative discourses and QAnon conspiracies on white Christian ideas of catastrophe; how Black Millennials and Gen Z are critiquing spiritual trauma tied to the Black Church through digital spaces; how race, gender, and religion inform responses to death and dying; and finally, how regional location impacts the relationship between religion and racial segregation. In doing so, this panel illuminates the relationship between religion and various forms of trauma, inequality, and catastrophe. It also reveals how race (along with class, gender, region, and age) shape engagement with these dynamics. Taking seriously issues of positionality and power, this panel further asks us to consider what may be currently overlooked by scholars of religion and how social-cultural approaches can offer new perspectives.

- John Sheridan, University of Iowa
Hutterites and the Catastrophic New World Order

The Hutterites are an Anabaptist communal group in North America. The majority of Hutterites live agrarian lives in colonies numbering around 100 members. Hutterites have subsisted for almost 500 years, partly because of their strict cultural ties and their ability to adapt to the constantly changing outer sociocultural landscape. Hutterite socioreligious worlds appear to be counter to “mainstream” U.S. society in significant ways. For instance, scholars of Hutterites have argued that Hutterites value selflessness over selfishness, community over the individual, cooperation over competition, minimalism over consumerism, simplicity and humility over vanity, the religious over the secular, and conservatism over progressivism. However, Hutterite responses to global climate change and to the COVID-19 pandemic, are demonstrative of influences from evangelical and conservative discourses. This paper explores how some Hutterites and Hutterite colonies are responding to notions of the New World Order and how this is shaping and reshaping Hutterite identities.

- Indhira Udofia, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Spits, Skits, and Spaces: The Role of Digital Presence and Social Media in Conceptualizing Spiritual Trauma in the Black Church

This paper is a portion of a larger project proposal that explores the impact of religious/spiritual trauma in Black churches to Black Millennials and Gen Z and to address the lack of empirical research pertaining to religious/spiritual trauma within Black churches. In this piece of work, I seek to examine the ways in which ‘viral’ church moments and comedy has become the new way to document trends and theorizing about the role of religious violence in the Black Church and beyond.

- Andrea Henderson, University of South Carolina
  Oneya Okuwobi, Ohio State University
  Brenton Kalinowski, Rice University

The Impact of Race, Gender, and Religious Identities on How Science and Religion Are Used to Understand Death and Dying

People tend to view death, their own and that of others, based on dominant cultural values, but particularly religion. Despite this, empirical work on the relationship between religion and death and dying have narrowly focused on the beliefs in an afterlife and coping. In this study, we draw on a nationally representative survey from the Religion, Science and Body Project to examine the association between religious involvement – i.e., organizational and nonorganizational religious involvement – and views of death and dying (particularly how science and religion are utilized to understand death and dying). We also examine if this relationship varies by race-ethnicity and gender. We find that religious coping, more so than religious attendance, is strongly associated with respondents’ views of death and dying, including the acceptable role of science relative to religion. These results have implications for the schema religious people draw on in their
understandings of death and dying.

- David Sikkink, University of Notre Dame
  Michael Emerson, University of Illinois, Chicago

Religion and Black/White Residential Segregation: How Religious and Regional Context Matters

Theories of religious tradition and residential segregation in the US have focused too strongly on the internal cultural traits of specific religious traditions, or the “closed community” thesis (Blanchard 2007), ignoring structural effects of religious fields as well as the complex relation of each religious tradition with public life and culture in particular regions. We argue that the dominant religion reinforces segregated interpersonal networks and generates a conservative orientation within the civic and political sphere that reinforces residential segregation. We find that mainline Protestantism is positively related to residential segregation in the North, where mainline Protestantism constituted the Protestant Establishment at key moments in U.S. segregation history, but negatively related to segregation in the South, where mainline Protestantism, as a minority religion, played a key role in the Civil Rights movement. Evangelical Protestantism is positively related to segregation in the South and negatively related to segregation in the North.

Business Meeting

Sara Williams, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Presiding
Rachel Schneider, Rice University, Presiding

A20-321
Religion in Southeast Asia Unit
Theme: Recent books in the study of religion in Southeast Asia
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Susanne Kerekes, Skidmore College, Presiding

This roundtable highlights recent books in the study of religion in Southeast Asia. Each participant will present on a monograph or edited collection published in the last two to three years that has made a meaningful contribution to the field, in non-English languages as well as in English. This session will not only spotlight notable new work but it will also consider emerging interests and what they suggest about where the academic study of Southeast Asian religions is going and should go. With scholarship on mainland and insular regions and on a wide range of religious traditions, this roundtable will demonstrate (and occasionally question) the value of considering this complex area as a coherent place.

Panelists

Trent Walker, Stanford University
Terenjit Sevea, University of Pennsylvania
Over the last decade, affect theories have moved from the whispered and the peripheral to the very center of the study of religion and theology. This session will be composed of 5-8 minute "lightning" talks from a variety of standpoints on the concept, theorist, or question that initially brought these presenters to affect theory. What is the inflection point, the illuminative labor that thinking about affect brings? The object of this session will be not just to return to some original impulses and questions, but to disaggregate: to counter the potential calcifying of "affect" into a single canonical block of ideas, theorists, or aesthetics and sensibilities. Approximately half of the session will be reserved for open conversation with presenters and attendees.

Panelists

Michal Beth Dinkler, Yale University
John McCormack, Aurora University
Jenna Supp-Montgomerie, University of Iowa
Max Dugan, University of Pennsylvania
Ali Noori, University of Pennsylvania
Candace Jordan, Princeton University

Business Meeting

Marvin Wickware, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, Presiding
In the 1990s there were several attempts to bring the atrocities of American Slavery and the Shoah or “catastrophe” in conversation with each other, most notably Laurence Mordekhai Thomas’ Vessels of Evil: American Slavery and the Holocaust (1993). It appears that another spate of attempts to compare the Holocaust and American Slavery are emerging, in both a written and visual format. We will host a roundtable of three scholars working in different contexts—a university, an institute, and a museum—that engages several of these recent works and more broadly investigates the bases, ethical implications, and fruitful avenues for a comparison between the Holocaust and American Slavery and their legacies.

**Panelists**

Benjamin Sax, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies  
Rebecca Carter-Chand, Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandell Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies  
Kate E. Temoney, Montclair State University

**A20-324**  
Religious Conversions Unit  
Theme: New Scholarship on the Politics of Conversion  
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)  
Marc Pugliese, Saint Leo University, Presiding

Attending to the political and often racialized nature of conversion in diverse contexts, this panel showcases fresh scholarship on conversion and deconversion. From examinations of the root narratives of ex-Mormons and Mormon leadership, to literary analysis of the comforting narratives of incarcerated people’s conversions that validate the current prison and immigration systems, these papers pay close attention to how talk about conversion is fraught with moral-political significance. Given the entanglement of power in the process of conversion and deconversion and in narratives surrounding such transformation, can conversion be a tool for advancing equity and justice? The panel also describes the kind of powerful, multifaceted self-transformation needed to work substantively and effectively towards racial justice.

- Oakley Hill, George Mason University

*The Intertextuality of Latter-day Saint Deconversion: Comparing the Moral-Politics of President Nelson and the Ex-Mormon Exodus*

The retention rates of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have dropped significantly in the Millennial generation. While the psychology and sociology literatures have contributed significantly to understanding the psychological and large-scale social mechanisms related to deconversion, they have also left its interpersonal and intergroup dimensions relatively unexplored. This paper contributes an intergroup, root narrative analysis of the Church and its former members’ moral-political discourse. The analysis identifies the semiotic structure of their moral-political discourse and finds the parties in a state of radical disagreement. Their distinct political values and conflicting moral
imperatives create a discursive trap wherein neither can pursue their moral interests without producing the other's grievance. Furthermore, this paper argues that deconversion becomes more likely in a state of radical disagreement since it constrains the religionists' interactive options while making their religious identity less attractive.

- Benjamin Hohman, Boston College

"Repenting for the Sin of Racism through Holistic Conversion"

Racism is often referred to as “America’s original sin.” Understood as a pervasive sin affecting all aspects of human persons, cultures, and institutions, I argue that any complete response must include a differentiated account of conversion. In this presentation, I will argue that Bernard Lonergan and Robert Doran's accounts of the four vectors of conversion provides a valuable hermeneutic for reading a number of key texts related to the struggle for racial justice and a heuristic for shaping contemporary pedagogical and political interventions. I develop this thesis in relation especially in relation to The New Jim Crow and 13th (intellectual conversion), The Fire Next Time (psychic conversion), the conversion of white-nationalist Derek Black (moral conversion, and the Autobiography of Malcolm X (religious conversion). In the final section, I will describe how I have effectively implemented this framework in my own teaching and pedagogy.

- Laura Simpson, Villanova University

Conversion and Carcerality

This paper engages literary analysis and cultural theory to examine the fragile construction of citizenship through the disciplinary structures of the U.S. prison and immigration systems, with attention to how narratives of innocence are invoked through the rhetoric of these overlapping institutions. It interrogates the ways in which the carceral logics underlying systems of detention and incarceration come to be presented as essential, and even compassionate, to those existing under their disciplinary “care.” This presentation relies on an uncritical acceptance of the U.S. prison and immigration systems as machineries of conversion that engage in a self-legitimizing cycle through appeals to redemptive violence.

Business Meeting

Edith Szanto, University of Alabama, Presiding
Eliza Kent, Skidmore College, Presiding

A20-325
Sacred Texts and Ethics Unit
Theme: Scripture, Everyday Ethics and Power: A Comparative Ethnographic Perspective
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Caroline Tee, University of Chester, Presiding
This roundtable discussion will explore how cultural and religious power manifests itself through the social life of sacred texts. Taking a Foucauldian perspective on power, it recognises that, ‘power is everywhere […] because it comes from everywhere’ (Foucault 1998). The negotiation of power is therefore fluid and unstable and subject to continual change, and within this process, the concept of scriptural authority is laden with emergent and diverse possibilities. Panellists bring ethnographic experience in the study of Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, non-religion, and astrology, and will contribute to a comparative discussion of the social lives of sacred texts, and their ethical dimensions, across different religious and non-religious communities.

Panelists

Joseph Blankholm, University of California, Santa Barbara
Omri Elisha, City University of New York
Darcie Price-Wallace, Northwestern University
Amin El-Yousfi, University of Chester
Lea Taragin-Zeller, University of Cambridge

Responding

James Bielo, Miami University, Ohio

Business Meeting

Tyler Atkinson, Bethany College, Presiding
Elizabeth Goldstein, Gonzaga University, Presiding

A20-326
Scriptural Reasoning Unit

Theme: Reading Plague: Disease and Distancing in the Abrahamic Traditions
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Ashleigh Elser, Hampden-Sydney College, Presiding

This session will introduce the practice of Scriptural Reasoning (SR), an interfaith study practice that gathers people of different faiths around short scriptural texts from the three Abrahamic traditions. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this year our SR session will consider scriptural texts that address the themes of plague, disease, and social distancing. Guided by three brief reflections on our shared texts, we invite participants to consider how these scriptural texts might shed light on the many material, social, and political challenges that have marked this global pandemic.

Panelists

Susannah Ticciati, King's College London
Daniel Weiss, University of Cambridge
Faiza Masood, Princeton University
Business Meeting

Laurie Zoloth, University of Chicago, Presiding

A20-327
Books under Discussion
Secularism and Secularity Unit and Sociology of Religion Unit
Theme: Secular Ambivalence and Secular Misfits: A Roundtable on Joseph Blankholm’s The Secular Paradox (New York University Press, 2022)
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Rebecca Catto, Kent State University, Presiding

In this roundtable, scholars of secularism from several disciplines respond to Joseph Blankholm’s The Secular Paradox: On the Religiosity of the Not Religious (2022), an ethnography of secular activists and organized nonbelievers in the United States. Blankholm merges the critique of secularism, which has largely taken place in anthropology, and the study of secular people, which is largely in sociology. Blankholm argues that, despite their desire to avoid religion, nonbelievers often seem religious because Christianity influences the culture around them so deeply. The book also explores how very secular people are ambivalent toward belief, community, ritual, conversion, and tradition. Blankholm highlights the experiences of “secular misfits,” such as women, people of color, and people who have left non-Christian religions, who do not conform to normative conceptions of secularism in the U.S. The book draws from and is a major contribution to sociology, anthropology, religious studies, secular studies, and continental philosophy.

Panelists

Jacqui Frost, Purdue University
Janet R. Jakobsen, Barnard College
Abou Farman, New School
Bradley Onishi, Skidmore College
Eric Stephen, Harvard University

A20-328
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
South Asian Religions Unit
Theme: Teaching South Asian Islam(s)
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Ayesha Irani, University of Massachusetts, Boston, Presiding

“How do we teach South Asia Islam(s)?” South Asian Islam(s) often receives relatively less attention in introductory Islam courses and relatively more emphasis on historical periods, dynasties, texts, and philological approaches in different types of South Asian Islam courses. Panelists in this roundtable will present and discuss specific pedagogical approaches and exercises shaped by our different teaching contexts that bring together the vernacular and
philological, among other approaches, to address South Asian Islam(s) specifically and enable it to speak back to Islamic studies and religious studies. We will also address issues of subjectivity and positionality in our pedagogical methods. The roundtable aims to open teaching-oriented conversations with scholars of Islam who may teach “Islam in South Asia,” scholars of other South Asian religions who teach Islam in “South Asian Religions” survey courses and scholars seeking to diversify their “Introduction to Islam” courses.

Panelists

Ali Altaf Mian, University of Florida
Hinasahar Muneeruddin, University of North Carolina
Jennifer Ortegren, Middlebury College
Anand Taneja, Vanderbilt University
Teena Purohit, Boston University
Karen Ruffle, University of Toronto

A20-302
Professional Development
Status of LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession Committee
Theme: Recognizing and Responding to Trans Antagonism: Intersectional Strategizing towards Care
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Benae Beamon, Bucknell University, Presiding

This roundtable session will explore the complex and growing issue of trans antagonism. Through the contributions of several panelists, we discuss the function of cissexism as it impacts the field of religion/religious studies, the current political landscape, as well as its impact on the ability to teach about privilege and equity. This session highlights the investments of this committee in supporting conversations that acknowledge the intersectional realities of systemic oppression. Furthermore, this roundtable session hopes to contemplate culpability and learn from responses inspired by personal experiences, theoretical engagements, and a robust discussion to follow upon which we might expand in community.

Panelists

Thelathia Young, Bucknell University

A20-303
Professional Development
Student Lounge Roundtable
Theme: Quelling the Qualms of Qualifying Exams
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Sabina Ali, Indiana University, Presiding

Many doctoral programs require students in humanities fields such as religious studies, theology, and history to pass a set of qualifying examinations (often written and oral) before allowing
students to begin the dissertation writing process. This roundtable is intended to help students develop strategies for successfully completing the qualifying examination process. These include reading list construction, reading and study strategies, note-taking options, and question formulation. Additionally, the workshop encourages students to make the most of the study process. Ideally, the qualifying examination process is an important step in doctoral student professionalization. Students gain mastery over disciplinary and sub-disciplinary questions, histories, debates, and frontiers. This process puts students in a strong position to develop their dissertation project in conversation with live or under-explored scholarly questions. Lastly, the qualifying exam process can be a time to develop syllabi. Students of any level are welcome to attend and do not need to have prepared any materials.

Panelists

Brian Hillman, Indiana University

A20-329
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Teaching Religion Unit and Transformative Scholarship and Pedagogy Unit
Theme: Democratic Deliberation in Religious Studies/Theology Classrooms
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Elizabeth Gish, Kettering Foundation, Presiding

Deliberative pedagogy is successfully used across a range of fields including in political science, communications, gender studies, and science classrooms. While its use in religious studies and theological classrooms is in the early stages, the presenters on this panel have had success both teaching with it, and in the case of our student panelist, being in several different classes where it was used. This panel proposes a series of five brief presentations on the use of democratic deliberation in the contexts of both undergraduate religious studies and graduate theological studies classrooms, followed by remarks from a respondent, and then an open discussion on the implications of this pedagogy for helping students to come to a deeper understanding of how they might work through religious and political differences. Panelists will provide sample teaching materials and engage the audience in considering applications of this technique in their own contexts.

Panelists

Elizabeth W. Corrie, Emory University
Jasmine Johnson, Emory University
Ian Curran, Georgia Gwinnett College
Amy Valdez Barker, Emory University

Responding

Callid Keefe-Perry, Boston College
Business Meeting

Laura Stivers, Dominican University of California, Presiding
Michael Fisher, San José State University, Presiding

A20-330
Books under Discussion
Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Unit
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Michele Watkins, University of San Diego, Presiding

Panelists come together to engage McGregor's fascinating text wherein he argues that "the Kingdom of God—the reign of God over all human affairs via God’s manifestations in love, power, and justice—can be fragmentarily achieved through a form of religious socialism that creatively integrates the early Tillich’s socialist thinking with later insights throughout Tillich’s theological career and with contemporary developments in just peacemaking. The resulting religious socialism is defined by economic justice and a recognition of the sacred reality in all human endeavors."

Responding
Kirk MacGregor, McPherson College

Reviewers
Kristin Johnston Largen, Wartburg Theological Seminary

Business Meeting

Bryan Wagoner, Davis & Elkins College, Presiding

A20-331
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Women of Color Scholarship, Teaching, and Activism Unit
Theme: Transcending and Transforming Catastrophes: Women of Color and Strategies for Survival
Sunday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Sailaja Krishnamurti, Queen’s University, Kingston, Presiding

This roundtable panel explores the notion of catastrophe, in connection with the AAR annual theme of religion and catastrophe. As we consider the ongoing and often ‘catastrophic’ intersectional vulnerabilities that distinctly impact women of color, how do we imagine rest and resilience as strategies for transcending and ultimately transforming catastrophic realities? What
are the gifts found in catastrophe? What resources do women of color use to celebrate catastrophe as an opportunity for new beginnings and imagining/creating new futures, particularly in light of the prospect of catastrophic climate change? How do political catastrophes invite women of color, who tend to be disproportionately affected by changes in legislation, to engage with public theology and religion? What models of activism, spirituality, and religious practice help us to mitigate such catastrophes?

Panelists

Oluwatomisin Oredein, Brite Divinity School
Shazetta Thompson-Hill, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School
Hsiao-Lan Hu, University of Detroit Mercy
Lorena Parrish, Wesley Theological Seminary
Nadia Hasan, National Council of Canadian Muslims

Business Meeting

Deborah Rogers, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School, Presiding

A20-332
Books under Discussion
Yogācāra Studies Unit
Theme: Sonam Kachru’s Other Lives (Columbia University Press, 2021): A Roundtable Session
Sunday, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM (In Person)
Davey Tomlinson, Villanova University, Presiding

Sonam Kachru’s recent book, Other Lives: Mind and World in Indian Buddhism (Columbia University Press, 2021), revisions the study of Buddhist philosophy through a sustained engagement with the thought of Vasubandhu. Kachru’s approach takes seriously the profound philosophical stakes of Buddhist cosmology and theories of karma in the course of giving a novel account of mind and world in Vasubandhu’s work. Other Lives challenges us to change the way we approach Buddhist philosophy, within the Yogācāra tradition and beyond. This roundtable session will offer critical and constructive engagements with Kachru’s work, together with a response from the author.

Panelists

Natalie Gummer, Beloit College
Roy Tzohar, Tel-Aviv University
Karin Meyers, Mangalam Research Center
Bryce Huebner, Georgetown University
Emily Lawson, University of British Columbia

Responding
Sonam Kachru, University of Virginia

**Reviewers**

Gereon Kopf, Luther College

**A20-341**

Tours

Tours

Theme: **Historic Haunted Denver Tour**

Sunday, 3:00 PM-5:00 PM (In Person)

Venture into the heart of one of Denver’s oldest neighborhoods—and hear many of the city’s spookiest ghost stories as you visit its supposedly haunted landmarks—on this small-group walking tour. You’ll explore the historical Capitol Hill neighborhood, where you can see highlights like Titanic survivor Molly Brown’s house, creepy hotels, apartment blocks, and more.

Cost: $35

**A20-342**

Books under Discussion

**Chinese Christianities Unit and Ethnic Chinese Biblical Colloquium**

Theme: **The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in China (2021)**

Sunday, 4:00 PM-6:30 PM (In Person)

Khiok-Khng (K.K.) Yeo, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Presiding

Kevin Chau, University of the Free State, Presiding

This is a joint session (AAR Chinese Christianities Unit and SBL Ethnic Chinese Biblical Colloquium) for a book panel on The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in China (New York: OUP, 2021), reexamining the relationship between the Bible and China. The roundtable session offers the four-fold paradigm of Chinese Bible’s translation, expression, interpretation, and reception, and aims: 1) to have a constructive dialogue on the ways the Bible can be truth, beauty, goodness, justice, salvation, grace, and so forth to China and the world—as one holds the tension of both biblical and cultural hermeneutics; 2) to give examples of how Chinese Christianity reads the Bible in the context of world Christianity—thus protecting both world Christianity and Chinese Christianity from misrepresentations of each other.

- Khiok-Khng (K.K.) Yeo, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

  *Bible in China and the World: De-nationalism and Re-contextualization in the Bible’s Translation, Expression, Interpretation, and Reception*

  Racism, nationalism, and narrow localization are undercurrents of this *Handbook*, which attempts to usher in universal principles, de-nationalism, and re-contextualization in the
challenging yet fruitful work of the Bible’s translation, expression, interpretation, and reception. Without the vision of a catholic church (world Christianity), the Bible in China may risk a tendency toward lifeless (China cannot feed on itself) and idolatrous (the Bible needs cultures to express its meaning) conditions. The Handbook offers what may be the most cross-sectional, multi-faceted appraisal of the Bible’s penetration of a country’s cultural and social life over centuries. In so doing it offers a model and a point of comparison for world Christianity.

- Gang Song, University of Hong Kong

*The Basset-Su Chinese New Testament: Multilingual Border Crossing*

Multilingual friendship and border crossing are evident in the first Chinese New Testament translation by the missionary of the Paris Foreign Missions Society (M.E.P.), Jean Basset (1662–1707), in collaboration with Confucian convert Johan Su in early Qing China. This is the earliest extant Chinese Catholic New Testament that has direct influence not only on later Catholic translation but also nineteenth-century Protestant Bible translations. With in-depth analysis of this exemplary piece among early Catholic endeavors, the essay addresses a set of key concerns, including the translation principle and techniques regarding biblical and Chinese terminology and the interface of biblical translations and Chinese language and literature in a complex and changing world.

- Chloe Starr, Yale University

*The Bible in Modern Chinese Fiction and Literary Engagement*

This essay surveys existing scholarship on the appearance and use of the Bible in modern Chinese fiction—including chronological, biographical, and thematic studies—while offering its own approach to the Bible in fiction through the type and degree of literary engagement. This ranges from direct, sustained dialogue with the Bible—as in stories based on a particular biblical scene or pericope or the many semi-fictional Lives of Christ produced in the first half of the twentieth century—through to much more diffuse or passing references to biblical themes or allusions. It raises questions as to whether literary or thematic engagement is biblical or Chinese and its universal principles.

- Joseph Tse-Hei Lee, Pace University

*The Bible and Popular Christianity in Modern China*

This presentation overviews the cultural influence of the Bible in the mid-nineteenth century, argues that the liberating power of the Word was leveraged by peasant converts looking for new cosmologies and norms to change society. The twentieth century witnessed multiple levels of direct engagement with biblical texts, unmediated by foreign missionaries, among Chinese evangelists and congregants. These examples offer complex view of the symbiosis between Bible reading and conversion in Chinese popular
Christianity.

- Clover Xuesong Zhou, Journalist and Art Critic, Los Angeles

*Chinese Contemporary Christian Arts and Global Issues of Justice*

Exploring the burgeoning intersection of Chinese culture, contemporary art and Christianity in the world by introducing three paradigmatic Chinese contemporary Christian artists. This essay looks at contemporary artists in China who have come face to face with the global issues of justice, such as finding themselves at odds with the government beginning in the 1980s. The artists whose lives and art practices are unifying these diverse orientations are thus quintessential trailblazers. Pastor Feng Chun Lan’s award-winning photography series is an outlet for evangelism and worship; video artist Li Ran exhibits and instigates cultural dialogue about church experience and modern Chinese political history; and Gao Lei’s installations evoke subtle but potent biblical themes often with an eye toward Chinese or global issues of justice.

**Responding**

Dale T. Irvin, Georgetown University
Sarah Zhang, GETS Theological Seminary

**A20-400**

Professional Development - Employment

**Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Committee and Class, Religion, and Theology Unit**

Theme: **Pursuing Solidarity with Contingent Faculty Beyond the Pandemic**

Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Kerry Danner, Georgetown University, Presiding

This session considers practices through which institutions can move towards or amplify solidarity with contingent faculty members. Such solidarity was already an urgent need even before the pandemic, but the pandemic has stretched contingent faculty beyond the breaking point. The pandemic makes it much harder to ignore the unjust conditions of contingent labor — and opens up the possibility of beginning to remedy them. The presenters on this panel offer concrete suggestions for how to begin doing so.

- Amy Artman, Missouri State University

*The Triage Units of Higher Education*

Every student in higher education in the coming years will have been through the trauma of a global pandemic. It is bracing to imagine what to anticipate regarding the lives and psyches of these students. In light of this, trauma-based teaching methods are particularly suited to the skill sets of contingent faculty. Practices such as restorative rather than punitive grading and other trauma-based developments can serve contingent faculty well.
The first question this paper will address is, what can trauma-based teaching offer both the traumatized student and the wounded-healer contingent faculty? In a follow up query, the paper will then explore the concern that, by their very competency in trauma-based teaching methods already, contingent faculty run the risk of becoming the triage units of higher ed, consumed with staunching the bleeding and bandaging the wounded on the front lines.

- Haley Feuerbacher, Southern Methodist University

"Not in It for the Money:" The Power Dynamics of Compassion Fatigue Among Contingent Faculty

Adjunct and contingent faculty in higher education are routinely and systemically exploited and undervalued, but one of the greatest concerns for our education system is the high rates and risks of compassion fatigue that contingent faculty are experiencing. The emotional labor that befalls contingent faculty is not a weakness or lack of boundaries, as it is often depicted by institutions, but rather a symptom of problematic and exploitative practices and power differentials within the institution itself, which compromises the wellbeing of and victimizes both contingent faculty and students alike. This paper will explore the causes of compassion fatigue and the relationship of compassion fatigue to power flows and differentials and propose key steps for adjunct self-advocacy, as well as essential changes for institutions.

- Anna Harrison, Loyola Marymount University

Creating a More Hospitable Community: Solidarity in Practice

This paper describes work in which non-tenure track faculty (NTTF) and tenure-track faculty (TTF) in the Department of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University (LMU) are engaging to create a more hospitable Department for NTTF across all ranks. It focuses on “Creating a More Hospitable Community,” a collaboratively composed document that offers eighteen practical proposals to this end. It does so while providing a larger LMU context out of which this work is taking place and underscores the value of cultivating personal relationships of solidarity across the NTTF and TTF divide for achieving meaningful change beneficial to faculty and students.

Business Meeting

Rosetta E. Ross, Spelman College, Presiding
Jeremy Posadas, Austin College, Presiding

A20-401
Professional Development
Academic Relations Committee
Theme: The Genie is Out of the Bottle: Departmental/Program Challenges and Opportunities "Post" COVID
COVID has spurred many changes in academia, not the least of which is how we meet, engage, and communicate with our colleagues. Join us for a conversation of how COVID is impacting departmental/program community. What is your sense of COVID’s impact on departmental practices? Are there practices that you’ve put in place during COVID that you will continue? What has worked; what hasn’t?

**Panelists**

Jennifer Rycenga, San José State University  
Deborah Whitehead, University of Colorado

**A20-435**  
New Program Unit  
**Anglican Studies Seminar**  
Theme: **2022 Meeting of the Anglican Studies Seminar, Part 2**  
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)  
Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook, Claremont School of Theology, Presiding

During this second of two 90-minute sessions at the 2022 AARSBL Annual Meeting, the members of the Anglican Studies Seminar and any other interested parties (warmly invited!) will gather to hear Jennifer Snow respond to the three pre-circulated papers the seminar will have discussed in the first part of our meeting this year. Following that response, the membership will discuss plans for work this year and for the 2023 seminar meeting. The emphasis in the seminar's second year will be to surface the biblical and theological factors that are shaping Anglican practices of church in diverse locales. The membership and others present will ask themselves what was learned in this, our first year, about the historical dimensions of operative ecclesiologies, whether that necessitates any course correction(s) for Year 2, and how we will structure the Year 2 meeting. Publication plans will also be made.

- Jennifer Snow, Church Divinity School of the Pacific

*Response to Papers Discussed in Part 1 of the 2022 Seminar Meeting*

Jennifer Snow will respond to a discussion in Part 1 of this year's meeting of a pre-circulated paper by Lora Walsh detailing the historiographical methods to be taken into consideration when conducting research into operative ecclesiologies in the Anglican context. Snow may or may not also respond to the discussion of the two other papers offered during that session, one by Carla Roland Guzmán on the beginnings of the Anglican Church in Mexico, its connections to (or disconnections from) the U.S. Episcopal Church, and the proposed use of the Mozarabic rite within it, and a second by Hilary Bogert-Winkler on the complex historical antecedents of the ways in which the Church of Ireland continues to embrace a Protestant identity—both in the Republic and in Northern Ireland—in ways that are markedly different from other Anglican
churches in Britain and North America.

**Business Meeting**

Scott MacDougall, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Presiding

**A20-406**

Books under Discussion

**Buddhism Unit and Chinese Religions Unit**

Theme: *Author Meets Critic: Reading Matthew King’s In the Forest of the Blind (Columbia University Press, 2022) for Decolonizing Buddhist Studies*

Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Rae Dachille, University of Arizona, Presiding

What does a “critical Buddhist studies” look like? Matthew King responds to this question with his experiment in “anti-field history.” *In the Forest of the Blind* is a study of the nineteenth and twentieth-century circulation through Europe and Inner Asia of the *Foguo ji*, the account of Faxian’s fifth-century travels to Buddhist sites in South and Central Asia. Incorporating Chinese, French, Mongolian, and Tibetan sources, this book provokes conversations across linguistic, regional, and temporal boundaries. King shows how Inner Asian authors transformed Orientalist renderings of Faxian’s account through such diverse lenses as Qing world historical order, emergent nationalisms, and the Tibetan refugee experience. These lenses were themselves also transformed. The panelists respond to questions such as: What does it mean to emphasize “negative space and absence” over “impact or influence” in the historical approaches to Buddhist worlds? How can “circulatory” histories contribute to decolonial, deimperializing, and deorientalising scholarship?

**Panelists**

Gray Tuttle, Columbia University
Sangseraima Ujeed, University of Michigan
John Kieschnick, Stanford University
Alexandra Kaloyanides, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

**Responding**

Matthew King, University of California, Riverside

**A20-436**

Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching

**Buddhist Pedagogy Seminar**

Theme: *Teaching Buddhism Outside the Classroom*

Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Ben Van Overmeire, Duke Kunshan University, Presiding

This panel examines teaching Buddhism in the Tibetan monastery, chaplaincy, and to second-
generation Asian American children in American Buddhist temples. Sherab Chomphel’s presentation analyzes the conflict of modernity in Tibetan monastic educational regulations in exile during the 1970s. Chomphel highlights the changes of former ritual performances and the proposed reasons for and against the planned innovations. Xiandong Shi’s research investigates how the monastery can help the second-generation Chinese American children cope with ethnical identity issues and tools that the monastery can use to promote their identity as young Asian American Buddhists. Outside the monastery, Leigh Miller draws on ethnographic research with Buddhist chaplains who received contemplation training in Buddhist graduate programs to elucidate the relationship between contemplative education and contemplative experience in professional or community service-learning contexts. In sum, this panel offers insights into the challenges and adaptations need to teach Buddhism in diverse settings.

- Sherab Chomphel, Banaras Hindu University

*Conflict of Modernity among Tibetan Buddhist Religious Institutions*

This paper will examine the causes and conditions that led to the historical changes in monastic educational regulations in the 1970s. The focus will be on the ritual performances and prayer sessions (tshogs chos spyod) that formed the essential part of monastic practice in former times.

In the various Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the emphasis has been on ritual performance and prayer, and have been regarded as essential elements in the study of philosophical texts and other monastic activities. However, the younger generation of monks in exile began to oppose these stiff and constricting conventions of performing daily rituals and prayers, with support from some eminent religious leaders.

Through interviews, reports on the religious life at individual monasteries and personal biographies, my research will highlight how these changes were negotiated and what reasons were put forward for and against the planned innovations.

- Xiandong Shi, University of the West

*Buddhist Ministry to 2nd - Generation Chinese American Buddhist Children: Addressing the Development of Ethnic Identity*

Research reveals that Asian and Asian American people in the US often experience issues specific to their ethnic identity. Children of immigrants appear especially vulnerable; they seem to have more difficulty in finding a sense of belonging than the children of other generations. Lacking strong spiritual support and models may be one factor contributing to a positive ethnic identity for second-generation Asian American Children. Grounded in Engaged Buddhism, a psychoeducational group intervention will be designed to provide a safe space for these children to work through issues specific to their demographic in order to normalize their shared experiences and struggles relating to their ethnic identity.
Leigh Miller, Maitripa College

Fruits of the Practice: Contemplative Experience after Contemplative Educational Training

There are moments of spiritual care with another human being in which contemplative experience arises. Such moments are not uncommon in spiritual care: a chaplain offers up a silent prayer or internally shifts their body-mind, and, as if by magic, the encounter moves in a wholly new direction, barriers melt away, spaciousness opens and yet the space between two persons tapers. Or, sensing another’s panic, the chaplain offers their own regulated breath and heartbeat to be calm in the room. What is changed interpersonally and intrapersonally as a result of such moments? Who is having such moments? Are they indicators of the fruits of contemplative studies and practices? This paper draws on ethnographic research to explore the relationship between contemplative education and real-world impacts for oneself and others.

Responding

Todd T. Lewis, College of the Holy Cross

Business Meeting

Gloria I-Ling Chien, Gonzaga University, Presiding
Trung Huynh, University of Houston, Presiding

A20-407
Catholic Studies Unit
Theme: Mediums, Media, and Mediators in Global Catholicism
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Kristin Bloomer, Carleton College, Presiding

What does it mean to think about Catholicism as global? How does the global take shape? This session will create a conversation about these questions through four case studies. Thinking about film, popular devotions, social media, and cartography, our presenters crack open the idea of the Catholic global through analysis of processes of its modern and contemporary mediation.

Fabrizio Cilento, Messiah University

Cinema Has Not Yet Been Invented: André Bazin’s Ontology of Moving Images

Through the writings of Catholic critic André Bazin, I explore how cinema finds its roots in the capacity of documenting traces of the world and in the osmotic relationship between an event and its record. Due to its ontological status, photography echoes an incarnational model, and cinema becomes a mediator between the passage of time and the inevitability of death. Influenced by Marcel’s approach to existentialism and by Mounier concept of proper orientation, Bazin wrote about religious films, while also dedicating
attention to movies that challenged him spiritually, either at a technical level or regarding their contents. At times discussions about film and Catholicism imposed a structure of beliefs that limited the possibility of articulating cinema’s transformative power. The antidote to dogmatic views lies in Bazin’s emphasis on spectatorship and his awareness that cinema is permeated by values that can be communicated through an aesthetic use of the medium.

- Michael Rogers, University of Toronto

*Devotion as Transgressive Lament: Santa Muerte and the Globalization of Heterodoxy.*

To the chagrin of ecclesial authorities, devotion to the Mexican folk saint Santa Muerte has spread rapidly from one of the poorest and most violent barrios of Mexico City and has shown how globalization in the Catholic Church is often no longer a matter of a shared classical culture but is rather increasingly the result of diverse narratives coming into contact. As a decentralized reality, an example like Santa Muerte demonstrates how belief, especially heterodox belief, often comes from an unintended sensus fidelium, demonstrating how a global Catholic Church functions beyond the traditional magisterium. Utilizing Ricoeur’s understanding that “lament reveals us as victims,” we will examine how such transgressive devotional practices point to a deeper problem than heterodox belief and how it stands as the voice of victims crying out against God’s perceived absence.

- Gary Slater, University of Münster

*The Cartographic Catholic: Mapping Prejudice and Praxis Within a Contested Global Space*

Even as the Catholic Church retains a compelling claim to global status, the global itself is increasingly contested. This impairs the ability of the Church to motivate moral action. This paper argues for interpreting the Catholic moral imagination cartographically. Cartographic practices facilitate the exposure, not just of their own prejudices and biases, but also of the contradictions that generate much of the contemporary confusion with regard to global/planetary dynamics. Cartography does not just trade in representations, but makes transparent a certain kind of representation, one whose geometric imagination contrasts with both interspecies and intercultural dynamics within concrete (unmappable) spaces. Moreover, cartography makes its technologies transparent in a way that is not simply diagnostic, but also potentially empowering with respect to moral action. This is exemplified by the non-profit organization GoodLands, which employs GIS mapping technologies to help its partners live out the moral imperative expressed within *Laudato si*. 

- Lauren Horn Griffin, Louisiana State University

*Mediating Catholicism in a Digital World: Internet Cultures Beyond the National/Global*
Binary

Through the example of traditionalist Catholics on Twitter, my paper argues that the answer to why scholars of the early modern period often focus on the global or transregional while scholars of the modern focus on the national can be answered by focusing on the role of media, mediation, and media practices. Looking at contemporary Catholic communities through the lens of media studies complicates this global/local binary and indeed leads to a more fragmented, diffused picture of Catholic communities that animate different questions and frameworks. If Benedict Anderson showed us how print capitalism made conceiving of national identity possible, globalized platform capitalism has not made a “global village” identity, as famous media theorist Marshall McLuhan predicted. New media has drawn new boundaries and created new affinities.

A20-408
Christian Systematic Theology Unit
Theme: Theology, Race, and Decolonial Thought
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Jessica Wong, Azusa Pacific University, Presiding
Cross-racial Epistemic Solidarity, Stephen Calme, Carlow University
Justice, Hope, Joy: an Embodied Soteriology, Natalya Cherry, Texas Christian University
Rethinking Justice and Mercy with Pope Francis, Walter Kasper, and Decolonial Thought, Erica Ridderman, Duke University

- Stephen Calme, Carlow University

Cross-racial Epistemic Solidarity

Building on antiracist theologians' emphasis on the need for solidarity to overcome white supremacy, this paper will propose a particular need for epistemic solidarity. It will begin by arguing that antiracist scholars such as José Medina and George Yancy are in fact already promoting epistemic solidarity by identifying the common good of epistemic authenticity as an essential part of whites’ conversion to antiracism. After pointing out the danger of whites’ current tendency to presume epistemic authority and to emphasize the independence of the individual knower, I will draw from Black theology as well as feminist epistemologies in order to describe several characteristics of authentic cross-racial epistemic solidarity. Each will correspond to an aspect of general cross-racial solidarity explicitly or implicitly described in Bryan Massingale’s Racial Justice and the Catholic Church.

- Natalya Cherry, Texas Christian University

Justice, hope, Joy: an Embodied Soteriology

Exploring the intersection of justice, hope, and joy from a soteriological standpoint, this paper employs the Augustinian concept of Christ's applying the Holy Spirit in baptism like glue -- as a means of unfurling the curled-inward sinner to become the outward-
turned believer into Christ who thus is vitally and inseparably connected both to Christ and to other humans -- to argue that individual salvation is inseparable from communal salvation and transformation. Salvation from personal sin involves a deification that enacts transformation of systemic sin in society. In dialogue with the work of Delores Williams, Patrick Cheng, and Nancy Eiesland, the argument centers various embodiments that are marginalized in traditional (read: white, male, cis-gendered, heteronormative, non-disabled) theology to construct a proposal of salvific relationship that cultivates care for one another and society in radical ways. Counterarguments considered in this paper include implications of church schisms and the place of members of other faiths.

- Erica Ridderman, Duke University

*Rethinking Justice and Mercy with Pope Francis, Walter Kasper, and Decolonial Thought*

In recent years, both Walter Kasper and Pope Francis have prioritized mercy in the doctrine of God. For them, mercy is the central category, or “first attribute,” through which to understand God, and in turn, through which to shape our own engagements in the world. With this emphasis come questions: if we prioritize mercy, do we lessen justice? Is mercy needed when our world is plagued with such deep and abiding injustices? This paper argues that their accounts, though largely compelling, fail to prioritize mercy enough, in ways that actually diminish the fullness of justice. To illustrate my own account, I look to decolonial thinking and its intentional disordering of society by movements of decolonial love.

A20-409

Constructive Muslim Thought and Engaged Scholarship Seminar
Theme: *Interventions and Intersection in Engaged Scholarship*
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Martin Nguyen, Fairfield University, Presiding

As the "Constructive Muslim Thought and Engaged Scholarship" seminar enters its second year, the seminar organizers continue to develop ways for better understanding the nature and substance of this capacious, developing, and distinctive field. For this particular session, the participants have been invited to join a roundtable conversation aimed at exploring the needed interventions and important intersections related to constructive Muslim thought and engaged scholarship. Each panelist has been invited to draw upon their growing bodies of work to name and engage with the questions, issues, and challenges that each of them deems critical and necessary for the field today. What sort of work needs to be done and how can that work be dynamically pursued? Or in other words, what are the terms of “engagement?” All seminar attendees are encouraged to join the conversation after the invited participants have shared their opening remarks.

Panelists
Eileen Goddard, University of California, Santa Barbara

*Meditation and Correct Perception in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Tradition*

In the 16th century Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava tradition, meditation is an important catalyst for direct perception of supreme Godhead Kṛṣṇa. In this tradition, direct perception of Kṛṣṇa is possible through bhakti, devotion. Bhakti is the highest aspect of Kṛṣṇa’s potency of bliss, which realized devotees partake in eternally. The process of liberatory realization occurs through two stages of recognition made possible through praxis: initial recognition of Kṛṣṇa as Godhead and ultimate recognition of eternal self in relationship to Kṛṣṇa. This siddha-deha self is composed of cit, consciousness, and ānanda, bliss, and resides eternally in Kṛṣṇa’s transcendental realm. Progressive stages of meditation are what initially enable such correct cognition of self. The mental faculties, however, are not themselves conceptualized as capable of generating such divine vision. Cognition which is increasingly refined through meditation is instead only the catalyst for divine grace, which itself is the source of all correct cognition.

Stephen Molvarec, Boston College
Thomas Keating’s “Blend of Teas”: Keating as a reader and interpreter of The Cloud of Unknowing

Thomas Keating described the development of Centering Prayer: “[T]he Christian contemplative tradition can be compared to a blend of the finest herb teas. […] A primary source is The Cloud of Unknowing, but we have incorporated other ‘teas’ to establish a special blend.” This paper's primary focus is to explore Thomas Keating as a reader and interpreter of The Cloud text, situating his reading of the anonymous, fourteenth-century Carthusian author not only in context with that of his Trappist confreres, William Menninger and Basil Pennington, but also with those of Evelyn Underhill and William Johnston. The immense impact that Centering Prayer has had on Christian and secular landscapes has all but hidden Keating, the reader and the interpreter of The Cloud. Yet, The Cloud and Keating’s reading of it remain the foundations of a rebirth of contemplative practice.

- Iva Patel, Augsburg University

“Enlightening the Mind-Heart”: Mechanics of Contemplation in Swaminarayan Hindu Devotion

Through discourse analysis of a Hindu lyric text from nineteenth century western India, I chart sectarian mechanics of contemplation aimed at building a sustained devotional relationship with God. I discuss the Hradayprakash (Enlightening the Heart), a text composed in 1838 in western India by Nishkulanand Swami, a monk within the Swaminarayan Hindu tradition, wherein he instructs devotees to recognize the “enemies within” and then to reconfigure their interiority, the antahkarana (inner chamber), to make it habitable for God. The poet draws our scholarly attention to the cognitive exercises that constitute a necessary precursor and a complement to the emotional and the tactile dimensions of bhakti (South Asian devotion). Attending to such regional interpretations of classical Indian and Hindu philosophies of the mind reveals the dynamism of cognitive embodiment, that is, mind as a body and mind within a body, within Hindu praxis of devotion.

- Yuria Celidwen, Independent Scholar

Spirit Medicine beyond Mind Medicine: Indigenous Ethics for Western Psychedelic Research

Indigenous traditional medicine gave origin to the Western scientific research on psychedelics. Considering the current study and application of these medicines, they have transformed the approaches to mental health. The clear risk in this cultural development is that Western psychedelic research excludes the voices of the Indigenous traditions from which these medicines originate, thus perpetuating practices of extraction, appropriation, commercialization, and commodification of the heritage of Indigenous Peoples. A lack of judicial frameworks to protect Indigenous traditional medicine at the local, national, regional, and international levels, has devastating effects on Indigenous
Peoples. More worrisome is that the benefits of Western psychedelic research do not return to the communities of origin. Given this problematic context, these are guidelines on the ethical use of the heritage of Indigenous traditional medicine in Western psychedelic research.

Responding

Loriliai Biernacki, University of Colorado

Business Meeting

Harold D. Roth, Brown University, Presiding
Judith Simmer-Brown, Naropa University, Presiding

A20-411
Contemporary Islam Unit
Theme: Critiquing and Engaging the Modern in Muslim Literatures, Technologies, and Arts
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Kirsten Wesselhoeft, Vassar College, Presiding

The papers on this panel explore literatures, technologies, and arts as methods of knowledge production and social change. The first paper examines the disrupting presence of djinn in a series of novels by P. Djèlí Clark where the imperatives of Western modernity are disrupted and another future becomes possible. The second paper explores how Islamic digital culture forms its specific epistemic subject of the knowledgeable scholar of Islam under the pressures of both political and technological change in Iran. The third paper offers an analysis of grass-roots art-activism through the study of a mediatized “clash” between the anti-Muslim Freedom Defense Initiative and a queer Muslim arts collective in the San Francisco Bay Area. Together, these papers ask how different forms of media serve as sites for re-imagining Muslim subjectivities, collectivities, and futures.

- Matthew Hotham, Ball State University

Djinn as Agents, Allies, and Allegories: P. Djeli Clark's Vision of an Anti-Colonial Muslim Modernity

Djèlí Clark has written multiple works set in an alternate history early 20th century Cairo. In them, he posits a world where the package of Western modernity is disrupted and another modernity becomes possible, one that does not mandate the technological domination of nature and where materialism and secularization are not pre-requisites for progress. Leaning on Bruno Latour, I will examine Clark's imagining of a modernity in which multiple modes of existence are able to sit in productive tension with one another without seeking to dominate or negate one another. This is made possible through the disrupting presence of non-human agents who shift in their representation--sometimes standing in for affect, in other cases natural forces, in others quantum leaps in
technological innovation. By disrupting the narrative of a teleological progressive history, Clark invites readers to imagine a different and better future--a non-reductionist, non-exploitative, intellectually humble Muslim future.

- Saman Fazeli, University of Chicago

*Islam and Digital Culture Under the Islamic Republic: Islamic Learning and "the Noor Computer Research Center" in Iran*

In this paper, I examine a Windows software package, namely “The Library of Seminary Lessons,” produced by the “Noor Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences” in Iran. The software package is meant to be used by Islamic seminary students. Located in Qom, Iran, Noor is a state institution devoted to the project of digitization of Islamic sources and "facilitating Islamic learning and scholarship using technology." Focusing on “The Library of Seminary Lessons,” I examine not only digital Islamic culture in post-revolutionary Iran, but also the ways in which both Islamic learning and the user transform in accordance with the logic of the new technology. Examining different affordances of this software package, I explore how Islamic digital culture in Iran forms its specific epistemic subject. I argue that Noor not only transforms the object of study but also creates new social orders with a workable reconfigured scholar of Islam.

- Zareena Grewal, Yale University

*Muslim Superheroines and the Culture Wars*

The catastrophic consolidation of white supremacies in the 21st century reveals both the continuities and shifts between new and old forms of white power. I survey the racial genealogies of secularism in the US and then move into an analysis of grass-roots activism deeply steeped in religious language on both the right and the left in the US. In 2015, a clandestine group of street art activists known as Bay Area Art Queers Unleashing Power (BAAQUP) defaced anti-Muslim posters by the Freedom Defense on dozens of San Francisco City buses. BAAQUP, a collective led by queer Muslim artists, covered the racist ads with images of Marvel comics’ first South Asian Muslim American superheroine. I analyze the use of the Quran in The Freedom Defense Initiative’s racist campaign, in the *Ms. Marvel* comic series, and in the graffiti of the BAAQUP artists who identify as real-life Muslim super-heroines.

**Responding**

Arafat Razzaque, University of Toronto

**A20-412**

Daoist Studies Unit

Theme: **Barbarians, Women, and Disciples: Inscribing Social Authority in Medieval Daoism**

Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Michael Stanley-Baker, Nanyang Technological University, Presiding

This panel features three studies of Upper Clarity (Shangqing) Daoism that ways that written texts shaped how Daoists understood themselves and their place in medieval society. The three presenters foreground the manuscript cultures of Daoism and cast light on the complex editorial processes undergirding Daoist identity. Collectively, the authors are both interested in how texts were vehicles for remaking one’s identity as a Daoist, while simultaneously remodeling the social institutions that physically and metaphorically housed the prominent Daoists of medieval China. The authors look at the variety of scriptural and hagiographic texts, most of which were written centuries after the initial wave of Upper Clarity texts in the mid-fourth century CE. Thus, these papers make an important contribution in understanding how Upper Clarity identity evolved and unfolded in the medieval era.

- Liying Xu, Arizona State University

Authority and Identity in the Editing of the Zhen’gao

Tao Hongjing’s (456–536 CE) Zhen’gao was based on an earlier collection Traces of the Perfected (Zhenji) by Gu Huan (425–479). However, in Tao’s postface, he harshly criticized Gu Huan’s editorial methods and ability. Given that Gu provoked a heated debate between Daoists and Buddhists after composing his Treatise on Barbarians and Chinese (Yixialun) Tao’s critique might have a deeper reason. This paper analyzes any traces of Gu’s perspective on the relationship of Daoism and Buddhism, and hones in on Gu’s retelling of Yang’s narrative about the origins of these two religions. As the first editor of Yang’s manuscript, Gu Huan might be inspired by Yang’s narrative and keep consistent with Yang’s perspective. However, Gu Huan’s treatise contrasts the geographical and cultural differences in reality between two religions. Therefore, Tao tried to diminish Gu Huan’s editing the Zhen’gao, and emphasized the equal importance of Buddhist sutra in the Zhen’gao.

- Jonathan Pettit, University of Hawai’i

A Man and a Woman: Sexual Identity and Textual Transmission in Upper Clarity Daoism

In medieval China, men and women could both attain high ranks within the Daoist church, but the social expectations and pressures on young men and women contemplating living as Daoists were quite different. This paper asks why did one’s sex in Daoism begin to determine which scriptures one could receive? And when did one’s sex determine to whom one could pass texts on? The author answers this question by drawing on examples of Daoist hagiographies in the Yunji Qiqian, a Song dynasty hagiography, to better understand changing ideas concerning how one’s sexual identity set parameters upon one’s Daoist identity. It focus on examples from the Lord Mao’s (Mao Ying 茅盈), Lord Pei’s (Pei Xuanren 裴玄仁), and Lady Wei’s (Wei Huacun 魏華存) hagiographies to consider how one’s sex determined access to knowledge, ritual, and literature in Daoist communities. This paper highlights new developments in medieval China where power within Daoist groups became increasingly bifurcated
between men and women.

- Matthew Wells, University of Kentucky

*One’s Story in Another’s: Editorial Interventions by Disciples in Shangqing Biographies*

This paper focuses on the Shangqing (Upper Clarity) hagiography *Traditions of Lord Su, Upper Chamberlain of the Dark Continent* (Xuanzhou shangqing Sujun zhuang 玄洲上卿蘇君傳) to examine how disciples were imagined to play a role in editing their masters’ hagiographies. The paper begins with an overview of the various ways that authorship of Upper Clarity hagiographies are attributed to their disciples, focusing on three texts in which the disciple plays an active role in the story being told. The author examines how these disciple-editors interject in the text, validating their own self-image, textual lineages, and specific contemplative practices. These editorial practices are concerned with lineages of teachers, texts, and practices in a way that earlier fables in the *Liexian zhuang* and *Shenxian zhuang* were not, suggesting the central role played by biography alongside scriptures and instructions in developing the Upper Clarity tradition.

**Responding**

Jessey Choo, Rutgers University

**A20-438**

*Exploratory Session*

**Theme:** Emerging Technologies: The Spiritual Dimensions of Next-Generation Virtual Realities

Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Erik Davis, San Francisco, CA, Presiding

The Exploratory Session for an Emerging Technologies Unit seeks members who are interested in the anthropological, ethical, philosophical, and spiritual dimensions of all forms of bleeding-edge digital technologies that are currently in development or have very recently been made available. Emphasis is placed on comparative analyses and interdisciplinary perspectives on such devices as they continue to evolve. Also, efforts will be made to form a cohesive working group that aims to assist members with publication on such topics throughout the year.

This year’s panel analyzes next-generation virtual reality platforms, such as the Metaverse. Individual papers address ethical questions related to the use of such devices; the spiritual progenitors, philosophical origins, and religious implications of these technologies; and the economic systems that exist on such platforms, such as cryptocurrencies and non-fungible tokens (NFTs).

- Christopher Senn, Rice University

*The Meta Experience Machine*
In his 1974 book *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, Robert Nozick utilized the thought experiment of an Experience Machine, which could offer a perfect fully immersive virtual reality experience, to argue against philosophical hedonism and claimed that almost everyone would make the conscious choice to not permanently remain in a synthetic reality.

However, there may have been a fatal flaw in Nozick’s thought experiment since he could not foresee the deep-learning artificial intelligence technology that might one day make such devices a reality or the ways that such machines affect the unconscious. Already, the possible precursors to such an Experience Machine have learned to target the human limbic system, as it seems that the experiential stimulation people most often crave is satisfaction of their instinctual drives. Thus, this paper explores what problems might arise from using such devices to create fully immersive virtual environments, such as the Metaverse.

- Jeremy F. Cohen, McMaster University

*Fear of a Transhuman Future: Metaverse, Neuralink, and the New World Order*

Human augmentation, brain-computer interfaces, alterations to DNA, and physical immortality are welcomed by many within the diverse ascension community. Yet, these very same technological possibilities, associated with transhumanism, are seen as evidence of a vast, global conspiracy that seeks nothing less than total human domination. In this paper, I investigate the complex and often paradoxical relationships to technology among ascensionists and conspiratorial communities, where transhumanism and adjacent techno-cultures are seen as a present danger facing humanity. I utilize ethnographic and textual analysis to trace conspiratorial narratives about the Metaverse, Neuralink, and transhumanism. In a context where techno-science is understood as profane, human-driven technological advancements are impediments to the global shift in consciousness and frequencies that many claim will precipitate extraterrestrial or supernatural salvation. I argue that ascensionist techno-religious imaginaries are a form of spiritual practice, which views nonhuman technology as a sacred resource for realizing forgotten and suppressed human potential.

- Jacob Boss, Indiana University

*The Keybase and the Glory*

Why is surging interest in cryptocurrency and NFTs (non-fungible tokens) delivered in the language of salvation, transformation, liberation, and sovereignty? And why are they advertised with or (in the case of NFTs) made from a kaleidoscopic array of religious art? To open this investigation, I focus specifically on the rhetorical, phenomenological, and material aspects of creating new currency and financial infrastructure as found in the Enter The Mandala project, a business venture offering what it calls an ‘Enlightenment Simulator.’ I draw together ethnographies of currency production, theoretical resources from economic anthropology, and recent work in religion and consumption, law, and
virtuality to explore the valorization of currency creation as a salvific act.

- Sara Jo Swiatek, University of Chicago

*Containing the Future: Unpacking the Temporal and Spatial Dimension of the Metaverse*

This paper describes and analyzes Mark Zuckerberg’s portrayal of the metaverse in his 2021 promotional video. Zuckerberg conveys the metaverse as an open, immersive, and dynamic space in which we can explore new experiences and feel a deep sense of presence. However, my paper exposes the way in which the metaverse operates according to what Sean Gaston calls a “logic of containment” and relies on an account of temporality that can only ever hold out a promise of pure presence.

**Responding**

Sharday Mosurinjohn, Queen's University, Kingston

**A20-413**

**Hinduism Unit**

Theme: The Sanskrit Dilemma
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Varun Khanna, Swarthmore College, Presiding

This panel seeks to understand what it means to be a scholar of Sanskrit when Sanskrit is often used to fortify and reproduce configurations of Brahminical power. How can Sanskrit be used to challenge or subvert that power? What is the scope for Sanskrit scholarship to challenge caste, patriarchy, and Hindu nationalism? Can Sanskrit be separated from Brahminism? What would such a Sanskrit look like? How can Sanskrit teachers transform their pedagogies to reflect a critical engagement with these issues? Can there be a “Critical Sanskrit Studies”?

**Panelists**

Manasicha Akepiyapornchai, Cornell University
Gregory Clines, Trinity University
Marko Geslani, University of South Carolina
Jamal Jones, University of Wisconsin
Mishka Sinha, Oxford University
Dheepa Sundaram, University of Denver

**A20-414**

**Innovations in Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care Unit**

Theme: Diversities in Chaplaincy
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Sarah Jobe, Duke University, Presiding

Chaplaincy is an inherently diverse field: in the wide range of sites and institutions in which
chaplaincy is practiced, in the identities of practitioners and those seeking care, and in the clinical and theological models used for care. Innovations in Chaplaincy and Spiritual Care hosts an invited panel of scholars and practicing chaplains that intentionally highlights the diversity in the field, sparking imagination for innovations in research, practice, and education for practitioners and scholars. This panel will cover Islamic models for chaplaincy with survivors of sexual assault, transgender-affirming spiritual care, and expanded concepts of what counts as chaplaincy from within black women's literature and practice. Dr. Pamela Cooper-White will offer closing reflections and response.

- Chris Paige, OtherWise Engaged Publishing

*Centering the Health Disparities of Black Transgender Women in the Conversation about Transgender-Affirming Spiritual Care*

For many years now, the limited conversations about transgender-affirming spiritual care have tended to focus on theo-ethical considerations. While the literature in support of transgender-affirming spiritual care is growing, the conversation has not yet turned significantly to how racial disparities, systemic injustice, and structural violence inform the spiritual care encounter. Conversations about transgender-affirming spiritual care need to pay more attention not only to transgender health disparities generally, and to racial health disparities, specifically. This paper shares insights from the 2015 U.S. transgender survey alongside anecdotes from Black transgender women which illustrate those concerns, in contrast to the prominence of white transgender narratives such as that of Caitlyn Jenner. The resulting recommendation to emphasize trauma-informed, strengths-based, person-centered interventions and harm reduction strategies in education about transgender-affirming spiritual care draws broadly on vulnerability theory and Willie James Jennings’s critique of theological education as centering “white self-sufficient masculinity.”

- Wietske Merison, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

*Sisterhood, Shame and Spiritual Healing: Islamic Chaplaincy for Female Victims of Sexual Violence*

Any Islamic chaplain ought to be well-equipped to help recognize, address and heal the injuries and trauma caused by experiences of sexual abuse. In this paper I propose a new approach of female-to-female chaplaincy based on the Islamic concept of sisterhood. Since chaplaincy is highly contextualized, in this paper I explain this new approach as applied to the specific context of the case of Hiba, a Muslim woman who became the victim of sexual violence during her visit to al-Aqṣā mosque in Jerusalem during the holy month of Ramadān. I will analyse this case on three levels, referring to the different aspects of the Islamic faith as highlighted in the famous narration of Jibril: (1) islām, (2) īmān, and (3) iḥsān. The first level of analysis, islām, deals with the ethical questions, the second level, īmān, with the theological dimension, and the third level, iḥsān, focusses on the spiritual elements.
Kimberley Gordy, Union Theological Seminary

*Expanding the Lens of Chaplaincy Through Black Women’s Communal Roles in Black Literature and Lived Experience*

Black women are healers. Healing modalities we engage range from and in some ways merge aspects informed by origins in African and Caribbean cosmologies and religious traditions - that have been demonized by European patriarchal heteronormative rational epistemology - along with Christian spiritual gifts, embodied practices that call upon internal intangible power, employment of psychological and metaphysical principles and other forms of nurturing, love and presence. Black women have repeatedly proven their ability to heal others while healing themselves, as exemplified through the writings and lives of figures like Phyllis Wheatley, Audre Lorde and Pauli Murray. These forms of generative power are difficult to explain but commonly recognized once encounters with caregivers who are Black women occur. Thus, the low frequency of Black women in the field of chaplaincy seems incongruent. My contributions to this panel will focus on ways that Black women’s fulfillment of roles in various industries, including my own self-reflective practice as a chaplain resident, as well as literary examples, facilitate an existing but under acknowledged congruence with chaplaincy, justifying an expansion of what can count as chaplaincy work both inside and outside of Black communal means of caregiving.

Responding

Pamela Cooper-White, Union Theological Seminary

Business Meeting

Michael Skaggs, Brandeis University, Presiding

A20-415
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Korean Religions Unit
Theme: Catastrophe, Recovery, and Korean Christianity
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Minjung Noh, Drew University, Presiding

What are the roles of Korean religions in the face of disasters? How do Korean religious communities respond to various catastrophes, including ecological, political, social, emotional, historical, and transnational disasters? What ideas and practices do they offer for recovery and healing? This panel explores these questions by examining the continuity of the tumultuous Korean modern history to the contemporary religious lives of Korean society, which is grappling with the inheritance of the past along with new challenges. Specifically, the twentieth-century aftermath of the Korean War and the ever-emerging environmental crisis in South Korea are of special interest to the panel. Accordingly, the following papers present how religions are embedded in the system of such catastrophe while also working as an apparatus—both symbolic
and social—for healing and recovery.

- Haewon Yang, Ewha Womans University

*Injured Family, Injurious Family: Religion, Family, and the Individual in Park Wansuh’s Spiritual Journey*

In this paper I explore the spiritual journey of the renowned writer Park Wansuh (1931-2011) as she struggled with her traumatic experience of the Korean War and later with the untimely death of her only son. As a professing Catholic Park’s spiritual journey can be traced in her works, and while her conversion was initially a rational decision, she came to embrace the personal and experiential nature of faith as she struggled with the most painful affliction of losing her son. By focusing on a selection of her works I explore how Park’s experience of religion influenced the ways in which she came to terms with two major catastrophes of her life. Park’s journey would provide a unique window into understanding how religion works in the healing process to bring out a strong sense of individuality against the patriarchal family with its injured and injurious nature in modern Korea.

- Sarah Williams, Drew University

*The Dead Will Show Us the Way Forward: Catastrophe of a Life and Ontologies of Orphanhood*

Post-Korean war U.S. evangelical networks mobilized resources to facilitate transnational adoptions as a response to the icon of the disabled orphan that represented catastrophe. Discourses of transnational adoption constructed futurity for the disabled orphan through inclusion into Christian able-bodied American families which yielded dual citizenship in two empires: the United States and the kingdom of heaven. Systems of transnational adoption transformed disabled orphans into disabled adoptees. However, analysis of disabled adoptee’s ontological constructions reveals the limits of these narratives which purport access to humanity through inclusion-based and rehabilitative frameworks. In catastrophe, collective futures are forged upon realizing the impossibility of rehabilitation. The assessment of ontological disabled orphanhood reveals the limits of evangelical responses to the catastrophe that propagate discourses of assimilation, healing, and inclusion and proposes a theo-ethical method constructed by those haunted by ontological orphanhood: disabled Korean adoptees.

- Shin-Young Kim, Seoul National University, Drew Theological School

*Christian Environmental Activism and Weekly Funeral Procession Protest at the Wolsong Nuclear Power Plants*

The residents, who have lived only 914m away from Wolsong Nuclear Power Plants at Gyeongjoo, South Korea, have continued a weekly funeral procession as the promise of safety that the government and Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power Co., Ltd (KNHP) gave to
the residents has not been kept. They continued their activism for more than 6 years asking for government reparations and support for their relocation. This paper explores the environmental activism carried out by the residents in the context of the Korean Christian environmental movement. I argue that the Christian environmental movement in the face of catastrophic environmental pollution, including the impact of nuclear power plants, shows a significant example of Christian activism. In addition, my analysis of the current movement using ritual theory articulates the multifaceted meaning-making process of the religious and secular public surrounding the issue.

Responding

Hyemin Na, Emory University

Business Meeting

Liora Sarfati, Tel Aviv University, Presiding
Chong Bum (Sean) Kim, University of Central Missouri, Presiding

A20-416
Middle Eastern Christianity Unit
Theme: Middle Eastern Christianity, Materiality, and Identity
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Tala AlRaheb, Emory University, Presiding

This session explores the themes of materiality and communal identity, focusing particularly on how diverse Middle Eastern Christian groups have used, incorporated, and espoused materials (including texts, objects, and sacred spaces) from their own traditions and from the religious other. Addressing historical periods ranging from the early Islamic period to the present, the four papers in this session examine the roles that materials play in constructing communal identity, as applied in Middle Eastern apocalyptic traditions, in miaphysite theology, in Coptic communities during Word War II, and among Melkite leaders in twentieth and twenty-first century Palestine.

- Maroun El Houkayem, Duke University
  
  Women, Children, and Slaves: Christian Apocalypses in the Early Islamic Period
  
  Both in the past and in the present, apocalyptic reactions are common after a shift in the social order. As the Islamic religion spread throughout the Near East and Egypt, it made its way into Christian eschatological writing. Inscribed in a long literary tradition, Christian authors from different geographical and theological domains made use of this genre to address the changes they faced. As powerful tools, these texts served, not only to depict Muslim counterparts, but also to reinforce religious, cultural, and linguistic identities.

  Instead of focusing solely on how each branch of Christianity portrayed Muslims, this paper will also discuss three agents that are often neglected: women, children, and slaves.
All three of them appear in eschatological writing, and all three are used differently in delineating communal identities. Examining various texts will allow us to demonstrate their roles in the identity formation of various Eastern Churches.

- Eric DeVilliers, University of Notre Dame

*Getting to Heaven Together: Common Approaches to Knowing God in Miaphysite and Muslim Theology*

In the tenth century, the famous Muslim theologian Abu Mansur al-Maturidī (d. AD 944) brought to the fore a central question of Islamic theology: how does one infer things about the invisible world (al-ghayb; i.e., heaven and hell) from our place in the visible world (al-shāhid)? This question pervades al-Maturīdī’s theological work and would serve as the touchstone for the theological tradition he founded. Yet, scholars have only recently begun to notice that this question, and al-Maturidī’s solutions to it, may have been part of a broader epistemological and theological project shared between Muslims and Christians. This paper, then, examines how the Miaphysite authors Moshe bar Keph and Job of Edessa utilized and revived the exegetical genre of *Hexaemeron* literature. It argues that Christian and Muslim theologians made use of this literature to ground their discussion of the world’s intelligibility and the possibility to speak rationally about heaven.

- Weston Bland, University of Pennsylvania

*World War II as a Vocabulary of Coptic Precarity in Post-War Egypt*

This paper explores how the catastrophic violence of World War II served as a vocabulary of anxiety for Egypt’s Coptic Christian community immediately following the War. Using Coptic periodicals published in the 1940s, I show how the destruction, authoritarian excesses, and genocide of the War developed as points of reference for Copts to express their feelings of precarity as a minority. In the post-War years, these anxieties were directed toward the growing activity of Islamist movements and the illiberal trajectory of the Egyptian government. I argue that the oppression of European minorities during the War not only served as a means of comparison for Copts to critique Islamists and the state, but also added urgency to internal debates on Coptic institutions’ capacities to represent the community and defend its interests. In this way, the global catastrophe of the War greatly shaped localized Coptic interpretations of their religious and lay bodies.

- Nathan Hershberger, Duke University

*Were We Not ‘Children of the Promise’? Election, Palestinian Christian Identity, and the Fortitude of Elias Chacour*

The Bible is bound up with communal identity. With the development of modern nationalism and imperialism the entanglement of scripture with the drama of peoplehood
has become far more fraught. The case of Palestinian Christians provides an illuminating vantage point from which to survey these difficulties. How can Christians read scripture well when history marks them unjustly as the enemies of the people of God? In the memoir and writings of Elias Chacour—more detailed than any other Palestinian Christian autobiography—we may discern the stubborn limits and joyful possibilities of a life lived under such a burden. Though not without his own difficulties, Chacour demonstrates Scripture’s ability to form communal identity for positive agency, even as this very capacity allows for the possibility of destructive nationalism. Holding to this capacity with charity and fortitude allows Palestinian Christians to read scripture as a book of life and not death.

A20-417
Mormon Studies Unit
Theme: Mormon Studies as Religious Studies
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Sara Patterson, Hanover College, Presiding

This session features a panel of scholars of religious studies discussing how they incorporate primary and secondary sources on Mormonism into their courses in religious studies. Mormon studies content and material is routinely included in courses on American religious history, often from a historical perspective. With the growth of scholarship on Mormonism from an increasingly diverse set of methodologies and new kinds of courses, Mormonism is making its way into new conversations. Panelists share examples from their syllabi and discussion ideas.

Panelists
Laurie Maffly-Kipp, Washington University, Saint Louis
Max Mueller, University of Nebraska
David Walker, University of California, Santa Barbara
Katherine Mohrmann, University of Colorado, Denver
Sujey Vega, Arizona State University

A20-418
Nineteenth Century Theology Unit and Schleiermacher Unit
Theme: Theological System-Building: Doctrine, Method, and Context
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Annette G. Aubert, Westminster Theological Seminary, Presiding
Matthias Gockel, University of Basel, Presiding

Friedrich Schleiermacher’s Glaubenslehre, first published in 1821/22, was a turning point that ushered in the modern development of theological system-building, even among theologians who disagreed with his approach. As part of their efforts to expand on and engage with Schleiermacher’s method and work, theologians wrote systematic works on both sides of the Atlantic. Those texts also reflected the role of religious consciousness for scientific theology. This session explores philosophical, theological, and historical approaches to theological system-
building in a global context from 1800 to 1914.

- Christine Helmer, Northwestern University

*System and World-Building*

This paper addresses how Schleiermacher’s *Christian Faith* is generative for the contemporary discussion of world-building in the humanities, particularly among postcritical, queer and Black feminist scholars. Before working out aspects of Schleiermacher’s theological system that are pertinent to the emerging discussion, I consider the contributions of Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann, and Clifford Geertz to the topic of world-building and show how their understanding of this term is inflected with theological concepts. It is this conversation that has clues for theologians who want to participate in the contemporary discussion of world-building. Schleiermacher’s architectonic is explicitly oriented to the three parameters, self, world, and God. How he organizes his system as one that is future-oriented, while insisting on transformation in the present—also by invoking God and by insisting on a metaphysical realist position—is the paper’s primacy focus.

- James Lee, Concordia University, Chicago

*The Science of the Atonement: Johannes von Hofmann’s Theology of the Atonement*

The Nineteenth-century Erlangen theologian Johannes von Hofmann advanced a theory of the atonement with the goal of reconceptualizing the Lutheran theology of the doctrine of the atonement. Hofmann accomplished his revisionary efforts by recasting Christ’s death within a broader and more comprehensive christological perspective. This reframing allowed Hofmann to circumvent and restrict concepts that he found problematic, such as penal substitution, divine wrath, and the forensic character of Jesus’ death. This paper investigates the relationship between Hofmann’s theology of the atonement and his conception of theology as a science. By contextualizing Hofmann’s understanding of the atonement within his larger project of advancing a system of theological science, this paper argues that Hofmann’s revision of the doctrine of the atonement was the direct result and application of his concept of theological science.

**Responding**

Johannes Zachhuber, University of Oxford

**A20-419**

North American Hinduism Unit and Religion, Media, and Culture Unit

Theme: *Digital Hindu Publics: How Capital, Community, and Cultural Nationalism Shape Transnational Hindu Social Media Spaces*

Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Deeptangshu Das, University of Denver, Presiding
This panel explores how digital networks foster connection through inclusionary and exclusionary methods of engagement. Each paper addresses how digital religious identities are shaped, hewn, and honed through the strategic use of cultural markers, authenticity politics, and capital networks within social media. The first essay considers two Facebook groups dedicated to Ganesha who use social media posts to build personal connection. The cultivated alliance between capitalism, spiritual guides, and Indian monetary policy within social media spaces grounds the analysis of the second essay. The third essay shows how Hindu nationalists on Twitter engage in gatekeeping authenticity politics to identify so-called “true Hindus”. The final paper examines how “white Hindus” use social media to forge a marginalized positionality. More broadly, this panel attends to the question of how social media enable the production of digital Hindu publics defined by cultural connection, exclusionary canon-building, capital relationships, and an affect of grievance.

- Aditya Bhattacharjee, University of Pennsylvania

*A Facebook Family for the Global Ganesh: Making a Digital Public of Thai-Hindu-Buddhists*

The connections between religious communities and digital media have become an especially salient topic of discussion as scholars imagine what forms religious life may take in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic. My presentation draws upon this body of scholarship to explore the emergence of Facebook groups focused on circulating knowledge about the deity Ganesha among Thai internet users. My main question: How do virtual platforms like the Facebook group accommodate and transform devotion towards Ganesha? Rao Rak Phra Phikhanet and Thevalai Phra Phikhanesuan, two Thai Facebook groups dedicated to Ganesha with thousands of members, function as community spaces where users can post Ganesha photos, list icons for sale, and share anecdotes of excursions to local Ganesha temples or miraculous events in their lives attributed to Ganesha. I argue that social networking services help create new Thai religious publics centered on cultivating direct personal relationships between devotees and Ganesha.

- Justin Henry, Georgia College & State University

Hinduism and the New Spirit of Capitalism: Transactions between Neoliberal Online Discourse in India and North America

This paper examines expressions of proposed unity between Hinduism and free-market ideology in online spaces, giving special attention to reciprocal interaction between content creators and social media users based in India and North America. I characterize actors in the digital media landscape as nodes in a “global neoliberal movement,” exploring ideological congruence as well as avenues of influence between capitalist gurus based both in India and the North America, neoliberal think tanks in the United States and their India-based analogues, and advocates within the current Modi administration for market deregulation and a transition to digital banking for all Indian citizens.
Highlighting rhetoric within the Hindu global neoliberal movement as symptomatic of what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello characterize as the “new spirit of capitalism,” I consider teleological aspects of narratives which embed the nation of India and Hindu traditions within a framework of the liberal marketplace as the maximally moral.

- Juli Gittinger, Georgia College & State University

*Gatekeeping Hinduism: Contesting Voices of Authority and Authenticity on Social Media*

In this paper I discuss “gatekeeping” of Hinduism on social media platforms, most notably Twitter. Gatekeeping refers to the attempt to control or limit the discourse of a particular topic, implying that there are people with more authoritative and authentic knowledge whose job is to keep dilettantes out of the conversation. The presumption of authority and authenticity—two issues that are central to digital discourses—is often associated with voices that represent the insider, the member, the practitioner, and (in the case of Hinduism) the upper caste. I argue that authority and authenticity are central motifs in online religious discourse, and that Hindu nationalists are especially invested in “managing” the representations of and challenges to a particular ideal of Hinduism. This paper will analyze examples of this on Twitter and other platforms, with particular regard to scholars, politicians, or journalists who challenge the BJP’s claims to promoting a true Hinduism.

- Prea Persaud, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

*When the Oppressor becomes the Oppressed: The Problem of the White Convert*

This paper examines the digital presence of white Hindu converts, especially academics, to discuss how these converts perform their religious identity in a way that is never open to racialized scholars. Focusing on social media outlets, blogs, and YouTube videos, I analyze the ways in which white converts talk about their identity, their relationship to Hinduism, and what it means to be an “authentic” Hindu. White converts often prove their “Hinduness” through visible cues, which allow them to solidify their newly found “insider” status, and their criticism of Christians enacting what I term a “decolonization of self.” Conversely, racialized scholars of Hindu heritage battle being tokenized in universities, accusations of being “too close to their subjects,” and fighting against Hindu nationalism. The white academic convert, therefore, gains access, authority, and power they can never have if they simply remained an ally, effectively creating a renewed form of orientalism.

**A20-420**

**Platonism and Neoplatonism Unit**

Theme: *One and Many in Plato and the Platonic Tradition: Varieties of Platonism*

Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Kevin Corrigan, Emory University, Presiding

The question of ‘one and many’ is an issue that steps over different traditions, East and West,
and over many time frames. We explore this issue in varieties of Platonism and Neoplatonism.

- Mark Wiebe, Lubbock Christian University

*Models and Metaphors in the Doctrine of God: An Analysis and Defense of the Doctrine of Divine Simplicity*

Oliver Crisp has recently offered a revision of the doctrine of Divine Simplicity (DDS), reconceiving it as a "model". This enables an affirmation of divine simplicity while avoiding the apparent problematic entailments of the classical doctrine, *viz.*, the identification of God with properties and the identification of those properties with each other. I will assess Crisp’s argument and defend the account of Thomas Aquinas, beginning with an examination of the role of the DDS in Thomas’ theology as well as the potential of Crisp’s proposal. I will then trace out the main features of Thomas’ work relating directly to simplicity as well as other aspects of his writing which can shed further light on this doctrine. I will argue that the Thomistic conception of DDS, bolstered and clarified by Thomas’ portrayal of divine being and essence, can withstand the objections which motivate Crisp to revise the doctrine.

- Samuel Baudinette, University of Chicago

*On Active and Possible Intellect: Eckhart of Gründig’s Account of Beatitude and the Subordination of Grace to Nature as a Problem for Christian Platonism*

The fourteenth-century *Traktat von der wirkenden und möglichen Vernunft* by Eckhart of Gründig stages a debate about whether beatitude is a natural or supernatural perfection. In this paper I show how Eckhart of Gründig argues that beatitude entails a self-knowledge where the human mind is conjoined to an active intellect that flows essentially from and into God. I argue that Eckhart of Gründig, aligning himself with Dietrich of Freiberg against Thomas Aquinas, subordinates the grace that perfects one’s possible intellect in this life to a higher intellectual nature that is always already blessed due to its inherent divinity. The treatise not only witnesses doctrinal tensions within the so-called German Dominican School, I conclude, but also addresses a question central to Christian Platonism itself insofar as it seeks to reconcile nature to supernature, which must be addressed by any constructive account that seeks to articulate a unified, participatory ontology or epistemology.

- Daniel Kimmel, Syracuse University

*Platonism, Theurgy, and Lactantius’ Divine Institutes*

This paper contributes to the study of Platonism in late antiquity by reading Lactantius’ *Divine Institutes* (early 4th century) in dialogue with late ancient Platonist conversations. It demonstrates that Lactantius’ *vera religio*, constructed on the grounds of poetic, philosophical, and oracular evidence, constitutes a philosophical theology that is intimately informed by and in response to debates, questions, and concerns addressed by
contemporary Platonists. These debates include those pertaining to monotheisms, contemplation, ritual, materiality and the body, and theurgy. Insofar as Lactantius constructs Christianity as the equivalent of a concept of vera religio established on grounds shared by Christians and “pagans” alike, he positions Christianity to fulfill the theurgic mission of purifying souls and drawing them upward to divinity. Lactantius’ Divine Institutes, then, is an understudied text of the “Latin West” other than the privileged texts of Augustine (and Origen) in which to fruitfully explore key issues pertaining to Christian Platonism.

- Clelia Attanasio, Cambridge University

The Role of Birds in Richard of St. Victor’s Benjamin Major: the Epistemological Path of the Power of Imagination

Richard of St. Victor elaborated a concrete system of contemplation, developed in detail in his most important mystical text: the Benjamin Major. This path for contemplation started in the imagination, developed into rationality, and finally resulted in the intellect in a moment of maximum ecstasy, called the excessus mentis.

The first part of the soul that is involved in Richard’s mystical theology is the imagination, which especially deals with physical realities. To metaphorically render the power of imagination, Richard compares the motion of the imagination with the flying of the birds (Benjamin Major, I, 5).

The aim of this speech is to shed light on how Richard’s epistemological system is grounded in physical reality, which is a door to the higher levels of reality.

Business Meeting

Douglas Hedley, University of Cambridge, Presiding

A20-421
Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit
Theme: Psychology, Culture, and Religion: Works in Progress
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Kirsten Sonkyo Oh, Azusa Pacific University, Presiding

Sharing of works-in-progress, new publications, and research agendas in the area of psychology, culture, and religion. This is an opportunity to meet and share with colleagues from across disciplines who are connected by an interest in the intersection of psychology, culture, and religion. All are welcome.

Business Meeting

Lisa M. Cataldo, Fordham University, Presiding
Global catastrophe compels scholars of religion to practice forms of engaged scholarship, whether to understand perspectives “on-the-ground” or to ally research with social action. Working toward a critical praxis of religious studies, this roundtable convenes scholars of religion who view public engagement – whether with policymakers, NGOs, the media, or grassroots groups – as integral to their research and advocacy. Engaged scholars of religion will reflect on what they do with public actors and why they do it. Questions will include: What inspired you to engage in public scholarship, what does it mean to you, and how do you practice it? How does engaged work transform the way you understand the role of the researcher and how has it affected you? What are the personal and professional challenges of this work and how do you face them? How can scholarship on religion (better) address the compounded challenges of global catastrophe?

**Panelists**

Jeremy Sorgen, University of California, Berkeley  
Rebecca Bartel, San Diego State University  
Seth Gaiters, University of North Carolina, Wilmington  
Elizabeth Bucar, Northeastern University  
Greg Johnson, University of California, Santa Barbara
The papers in this panel each uniquely explore (non-Christian) religious, spiritual, and cultural traditions in conversation with queer and trans studies in religion.

- Grace Elizabeth Dy, University of Washington  
  Ellen Perleberg, University of Washington

  *Chosen Mishpachah: Exploring Knowledge Transmission in Queer Jewish Communities*

  This study discusses the development of queer Jewish knowledge among LGBTQ+ Jews in Seattle, as well as its transmission and adoption by cis-heterosexuals in shared Jewish spaces within and beyond traditional family systems. Utilizing sociolinguistic ethnographic interviews, this paper demonstrates how queer individuals and families disrupt traditional pathways of religiocultural knowledge transfer, not only in response to exclusion from cisheteronormative family dynamics but also through self-selection into queer-affirming and -led spaces, influenced by both Jewish ethnoreligiosity and growing numbers of interfaith marriages and queer converts to Judaism. Prominent interview trends include younger generations teaching older relatives LGBTQ-affirming language and practices or spurring their adoption in synagogues, creative efforts to ‘queer’ and create inclusive language in religious languages and post-vernacular Jewish diasporic languages, expansive engagement with historical precedents, and multigenerational responses to trauma and catastrophe. Both queer Jewish knowledge itself and its means of transmission foreshadow broad potential queer futurities.

- Sahin Acikgoz, University of Michigan

  *Framing (Trans)Gender: Domestication of Religious, Racial, and Ethnic Difference in Turkish Film Industry*

  In this presentation I focus on the imbrication of race, religion, ethnicity, and gender in visual archives by performing a close reading of the representations of racialized and gendered bodies in Yeşilçam, the prolific national film industry of Turkey in the 20th century. Drawing on critical race theory, trans of color critique, and queer and trans studies in religion, I argue that the afterlife of the Red Sea slave trade dramatically shaped, in both implicit and explicit ways, the foundations of the Turkish film industry. I show that through its incorporation of American filmic representations of racial
difference and stereotypes, Turkish cinema not only facilitated cinematic imperialism but also projected the religious, racialized, sexualized, and gendered anxieties/ramifications of the Red Sea slave trade onto the screen. This, I conclude, served the state-sponsored agenda of consolidating the ontological exceptionality of the country’s racialized and religious minorities.

- Justin Sabia-Tanis, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities

*The Next World: Art and Queer Survivance*

Cristy C. Roads, a Cuban-American artist, says “Merging my ancestral magic and my deep elevation of the universe over capitalism and materialism has been a long journey.” This spirituality is evident in the seventy-eight beautifully illustrated cards of her *Next World Tarot*, which show trans and queer people in the midst of a dystopian landscape advocating for justice, holding their power, or celebrating their differences. We see a wide range of bodies, colors, and issues; together the deck weaves this diversity into a common call for justice and a key to survival of queer people beyond the fall of neo-capitalist patriarchy. This paper will examine *The Next World Tarot* in dialogue with queer theological writings on survivance, utopianism and the environment. The deck itself is a prediction of queer survival and flourishing, offering a vision of our strength.

- Emma Thompson, Princeton University

*Strategic Secularism: Indian Queer Activism and the Muslim Other*

Drawing on fieldwork conducted with two Indian queer activist organizations, one Muslim and one religiously non-affiliated, this paper examines how their relationships to secularism are framed by their negotiations between local and global demands. The relationship between queer activism and secularism is complicated by rising Hindu nationalism in India alongside the demands of international NGO networks that often control access to resources. This paper examines how each group deploys tropes related to secularism to further their activism in the face of competing demands even when they do not name secularism itself. Engaging with Joseph Massad and Jasbir Puar, among others, this paper argues that languages of secularism can be used strategically by queer activists, and especially queer Muslim activists, against Hindu (homo)nationalism without capitulating to normative Western models of queer secularity. However, this strategic use is not without risks.

- Learned Foote, Rice University

*Tibetan Sky Dancers and Queer Theory*

My proposal examines the auto/biographies of the Tibetan lama Adzom Drukpa (1842-1924) through a queer lens focusing on these texts’ treatments of gender and sexuality. I analyze gender as culturally situated and contingent—something that might not translate. However, as Rachel H. Pang shows in her treatment of Tibetan auto/biography, the
distance between contemporary scholars and the people who composed the text invites an opportunity for methodological reflection. Self-theorizing seeks the insider perspective in highlighting the terms texts use to explain themselves, while recognizing also the ways in which the scholar is an outsider to the contexts in which the texts emerged. This method disrupts the boundaries of received English-language categories. Building on Pang and queer Buddhist feminists like Hsiao-Lan Hu and Bee Scherer, I highlight the social context of the texts while engaging questions about how gender, sexuality, queer and woman have been constructed in contemporary discourses.

Business Meeting

Brandy Daniels, University of Portland, Presiding

A20-423
Books under Discussion
Religion and Politics Unit
Theme: Authors Meet Critics: The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy (Oxford University Press, 2022)
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
John D. Carlson, Arizona State University, Presiding

Most Americans were shocked by the violence they witnessed at the Capitol on January 6th, 2021. Where some saw a confusing jumble, Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry saw a familiar ideology: white Christian nationalism. In their new book, Gorski and Perry explain what white Christian nationalism is and is not; when it first emerged and how it has changed; and where it's headed and why it threatens democracy. The future of American democracy, Gorski and Perry argue, will depend on whether a broad spectrum of Americans stretching from democratic socialists to classical liberals can unite in a popular front to combat the threat to liberal democracy posed by white Christian nationalism. In this panel, Gorski and Perry engage with three experts on religion and politics in the US and abroad.

Panelists

Sarah Riccardi-Swartz, Arizona State University
Bradley Onishi, Skidmore College
Jocelyne Cesari, Harvard University

Responding

Samuel Perry, University of Chicago
Philip Gorski, Yale University

A20-424
Religion and Public Schools: International Perspectives Unit
Theme: What is the Impact of Religion Education? Secularism, Religious Literacy, and Interreligious Pedagogy in Practice
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Angela Bernardo, Sapienza University of Rome, Presiding

This session brings together papers that offer analyses of the impact of RE practices in the United States and Europe with a focus on religious literacy, secularism, and interreligious pedagogy. Specifically, this session takes into account religious literacy education outcomes, discourses on religion from a secular point of view, and identity formation processes in interreligious educational contexts.

- Kate Soules, Boston College

*Does religious literacy education make any difference and how do we know? A review of evaluation and assessment practices in religious literacy education*

Religious literacy education generally starts with claims of pro-social outcomes such as greater civic engagement, decreased religiously-motivated bullying and violence, and more positive attitudes towards pluralism. While these are valuable goals, they are also extensive and highly ambitious. This paper explores how, or if, we know that we are achieving these outcomes we claim are possible from religious literacy education. A review of the literature on existing research and practices around assessment and evaluation in religious literacy education, supplemented by interviews with religious literacy educators, reveals the shortcomings in both baseline and outcomes focused evaluations. A better understanding and implementation of appropriate methods and questions for religious literacy assessment and evaluation can enable the field to more effectively demonstrate its value and necessity in a crowded educational landscape.

- Lina Hauan, University of Southeastern Norway

*Conversations about religion: critique, conflict, and curiosity*

This paper presents findings from a case study of religion education in three Norwegian upper secondary classrooms, exploring how different discourses on religion were expressed in plenary class discussions and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. In my analysis, I have identified three conspicuous themes; *critique, conflict,* and *curiosity*. Secularist criticism and conflict perspectives dominated the conceptions of religion that were created in plenary classroom conversations. Particularly in one of the classes, an atheist outsider perspective was given connotations of neutrality and thereby difficult to argue against. Many students with a more religious view ended up withdrawing from discussions, feeling they would not be listened to. Curiosity towards religion were not easily detectable in classroom discussions, but more common in interviews and anonymous reflection notes. Although this conception of religion was not expressed as openly, it can modify the impression of a strong secularist view of religion among my informants.

- Nicole Bauer, University of Innsbruck
Religion and Identity in Interreligious Education Processes in Austria: Results of a Qualitative Study

In this paper I examine religious identity formation processes in interreligious education in Austria. To understand constructions of identity in the context of interreligious educational processes, I focus on theories of social and collective identity and highlight processes of the construction of religious identity. In interreligious education, individuals are constantly challenged through their experiences with ‘boundaries’, challenged to reflect upon their religious identity and to defend it when appropriate. The boundary becomes the focal point where personal and religious identity are primarily negotiated. The analysis focuses on constructions of religion, identity and alterity within interreligious education processes.

Business Meeting

Erik Owens, Boston College, Presiding

A20-437
Religions and Families in North America Seminar
Theme: Religion and Families in North America: Looking forward to next steps
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Mandy McMichael, Baylor University, Presiding

This roundtable offers insights into what "family" as a methodological approach to the study of religion might offer scholars. We will also explore the metaphor of family in religious congregations and in our own work. Laura McTighe Will focus on family not as a topic of inquiry, but as a method for studying differently. Drawing on the intimacies of my work as a scholar and organizer in our country’s movements to end AIDS and abolish prisons, She traces what is opened and foreclosed when scholars claim our interlocutors—whether in the field or the archive—as “family.” Susan Ridgely will discuss the ways that attending to the use of the term "family" in terms of flows of power as well as feeling of closeness helps to broaden our perspective on the usefulness of the metaphor in religious communities and beyond.

Panelists

Laura McTighe, Florida State University
Susan Ridgely, University of Wisconsin

Business Meeting

Samira Mehta, University of Colorado, Presiding

A20-425
Sacred Texts and Ethics Unit
Theme: Reconsidering Genre in Religious Ethics
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Close consideration of the relationships between historical texts, genres, and ethics opens up live questions about the ethical possibilities and limitations of various genres. As noted in the introduction to the *Journal of Religious Ethics*’s 2005 Focus Section on genre and persuasion, contemporary ethical inquiry cannot afford to ignore such concerns. Human moral imagination and ethical life is shaped by a far wider range of genres than the philosophical essay, to which so much ethical inquiry has been reduced. What ethical work do various genres perform and preclude? Are some genres better suited than others to certain modes of ethical reasoning and cultivation? We conceive of this session, which ranges from early China to medieval Andalusia and Persia to the nineteenth-century Black Atlantic, as a cross-cultural, comparative conversation about textual genres and religious ethics.

- Nicholas Andersen, Tufts University

*Pan-Africanism and Ethics in Martin Delany’s Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party*

This paper explores the ethical possibilities engendered by Martin Delany's 1861 *Official Report of the Niger Valley Exploring Party*. It considers what conditions of moral inquiry and practice the *Official Report* performatively establishes and projects as an ostensibly scientific report of West African life formally authorized by the 1854 National Emigration Convention of Colored People’s Board of Commissioners. I also address the kind of subjects presupposed by the *Official Report* and the kind of moral relations it wants to establish between them, particularly in view of Delany’s claim that the text “certainly is intended for information.” In view of the racial identification the *Official Report* stipulates between West Africans and Black Americans, I also explicate the pan-Africanist ethical obligations that Delany implies ought to structure their relations.

- Raissa Von Doetinchem De Rande, Rhodes College

*Reason, Revelation, and the Significance of Genre: Considering Ibn Masarra (d. 931)’s and Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185)’s Approach to the Promises and Pitfalls of Reasoned Ascent*

This paper compares the ways in which Ibn Masarra’s *Epistle of Contemplation (Risālat al-iʿtibār)* and Ibn Ṭufayl’s famous philosophical tale, *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, argue for the possibility of reasoned ascent to truth without the help of religion and for the convergence of this ascent with the claims of revealed knowledge. The author examines the implications of generic difference for each figure’s argument—where Ibn Masarra writes an exhortation, Ibn Ṭufayl adopts the medium of a tale. While observing a basic argumentative overlap, she shows how these choices matter for their claims, and that attending to the differences in packaging and framing can help us appreciate the uniquely political dimension of Ibn Ṭufayl’s tale as well as its desired non-specialist audience.

- Cyril Uy, James Madison University
Prayer, Deconstruction, and Boundless Play: Knowing and Being in Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūya’s (d. 1252) Avant-Garde Sufism

"Prayer, Deconstruction, and Boundless Play" focuses on the work of Sa’d al-Dīn Ḥamūya (d. 1252), a Mongol-era Sufi whose arcane treatises both bewildered and inspired future generations of occultists, mystics, and messiahs. For medieval Sufis, to achieve perfect knowledge was to adapt oneself perfectly to each and every moment; to endlessly reassess and represent one's self amidst a plurality of subjective possibilities. Contextualizing Ḥamūya within this broader ethical-epistemological landscape, the paper explores how the shaykh's work enacts a dialogical interplay between text and audience, transforming the bodies of his readers into laboratories within which the meaning of his words could become manifest as boundless play. If we understand medieval Sufi knowledge as an embodied sensibility that interfaces between a plurality of abstract and experiential frames, then I argue that Ḥamūya’s performative language provoked his readers to realize that their mechanisms of negotiation were themselves negotiable.

- Christopher Yang, Brown University

On Didactic Verse and Psychagogy in Early Daoist Texts

This paper examines a form of didactic verse found in the Zhuangzi and Huainanzi and its use in exercises of the visual imagination. It argues that these were intended to transform the subject’s basic sensibilities, to induce non-attachment and a sense of unity with the cosmic whole. It emphasizes the key role of text and textual genre in such practices in the early Chinese context, and shows how a contemporaneous belief in the incantatory power of words to effect change in the world—exploited by poets and exorcists alike—was here harnessed for purposes of ethical cultivation, to instill in oneself and others the desired attitudes and orientation to the world.

A20-426
Science, Technology, and Religion Unit
Theme: The Language and Politics of Science-Engaged Theology: Jewish and Christian Approaches
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Joanna Leidenhag, University of Leeds, Presiding

An ethicist, a Jewish theologian, a queer theologian, an intellectual historian, a philosopher of science, and a physicist all sit down at AAR…and discuss what the shift towards the language of ‘science-engaged theology’ really means. What are the methodological assumptions, historical forerunners, political undercurrents, and interreligious possibilities for this new movement? What does the case study of a comparative science-engaged theology of language reveal about these questions? This roundtable draws together a diverse range of scholars, each world-leading experts in their own fields, and each with a stake in the new sub-field of ‘science-engaged theology’.
Panelists

Jesse Couenhoven, Villanova University
Mark Harris, University of Edinburgh
Meghan Page, Loyola University, Maryland
Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, Arizona State University
Linn Tonstad, Yale University
Daniel Weiss, University of Cambridge

A20-427
Sikh Studies Unit
Theme: Orality and Aurality
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Nirinjan Khalsa, Loyola Marymount University, Presiding

Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Sikh histories and practices have been made legible primarily through Sikh texts and a privileged catalogue of ‘established’ canonical scholarship. This epistemological archive is embedded in and refracted through positivist and orientalist lenses and is the normative framework through which Sikh narratives have often been made intelligible. However, in the past two decades or so an ethnographic turn to ‘lived religions’ in Sikh Studies has emerged, and with it a nascent recognition of orality/aurality and its implications for interpreting Sikh histories, narratives, and practices. Panelists will discuss oral histories and colonial discourses of immigration and multiculturalism in relation to the Alberta Sikh History Project, Sikh American History Project, and Sikh Heritage Museum. In this context, heritage kīrtan compositions will be analyzed as aural-oral modes to memorize and transmit the Sikh Gurūs’ teachings, constituting a ‘sonic archive’ of Sikh literature.

Panelists

Michael Hawley, Mount Royal University
Francesca Cassio, Hofstra University
Tejpal Bainiwal, University of California, Riverside
Sharanjit Kaur Sandhra, University of the Fraser Valley

Business Meeting

Jasjit Singh, University of Leeds, Presiding

A20-404
Professional Development
Student Lounge Roundtable
Theme: Imposter Syndrome, the Pressures of Academia, and Mutual Support
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Sabina Ali, Indiana University, Presiding

Many early career scholars, researchers, and practitioners grapple with the conundrum of
academia by trying to take advantage of the opportunities and privileges of the academy while also grappling with its pitfalls, such as bureaucracy, career pressures, competition for jobs, politics, and isolation. Focusing on mental health, this roundtable discussion will create a safe and meaningful space for participants to discuss their experiences of academia and to think through pathways and opportunities of mutual support. We will also approach this topic by thinking with scholars and public intellectuals who have lived exemplary lives in dedicating themselves to both their fields as well as to their communities and humanity at large. The discussion generated in this roundtable will help us to reflect on and re-evaluate our career pathways, connecting our identities and stories with our academic contributions and trajectories. Students of any level are welcome to attend and do not need to have prepared any materials.

Panelists

Alexander McCrae, Concordia University, Montreal

A20-428
Study of Islam Unit
Theme: Adapt ing Islamic Law in Contemporary Social Contexts
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Francesca Chubb-Confer, University of Chicago, Presiding

This panel will explore different approaches to Islamic law.

- Esra Tunc, University of California, Santa Barbara

  *Zakat and Forms of Sociality in Financialized Philanthropy*

  Zakat, commonly translated as obligatory Muslim giving, attracts special attention in the settings of Islamic finance and philanthropy. With a focus on Islam in the United States, this paper examines different interpretations of zakat by practitioners and religious authoritative figures in the settings of financialized philanthropy and the implications of these interpretations for intersecting structural injustices. Based on intensive fieldwork in US-based organizations that facilitate Muslim giving and investing, this paper demonstrates that the ordering of modalities of Muslim giving in these settings encourages forms of sociality that are deeply connected to larger financial and philanthropic structures and operations. Through insight from conversations on abolition geography and practices of mutual aid, this paper suggests “an ‘otherwise’ philanthropy” to imagine alternative modalities of living beyond those that are created by financialized philanthropy.

- Seyed Hossein Hosseini Nassab, Emory University

  *HIV AIDS in Islamic Jurisprudential Works: Sunni and Shi’i Perspectives*

  This is a study of the Islamic jurisprudence of HIV AIDS in the works of two prominent Islamic jurists: Muḥammad al-Mukhtar al-Mahdī’s (d. 1437H/2016) from the Sunni sect
of Islam and Hasan Al-Jawāhirī’s (born 1328H/1949AD) from the Shi’i sect. Furthermore, this paper brings Islamic modernists who have written on HIV AIDS in Islam into the study.

Despite their differences, Mahdī’s and Jawāhirī’s works use some similar methods however, for example by employing the legal maxim lā ḍarar wa-lā-ḍirār (there should be no harm and no reciprocation of harm). While Jawāhirī portrays a more compassionate approach towards AIDS patients, Mahdī drastically changed his position to a less inimical position in the third edition of his work in comparison with the first two editions of his work, showing that his viewpoints on AIDS were in progress.

- Sohaib Khan, Williams College

_Secularizing the Shari’a? How Deobandi-Muslim Jurists Authorized the Limited Liability Corporation_

Scholars of religion have recently turned their attention to the corporate form as a site for novel forms of religious world-making and organization. This renewed interest takes its inspiration from structural similarities between practices of belonging and proselytization adopted by multi-national corporations and large-scale religious organizations. This paper intervenes in existing debates on the forms of similitude between religion and the corporate form by focusing on an Indo-Muslim clerical community’s attempt to religiously grapple with the modern corporation. In particular, it examines an internal debate amongst Pakistan’s Deobandi-Muslim jurists over recognizing the limited liability corporation by establishing its religious kinship with the Islamic charitable endowment (waqf). The paper gleans theoretical lessons from this internal debate to improve upon existing frameworks of secularization that otherwise remain inadequate to an understanding of religious and secular entanglements in postcolonial contexts.

A20-429

Study of Judaism Unit
Theme: Jewish Memory and the Politics of Place in and beyond Israel/Palestine
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Rachel Gordan, University of Florida, Presiding

These papers consider how contemporary Jews have oriented their political and religious imaginations through origin stories and narratives of place, in the United States, in Israel/Palestine, and in France. The first paper tracks varying approaches to the concept of Jewish “indigeneity,” from contradictory biblical attitudes toward both the land and strangers to contemporary Jews who link environmental concerns to a project of “decolonizing Judaism.” The remaining papers explore divergent case studies of the relationship between Jewish place-making and identity. The second paper highlights the complex interplay of memory and aesthetics at a shared pilgrimage destination, the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron. The third paper considers the Jewish-Muslim encounter within the thought and activism of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa in 1980s France. It explores how legacies of colonialism produced divergent understandings of Jewish identities vis-a-vis Muslims who emigrated from and to the
same places.

- David Seidenberg, Northampton, MA

*Decolonizing and Colonizing: Paradoxes of Jewish Environmentalism, Jewish Power, and Jewish Identity*

The biblical religious traditions that birthed Judaism are indigenous to Canaan/Israel/Palestine. At the same time, the Tanakh very explicit claims that the Israelites, or anachronistically the Jewish people, are not from and not formed in Canaan. By its nature, this claim problematizes the idea of indigeneity. the same time, two broad sectors of the Jewish community -- the Jewish environmental movement, and nationalistic pro-settlement Zionists -- are highly motivated for different reasons to claim indigeneity, in ways that can be seen as variously genuine or manipulative. The question, however, should not be, "Is Judaism indigenous?" but rather, "What are the ways in which Judaism is indigenous, and what are the ways in which it is not?" or perhaps more directly, "How can we query the idea of indigeneity to help make sense of these contradictions?"

- Gideon Elazar, Ariel University, Bar Ilan University
  Miriam Billig, Ariel University

*Shared Space and Shared Memory in a Contested City: Walking through Hebron's Tomb of the Patriarchs*

The Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron is the most significant shared religious site in the Holy Land; a complex lieux de mémoire (Nora 1989), sacred to all three monotheistic religions, commemorating a single set of Biblical/Quranic figures and a focal point of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the past several decades the site has been divided into Jewish and Muslim sections, with both religious groups granted exclusive control over the entire compound for a total of ten days annually. This lecture examines the esthetic and symbolic language within the interior of the Tomb of the Patriarchs as an expression of the site's shifting and multilayered religious meaning. Analysis of the site and the periodical conversion of space is aimed at revealing the tactics employed to create multiple strata of sacred space and memory within a single contested site.

- Mendel Kranz, University of Chicago

*The Politics of the Arab-Jew in Postcolonial France*

This paper takes up two projects oriented around Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) Jews in France in the 1980s; and it argues that these projects illustrate the complex ways the colonial legacy continued to impact MENA Jews and their relationship to other North African immigrants. MENA Jews occupy an ambiguous place in France’s racial and political hierarchy, especially in relation to Muslim immigrants. Though subjects of colonialism and often racially targeted, as Jews, they were allowed to
assimilate more easily into the French imaginary. This ambiguity elicited different responses; some attempted to entirely separate the two communities while others saw in them more entangled histories. Today, as the borders between Jews and Muslims in France are often seen as insurmountable, this moment in the 1980s of MENA Jewish self-articulation and exploration offers a microcosm for how to think more critically and generatively about these entangled histories.

A20-405
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Sessions Honoring AAR Award Winners

Teaching and Learning Committee
Theme: A Conversation with Rabbi Laura Duhan-Kaplan, Ph.D.
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Jessica Tinklenberg, Claremont Colleges, Presiding

Join us for an informal conversation and Q&A with the 2022 Katie Geneva Cannon Excellence in Teaching awardee, Rabbi Laura Duhan-Kaplan. Rabbi Duhan-Kaplan currently serves as Director of Inter-religious Studies and Professor of Jewish Studies at Vancouver School of Theology. Rabbi Duhan-Kaplan is an innovative educator in both her institution and community, and a passionate advocate for interfaith dialogue and social change.

Panelists

Laura Duhan-Kaplan, Vancouver School of Theology

A20-430
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe

Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit
Theme: This Is the End: Apocalypse in Contemporary Theory
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Anthony Paul Smith, La Salle University, Presiding

This panel brings together papers examining the theme of apocalypse as it forms the theoretical horizon for work in contemporary phenomenology, Black studies, and political theology.

- Matthew Peterson, University of Chicago

Apocalypse beyond Disclosure: On Jean Vioulac's Monstrous Phenomenology

In this paper I turn to the work of French philosopher Jean Vioulac to suggest that a properly philosophical approach to our contemporary catastrophes must view them as effects of a crisis of thinking. Drawing upon phenomenology, Marxism, and the history of Christian thought, Vioulac elaborates a notion of truth as apocalypse that turns to the figure of the monster to imagine events that would otherwise escape philosophical reflection—global capitalism, ecological collapse, totalitarian politics, and cyberspace. For Vioulac, apocalypse names both a continuous historical event as well as a structure of
experience. He arrives at this notion through a turn to theological sources, but also via readings of Marx, Nietzsche, and Husserl. I argue that Vioulac ultimately models a novel approach to the philosophy of religion and its attendant politics that offers an alternative to the new theological and speculative turns in contemporary continental thought.

- Thomas Lynch, University of Chichester

*New Apocalyptic Tones? Continental Philosophy Beyond the Continent and the Question of the World*

Forty years ago, Derrida wrote of a new apocalyptic tone in philosophy. He describes a sense of an ending, not only of the world, but of the possibilities it offers. In this paper, I identify potentially new apocalyptic tones that break with key theological dimensions of apocalypticism, severing its concern with redemption and the satisfaction of final judgment. I trace these ideas through the work of Frank B. Wilderson III, Jared Sexton and Denise Ferreira da Silva in order to make two key arguments. First, it is unclear whether or not these discussions of the end of the world should be interpreted as apocalyptic. Second, despite some similarities, there are different understandings of world at work in these perspectives. I conclude by arguing that these new apocalyptic tones show that continental philosophy remains too unreflective about its position in the world that must end.

- Andrew Kaplan, Emory University

*Apocalypse of Blackness: Afropessimist Meditations*

This paper’s title takes its inspiration from Jean Vioulac’s *Apocalypse of Truth* (2021). While Vioulac does not discuss how our modern epoch of truth is shaped by racial slavery, I propose that his text can be read in part as an unconscious allegory of anti-/Blackness. Vioulac mobilizes the biblical conception of apocalypse as revelation (apokálypsis) against the Greek conception of truth as disclosure (alētheia). For Vioulac, the Pauline thought of apocalypse entails a leap into a wholly other thinking—marked by the modalities of faith, flesh, mystery, abyss, and absence—wherein which nothingness is no longer held at bay as mere privation but instead indexes “the Undisclosable’s positivity.” The emphases in Vioulac’s elaboration of apocalypse as an attunement to abyssal absence—which convicts the World’s truth of error—deeply resonates with Afropessimism’s paradigmatic analysis of anti-Blackness and can help one understand Afropessimism’s apocalyptic demand as a discourse of revelation.

- Kimberly Matheson, Loyola University Chicago

*Inconsistent Apocalypse: Giorgio Agamben and Francois Laruelle*

Agamben and Laruelle are each, in their own way, thinkers of apocalypse. Each is in conversation with that fundamentally apocalyptic tradition, Christianity, and each is invested in overturning the world as we know it. What’s more, each has a kind of final
instance that is key to their thought: “the time that remains” (for Agamben) and “determination in-the-last-instance” (for Laruelle). This paper compares these two instances, asking what kind of apocalyptic vision they share in common. Together, Agamben and Laruelle intervene in apocalyptic discourses by claiming that the end of the world is not a question of the world’s completion but, rather, the world’s inconsistency. At the same time, however, Laruelle’s picture is to be preferred because it cashes out in a positive project whereas Agamben leaves readers stranded in a kind of mysticism.

A20-431
Books under Discussion

**Theology of Martin Luther King Jr. Unit**
Theme: *A Dream or a Nightmare? A Roundtable on James Cone's Martin & Malcolm & America (Orbis, 1991)*
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Pamela Lightsey, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Presiding

This roundtable reflects on James Cone’s Martin & Malcolm & America: A Dream or a Nightmare. Published in 1991, Martin & Malcolm & America places King and X in conversation, making it clear that reading these two American prophets alongside each other offers an otherwise missing understanding of their contributions to the American Civil Rights movement. Claiming that “Malcolm and Martin symbolize two necessary ingredients” in justice work and that “we need them together,” Cone’s work leaves us with a significant well to draw from in light of current questions and pursuits of justice. Panelists will critically reflect on this important text while offering a constructive analysis on Cone’s argument and insightful visions on how Martin King and Malcolm X offer resources for addressing modern Civil Rights concerns.

**Panelists**
Victor Anderson, Vanderbilt University
AnneMarie Mingo, Pennsylvania State University
Stanley Talbert, Union Theological Seminary
Michele Watkins, University of San Diego

**Business Meeting**
Leonard McKinnis, University of Illinois, Presiding

A20-432

**Western Esotericism Unit**
Theme: *A World of Hidden Masters: Conspiracy Theories, Religion, and the Occult*
Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Christa Shusko, Linnaeus University, Presiding

This roundtable will explore the intersections between esotericism, conspiracy theories,
conspirituality, and politics.

**Panelists**

Egil Asprem, Stockholm University  
Fredrik Gregorius, Linkoping University  
Joseph Laycock, Texas State University  
Giovanna Parmigiani, Harvard University  
Amy Hale, Atlanta, GA

**A20-433**  
**Women and Religion Unit**  
**Theme:** Reflection on Radical Praxis  
**Sunday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)**  
Georgette Ledgister, Harvard University, Presiding

Taking race, gender, and sexuality as analytical tools, this session critically explores how women collectively create the network against persistent gender-based violence in the U.S. asylum system, and sexual and racial violence in the church. Authors also critically reflect on how women use their wisdom to create a new relationship with (post) colonized land and/or new strategies to help each other during the COVID-19 pandemic. The session examines not only the U.S. context but also transnational contexts.

- **Paola Cavaliere, Osaka University**

  **COVID-19 as a crisis of reproductive labour: women’s search for religious and spiritual coping strategies in Japan**

  The COVID-19-induced ‘new normal’ has intensified Japanese women’s precarious employment status and undermined the living conditions across lower and middle-class women, a situation exacerbated by heightened unpaid reproductive labour. This study uses descriptive phenomenology to explore how the pandemic-induced crisis in reproductive labour relates to women’s search for religious or spiritual coping strategies. Narratives have been collected since September 2020 from thirty-two respondents composed of a mix of religious-affiliated and self-identified non-religious middle-class women practising temple meditation and yoga at a Rinzai Zen Buddhist Temple in Osaka Prefecture. Findings indicate that more women, including religious affiliates, have favoured spiritual strategies in that they tend to downplay gender-conforming ideas of the care economy and its emphasis on dedication and dependency. This paper concludes that, in the Japanese context, the current reproductive labour crisis is expected to spark increased demand for spiritual care and emotional support beyond institutional religion that might as well be provided by religious professionals in religious settings.

- **Aixin Aydin, University of Texas**
Gender-based violence as religious persecution in the U.S. asylum system

Gender-based violence is not a protected ground within the U.S. asylum system. For a victim of gender-based violence to win asylum, they must connect the violence they suffered to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or particular social group. In this paper, I argue that gender-based violence is a form of religious persecution. Based on Saba Mahmood’s work on the body’s relationship to the cultivation of piety, I demonstrate how domestic violence and sexual abuse necessarily interferes with the development of ethical subjectivity. Then, through an examination of asylum applications and guides from immigration nonprofits, I demonstrate how asylum-seeking women already utilize religious reasonings to describe their persecution and point out how legal practitioners omit religious persecution as a nexus.

- Hilary Scarsella, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School

Racial Terror and Sexual Abuse in the Church

This paper explores what investigating the ethical and spiritual problem of belief (i.e. believing survivors) in connection with racial terror lynching does for our understanding of sexual violence itself, as well as our understanding of the contemporary struggle to address sexual violence in Christian communities of faith. I read lynching as a form of traumatic racial violence that sometimes included sexual torture and commonly was justified by a sexual rationale. On these grounds, I conceptualize lynching as a form of sexual violence perpetrated against black individuals and communities. By reading black testimonies of lynching as survivor narratives, I construct a praxis for believing survivors today, grounded in the reality that sexual violence is disproportionately used as a weapon of racial domination. I treat belief in both its epistemological and spiritual dimensions.

- Himanee Gupta-Carlson, State University of New York, Empire State College

Spirituality and Farming on Settler-Colonialist Lands: An Autoethnographic Reflection

This paper offers an autoethnographic reflection on the relationships between land and self, farming and settler-colonialism, and healing from trauma through consciousness of historic violence. I draw on Gloria Anzaldúa’s “mestiza consciousness” to position myself within movements aimed at uprooting racism in the food system and establishing food sovereignty. I share the story of a farm I co-own and operate, and place that story within histories of American colonial settlement in upstate New York alongside narratives of resilience in Indigenous knowledge creation narratives. I argue that farming in settler-colonialist spaces offers an opportunity to heal one’s self of present trauma through a gaining of consciousness of the potential connectivity between present-day illness and historic violence. I further argue that a need to consider how we interact with land and work for food justice is of particular importance amid a global pandemic, ongoing climate change, and continued outbreaks of war.
The body is central to yogic traditions—the instrument of practice, a means to supernatural powers, an object of discipline and worship. The yogic body is also gendered. Gender is ascribed to the body and embedded in the development and understanding of yogic praxis. While much attention has been paid to ritual, physical, exegetical, and social dimensions of the yogic body in general, emic theorizations of the gendered body remain largely understudied. Featuring an array of interdisciplinary ethnographic, textual, and historical methods, these papers investigate the ways in which yogic and tantric texts and communities have developed complex theorizations of gender, from the medieval period in Tantric literature in Sanskrit, to 18th century Telugu literature, to modern Iyengar Yoga communities. As a whole, the panel illuminates concepts in yogic and tantric practice that communicate and define gendered social, soteriological, and cosmological realities in historical, textual, and contemporary yogic and tantric traditions.

- Agi Wittich, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

*Embodying Femininity: Menstruation-Oriented Iyengar Yoga as Gender Performativity*

Although Yoga could involve the transcendence of gender, this paper argues that Menstruation-Oriented Iyengar Yoga (MO-IY) enacts femininity among its members. MO-IY describes the systematized postural practice that was created to suit menstruating IY-members. I argue that MO-IY engages in gender performativity by labeling its members as “menstruating women”. In addition to the gendered label of “women”, IY-members bear the negative connotation menstruation carries in Western and non-Western societies. Second, since MO-IY is contrasted with “general” IY, it defines IY-members as non-ordinary, or “womanhood” as “otherhood”. Third, through spatial separation, a “Red Tent” appears, which functions similarly to “menstruating hut”, common in South Asia. IY’s official stand regarding MO-IY echoes Anita Diamant’s novel, which described the Red Tent as a place where women support each. Lastly, in the Red Tent, power dynamics resemble a “Panopticon,” employing power over the bodies of IY-members, and setting “correct” ways of behavior/movement.

- Aalekhya Malladi, Emory University

*Gender, Guise, and Performance: Analyzing the Cūḍāla Episode in a Telugu Yoga Vāsiṣṭha*

In an episode of the Yoga Vaśiṣṭha, a queen, Cūḍāla, takes on the guise of a brahmin man to guide her husband Śikhidhvaja (who rejected her teaching when she was a woman) to liberation. After taking on multiple guises, ultimately, she succeeds. This episode raises
the question—is gender an impediment on the spiritual path? Or is perception of gender as real an impediment? This paper analyzes the role of gender and gendered guising in the Cūḍāla episode of Tarigonda Vengamamba’s Telugu version of the Yoga Vāsiṣṭha. I argue that this episode, by parodying stereotypical “erudite brahmin male” and “wanton female” figures, demonstrates a particular theorization of gender as a construct. Finally, I analyze the performative impact of Vengamamba, a yogini and a woman with a nuanced approach to gender and yoga, adapting this text.

• Sundari Johansen Hurwitt, California Institute of Integral Studies

She Who is the Body of Yoga (yogavapuṣā): Interrogating the Child Body in Kaula Tantrism

Throughout the history of Tantrism, several methods of veneration and worship of young females known as kumārīs and kanyās—“virgins” or “maiden”—are prescribed in Tantric literature. Mentioned only briefly in medieval literature, the worship and ritual participation of kumārīs and kanyās becomes philosophically significant in post-13th-century Kaula revival literature such as the Kulārṇava Tantra, and especially in late medieval and early modern Tantric literature of Bengal and the Northeast, including the Nīla Tantra, Bṛhannīla Tantra, Kaulāvalī Nirṇaya, Rudrayāmalā, and Yoginī Tantra. Little research has been done to investigate their role in the development of Tantrism. In this paper, I investigate the frequently overlooked role of children in Tantric practice, locating and differentiating the kumārī and the ṭīrand in Tantric philosophy and praxis particularly in regard to sexuality and menstrual fluids. In doing so, I demonstrate the need for a revision of our understanding of the female Tantric body.

• Ruth Westoby, SOAS University of London

Masculinity, depletion, and the reversal of reproduction in haṭha yoga

This paper draws on the Sanskrit corpus of early haṭha texts, 11th-15th centuries CE, to argue that the ṭīrṇaizing principles of yoga praxis derive from concern over seminal depletion with a genealogy in medical and sexual accounts of reproduction and masculinity. The sources focus on seminal retention for male practitioners, who in the process develop perfect bodies. This is not sexual puritanism. Although it appears that the preoccupation of the texts with semen retention (bindu) and the sublimation of sexual arousal (kundalinī) are fully accounted by a psycho-analytical explanation of anxiety over virility, a more specific genealogy is found in the histories of medicine and the yogic body. I argue that the function of the yogic body in the haṭha corpus builds on medical accounts of reproduction to engineer a reverse embryology. I productively explore this through the rubric of masculinity studies.

Responding

Anya Foxen, California Polytechnic State University
Business Meeting

Christopher Patrick Miller, Arihanta Academy, Presiding

A21-100
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons

Program Committee
Theme: Program Unit Chairs' Breakfast
Monday, 7:30 AM-8:45 AM (In Person)
Whitney Bauman, Florida International University, Presiding

Program Unit Chairs are invited to a breakfast featuring information on upcoming program initiatives and celebrating their contributions to the AAR Annual Meeting.

A21-100a
Professional Development - Publishing

Applied Religious Studies Committee
Theme: Writing for a Popular Audience: Six Scholars in Conversation
Monday, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM (In Person)
Jana Riess, Religion News Service, Presiding

In this roundtable session, six religion scholars who have successfully crossed over into writing general market books and op eds share their personal stories about what it takes to write for a popular audience as well as an academic one. They will discuss how they first got started in writing for that hard-to-pinpoint “general reader,” what works and what doesn’t in communicating effectively, and why public scholarship about religion is important. They will also talk about how their non-scholarly writing has affected their careers and influenced their professional choices. There will be time allotted for audience Q&A at the end of the session.

Panelists

Anthea Butler, University of Pennsylvania
Kristin Kobes Du Mez, Calvin University
Pete Enns, Eastern University
Stephen Prothero, Boston University
Simran Jeet Singh, New York University
Kate Bowler, Duke University

A21-137
Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Committee
Theme: Business Meeting
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Nicole Kirk, Meadville Lombard Theological School, Presiding
A business meeting for the Academic Labor and Contingent Faculty Committee.

**Panelists**

Willie J. Jennings, Yale University

**A21-102**
Professional Development

**Academic Relations Committee**
Theme: Religion and DEI: Possibilities and Limitations
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Susan E. Hill, University of Northern Iowa, Presiding

This panel will investigate the possibilities and limitations of using traditional DEI frameworks (with their understandings of religion and religion as it relates to race) to accommodate religious diversity concerns. We are interested in the conceptual concern, but the second part of the panel will be given over assembling a list of ideas and strategies, both to make students of religious minorities feel acknowledged and welcome and to produce graduates who are sensitive to issues of religious diversity beyond the campus environment.

**Panelists**

Samira Mehta, University of Colorado
Melissa Borja, University of Michigan
Abel Gomez, Syracuse University
Stephanie Frank, Columbia College, Chicago
Heather Miller Rubens, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies
Elyse Nelson Winger, Tufts University

**A21-103**
African Religions Unit
Theme: Roundtable on the Contribution of Afe Adogame to the Study of Religions in Africa
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Sheila Otieno, Boston University, Presiding

The esteemed scholar of religion in Africa, Afe Adogame, has contributed a significant body of work in numerous disciplines, informing and shaping discourse in the study of religion, African Religions, religions of the African diasporas, and the effects of globalization and modernity on all of these traditions. Adogame positions indigeneity as a powerful tool to both decolonize knowledge and understand socio-religious change in Africa. The papers in this roundtable offer reflections and analyses of Indigeneity in African Religions, situating the text within the broader context of Adogame’s rich scholarship.

**Panelists**
Responding

Afe Adogame, Princeton Theological Seminary

A21-104
Afro-American Religious History Unit
Theme: Souls, Sounds, and Sources: A ‘State of the Field’ Roundtable for African American Religious History
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Matthew Harris, University of California, Santa Barbara, Presiding

This round-table centers recent historical studies in Black religious and spiritual life. A. Wells-Oghoghomeh’s The Souls of Womenfolk (UNC Press, 2021), N. M. Turner’s Soul Liberty (UNC Press, 2020), J. W. Drake’s To Know the Soul of a People (Oxford University Press, 2022), R. B. Turner’s Soundtrack to a Movement (NYU Press, 2021), and V. A. Booker’s Lift Every Voice and Swing (NYU Press, 2020) each offer methodological approaches, and identify new sources, to call for reflection on the state of African American religious history and how we constitute archives of Black religions. Taking seriously the ways that embodiment, intersectionality, gender, Black internationalism, diaspora, considerations of class and profession, popular culture, and Black Digital Humanities mapping methods challenge the study of religion, this session will generate reflection upon where our field(s) can go to offer novel theories and methods that help to make Black religious subjectivity legible, audible, and visible.

Panelists

Alexis S. Wells-Oghoghomeh, Vanderbilt University
Nicole Turner, Yale University
Jamil Drake, Florida State University
Richard B. Turner, University of Iowa
Vaughn Booker, Dartmouth College

Business Meeting

Tobin Shearer, University of Montana, Presiding

A21-101
American Lectures in the History of Religions Committee
Theme: American Lectures in the History of Religions: Professor Daisy Machado on Religion and the Borderland
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Duncan Williams, University of Southern California, Presiding
Professor Daisy Machado will deliver the culminating lecture in the 2022 American Lectures in the History of Religions (ALHR) series at this AAR annual meeting session focusing on religion and the borderland. Her lecture will be followed by a response from Professor Felipe Hinojosa.

Panelists

Daisy L. Machado, Union Theological Seminary

Responding

Felipe Hinojosa, Texas A&M University

A21-105

Books under Discussion

Anthropology of Religion Unit and Evangelical Studies Unit


Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Eric Hoenes Del Pinal, University of North Carolina, Charlotte, Presiding

This roundtable is an author-meets-critics session on Méadhbh McIvor's *Representing God: Christian Legal Activism in Contemporary England*, published by Princeton University Press in 2020. *Representing God* offers an ethnographic account of US-inspired, evangelical-spearheaded Christian activism in England to show how this activism contributes to the secularizing forces it ostensibly seeks to challenge. This multidisciplinary roundtable—which features scholars from anthropology, religious studies, political science, and ethics—contributes to analyses of evangelical Christianity as shaped by both local and global ecologies of (perceived) cultural, theological, and legal conflict.

Panelists

Finbarr Curtis, Georgia Southern University
Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, Northwestern University
Syeda Beena Butool, Florida State University
Joseph Blankholm, University of California, Santa Barbara

Responding

Méadhbh McIvor, Oxford University

Business Meeting

Jennifer A. Selby, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Presiding
James Bielo, Miami University, Ohio, Presiding
A21-138
Applied Religious Studies Committee
Theme: Committee Meeting
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Amy Defibaugh, Temple University, Presiding

Panelists
Joshua Bartholomew, Saint Paul School of Theology
Molly Bassett, Georgia State University
Daniel Fisher-Livne, Hebrew Union College
Sara Kamali, Kamali Consulting
Jenny Wiley Legath, Princeton University
Benjamin Marcus, Religious Freedom Center
Monya Stubbs, Chicago Theological Seminary
Mary Beth Yount, Neumann University

A21-106
Arts, Literature, and Religion Unit
Theme: Aesthetics and Narratives of Change
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
S. Brent Plate, Hamilton College, Presiding

One hundred years ago, with the works of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* and T.S. Eliot’s *Waste Land*, aesthetics and narratives changed. These works marked the beginnings of what became known as “Modernism.” The papers in this panel engage in understanding "modernism" and its significance for us today from religious/theological and literary/artistic perspectives and invite us to rethink modernism in arts and literature.

- Sofia Maurette, University of Maryland

*A Catholic avant-garde: defining a lost theological aesthetic program from the 1920s Argentina*

In the 1920s, a young Borges (1899-1986) brought the Spanish “ultraismo” to Buenos Aires. With his group, he stirred the literary scene publishing “manifestos” and statements against consecrated literary figures. Quite surprisingly, many poets from this new generation were published in the Catholic magazine *Criterio* (1928-present). However, the inclusion of this avant-garde aesthetic in an otherwise conservative religious magazine has been underestimated by historiographical studies of the magazine.

In this paper, I argue that the encounter of Catholics and avant-garde poets within the pages of the magazine gave way to the articulation of a new aesthetic synthesis: a “Catholic avant-garde”. Through a close reading of articles and poems, I show how this synthesis was theoretically developed and poetically performed. I claim that the recovery of this forgotten movement leads to the reevaluation of the Argentinean canon, and
especially of the marginal place traditionally given to Catholic writers within it.

- Abigail Gillman, Boston University

*Franz Kafka, the Mashal, and Parabolic Style*

Parabolic style has affinities with modernist poetics. Parable writers reduce complex, abstract ideas to simple, child-like stories, trying to communicate wisdom in elemental, yet enigmatic language. Scholars of European modernism—of Kafka, Brecht, Agnon, Calvino, Borges—have long noted the prominence of parable in modernist literature. This paper argues that Franz Kafka plays a pivotal role in shaping the possibilities of the modernist mashal: a function which becomes apparent when Kafka is read within the tradition of the Jewish parable (mashal). Modern critics often jump from Jesus to Kafka, ignoring the Jewish parable tradition in which both Jesus and Kafka belong. Kafka's parables, which invent new ways to convey meaning and wisdom, shed light on the parable genre and its uses in all periods.

- Evan Goldstein, Yale University

*Is Modernism Jewish?: Modernist Aestheticism and the Remains of Christianity*

For over a century, critics and defenders alike have attended to what seems to be the persistent Jewishness of modernism. While attending to the history of this fixation invites uneasy proximity with certain paranoid readings, there can be no doubt that Jews and Jewishness formed a major point of thematic interest for modernists. But what is concealed in this hyper-legibility of Jewishness? I revisit modernism’s Jewish specters as a moment within the history of sovereignty. As Eric Santner has argued, modernity’s shift from royal to popular sovereignty produces a surplus of immanence, in the disjunction between the mass of bodies from which “the people” must be made manifest and the absence of ritual forms for the labor of this manifestation. Turning to Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, I situate modernism’s specters of Jewishness within this theologico-political horizon: not a history of the Jews, but a lingering sign of Christianity.

- Amira Abou-Taleb, University of Helsinki

*Rethinking Modernism in Examining Islamic Art: Towards a More Holistic Approach*

This paper proposes a paradigm shift in the current two-dimensional approach to studying Islamic art and promotes the adoption of a multidisciplinary approach that bridges the gap between art history, theology and anthropology. I argue that the prevalent spatio-temporal approach to the study of Islamic art lacks a necessary investigation of the philosophy behind the art. Furthermore, I posit, based on a methodical analysis of the text, that the concept of *iḥsān* (beauty/goodness/perfection) lies at the core of the Qur’ānic moral *Weltanschauung* and acts as an underpinning philosophy that connects the vast array of traditional Islamic art; a mandate for harmony that subsumes and connects the objects despite their varied array of time and space. This depth is not only
necessary for a more holistic understanding of the field, but can act as a segway to countering the hate-based Islamophobic discourse prevalent today as well.

- Lacey Jones, Yale University

*Ruining Modernism: The Decadent Secular in Djuna Barnes' *Nightwood*

This paper reads Djuna Barnes’ *Nightwood* to argue that Modernism relies on a semiotics of decay to rewrite the relationship between secularization and the aesthetic: ruin in the novel isn’t the allegorical palimpsest of a religious, symbolic past. Instead, *Nightwood*’s ruins give aesthetic form to suffering’s transformation of the queer subject by, as Susan Stewart puts it, “conjoin[ing] the functions of the monument and of evocation.” This paper responds to a trend in literary studies concerned with rewriting Decadence as a defining predecessor to Modernism by reading Barnes’ novel alongside Talal Asad’s understanding of the secular: changes in the “grammar of concepts” that refigure pain as “itself agentive.” Taking *Nightwood*’s ruins as a grammar of suffering, I argue against an understanding of decadent Modernism that frames aesthetics as the secular realm of religious ruination and look instead towards Modernism as a site where the secular itself is an aesthetics.

A21-107
Professional Development - Employment
**Body and Religion Unit**
Theme: *Teaching Bodies, Mothering Bodies*
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Teresa L. Fry Brown, Emory University, Presiding

How do our birthing and nursing teaching bodies interact with our pedagogies? The roundtable will feature three early career scholars of religion who will ponder new intersections between embodied motherhood and teaching informed by particularities of their embodied experiences, as two African American and an international professors and mothers. In case of academic mothers, embodied motherhood has too long remained an overlooked particularity of one’s teaching body, fragmenting one’s identity and frequently leading to experiences of burnout, especially affecting mothers from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. This roundtable will ponder strategies for how academic mothers can resist the institutional marginalization of their embodied experiences and carve out alternative spaces of self-care and deliberate reflection within the academy with the goal of enhancing the flourishing of their teaching and mothering bodies. This conversation will be informed by the findings of the “Mother-logian” project aimed at identifying strategies for a greater integration of teaching, bodily self-care, and embodied motherhood, developed by the three panelists in 2021-22 and sponsored by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion.

**Panelists**

Ekaterina Lomperis, George Fox University
Lakisha Lockhart, Chicago Theological Seminary
Sarah Farmer, Indiana Wesleyan University

**Business Meeting**

Wesley Barker, Mercer University, Presiding  
Gwendolyn Gillson, Illinois College, Presiding

**A21-108 Buddhism Unit**  
Theme: **Sonic Dharma: Chanting and Reciting in the Global Buddhist Landscape**  
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Rongdao Lai, McGill University, Presiding

Chanting and recitation are central Buddhist cultivation practices. Invoking the Buddhist Dharma as a sonic practice plays an important role for Buddhists of most traditions. Scholarship on chanting exists within a variety of disciplinary contexts. Scholars, for example, study chanting from a textual perspective, focusing on the recited texts and their doctrinal meanings, or apply an ethnomusicological approach, considering musical theory, sonic patterns and experiences.

The panel builds on existing scholarship by bringing perspectives informed by textual analysis, ritual theory, music theory, raciolinguistics and ethnography into dialogue. In doing so it aims to overcome the common dichotomy of textual and social-scientific approaches to the study of Buddhism. It thus takes series the content as well as the context of chanting, thereby providing a more comprehensive picture of this important Buddhist practice, while also exploring the diverse ways in which chanting and recitation shape the global Buddhist landscape.

- **Sara Swenson**, Syracuse University  
  *Murmurs and Yelps: Buddhist Ethical Soundscapes in Vietnam*

  “Homage to Buddha!” [Mô Phật] my friend exclaimed as she burned her finger on a hot pan. The exclamation transformed her moment of surprised fear into a moment of devoted practice. In Vietnam, lay and monastic practitioners incorporate the name of the Buddha into daily greetings, activities, and utterances. Influenced by Pure Land Buddhism, practitioners explain that such exclamations can have a positive or protective effect both on speakers and on their surrounding environments. For example, murmuring the names of Siddhartha Gautama or Amitabha Buddha may guard speakers against sudden accidents or lurking ghosts. In this paper, I adapt Charles Hirschkind’s theory of “ethical soundscapes” to analyze how Buddhists use micro-recitations to actualize moral worlds in Vietnam. While Hirschkind theorizes Muslim practices of playing cassette sermons aloud in Cairo, I compare how the subtler phenomena of Buddhist utterances and exclamations carry an equally powerful cosmological significance in Saigon.

- **Miroj Shakya**, University of the West  
  *Overcoming Poverty: The Tradition of Recitation of the Vasudharā Dhāraṇī in the Newar*
Buddhist community of Nepal

Vasudhārā means bearer of wealth or stream of treasure. She blesses with wealth and prosperity anyone who sincerely chants her mantra and Dhāraṇī. There are many Sanskrit Buddhist texts attributed to her worship. Among them, Vasudhārā Vrata Kathā, Vasudhārānāmāṣṭottaraśatam, Vasudhārā Dhāraṇī, and Sucandra Avadāna are the most prominent. The Vasudhārā Dhāraṇī claims that Śākyamuni Buddha gave the teaching on Vasudhārā to Sucandra, the householder for overcoming poverty at the Ghoṣitārāma monastery near Kosāmbī. Newar Buddhists commemorate Vasudhārā by offering maṇḍalas of Vasudhārā in their annual celebration of “Gatila dhala danegu” event. The elders worship the Vasundhārā at the Old age (Jyā Jaṃko) rites hoping that it will bring good luck. This paper investigates the origin of the Dhāraṇī and analyzes its content. The belief in the effectiveness of this Dhāraṇī among Newar Buddhists will also be explored.

- Funie Hsu, San José State University

Paying Homage: Reciting, American Racial Formation, and Asian American Buddhists

This paper provides a theoretical exploration of Buddhist reciting within a paradigm of American racialization, paying particular attention to the racial formation of Asian American Buddhists. It investigates the manner in which reciting has been hegemonically interpreted as a marker of race, and thus functions as a social sign. As such, racialized reciting is also intimately tied to language, both in a communicative and theoretical sense. I argue that such hegemonic renderings of reciting exemplify a raciolinguistic function that weaves race, ethnicity and language with Buddhism to delineate a mode of American racial formation that continues to depict Asian American Buddhists as alien. I conclude by juxtaposing interpretations of reciting as a marker of otherness alongside an understanding of reciting as intentional acts of Asian American Buddhist sangha building. Thus, I express how Asian American Buddhist reciting practices can also reveal the illogic of the racialized reciting framework.

- Jens Reinke, Leipzig University

Form is Emptiness and Emptiness is Form? Chinese Mahayana Chanting in Translation

Chanting the Buddha’s name, reciting scriptures, or participating in Dharma assemblies are central practices within the Chinese Mahayana pool of cultivation methods. Common to them is the intonation of Buddhist names and texts in Chinese. Yet for the purpose of global propagation, dependence on Chinese languages can be an obstacle. This presentation examines the translation of texts and cultivation practices, as well as the transcultural dynamics at play within this process, by considering the global development of the Taiwanese temple Fo Guang Shan. It traces attempts to facilitate local language chanting at overseas temples and assesses the actors involved in these processes. The aim is not only to explore the impact of transcultural dynamics for the global spread of Fo Guang Shan, but also to reevaluate the role of chanting as a cultivation practice within the
framework of modern Buddhist border-crossings.

- Alex Grabiner, McGill University

*The Call of Bell and Drum: Ritual Structures and Innovations in Chinese Buddhist Liturgy*

The morning service (*zaoke*早課), an obligatory religious activity at most Chinese Buddhist temples and monasteries, reached a high degree of standardization by the end of the Ming dynasty. Yet within the last 50 years, large monasteries in Taiwan have been implementing variations and changes to the standard liturgy. Far from being arbitrary, these changes seem to reflect certain underlying constraints, suggesting a particular structure of the liturgy and function of the various elements. Drawing on ritual theory and textual analysis, this paper posits a framework for understanding the contours of the liturgy. It then identifies the factors driving these innovations, such as changing conceptions of religiosity and worship, shifting demands on the resources of the monastics, and theological commitments or desires for the expression of “sectarian” identities.

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**A21-109**

**Buddhist Critical-Constructive Reflection Unit**

Theme: *Buddhism and Religious Others: Reflections on Historical Encounters and Representations*

Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Nicholas Witkowski, Nanyang Technological University, Presiding

The proposed panel reflects on contributions to a new collection of studies that attends to how Buddhists have understood their tradition in heterogeneous, competitive and sometimes even combative religious landscapes. The matter of how Buddhists have conceptualized the existence and influence of rival systems of thought and practice, and themselves in relation to them, is of continuing interest to scholarship as well as to Buddhist practice, informing both the study of religions and how Buddhists themselves can navigate similar matters today. Contributors to the panel will discuss textual and artistic resources produced by Buddhists in India and elsewhere that reflect direct engagement with the existence of non-Buddhist ideas, practices and systems, and will reflect on what these tell us about the development of Buddhism and its perception of itself in the world.

**Panelists**

Perry Schmidt-Leukel, University of Muenster
Nathan McGovern, University of Wisconsin, Whitewater
Aleksandra Wenta, University of Florence
Christopher Jones, University of Cambridge

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**A21-110**

**Chinese Christianities Unit and World Christianity Unit**
Theme: The Worlds of Chinese Christianities  
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Christie Chui-Shan Chow, Princeton Theological Seminary, Presiding

This co-sponsored session between the Chinese Christianities Unit and the World Christianity Unit brings together four papers that open up the question of the multiple worlds of Chinese Christianities. These four papers suggest that the "Chinese" nation(s) and its various social and political institutions are constantly being formed and re-formed by the various actors that circulate through the worlds of Chinese Christianities. They address the historiography of reverse missionaries from America to China, the use of catechetical art in Chinese Catholicism, the institution building power of women in Chinese Christian institutions of higher education, and the indigenization of a Hakka church in Guangdong Province. Taken together, these papers take Chinese Christian networks, broadly construed, as sites where "Chineseness" and "Christianities" are investigated for the worlds they produce.

- Yucheng Bai, Duke University

*American City on a Chinese Hill: Jonathan Chao and Chinese Public Theology*

This paper traces the global dissemination of American Christian fundamentalism to China through the ministry of Charles and Jonathan Chao (趙中輝 and 趙天恩). The Chaos have inherited the intellectualist branch of American fundamentalism from Calvinist missionaries, then combined it with anticommunism and civilizationalism as they fled communist China. In the 1980s and 90s they reintroduced this package to a new generation of Chinese public theologians, who developed their theology further by connecting it with modern democracy and the Christian Right. Behind contemporary Chinese public theologians’ favor of Reformed theology and rightwing politics, then, stands the ministry of the Chaos and the Christian fundamentalism they bridged between China and the United States.

- Stephanie Wong, Valparaiso University

*Countering the Anti-Christian Movement: Catholic Catechetical Art in the 1920-30s*

During China's "Nanjing Decade," urban Catholic clergy sought to rally the Church as an indigenous and interconnected network for the two-fold task of both indigenizing the faith and converting lives. Thus, Catholic leaders promoted sometimes contradictory priorities in the hopes of infusing Chinese modernity with Catholic values. On the one hand, the apostolic delegate Celso Costantini hoped to present the Church with a Chinese face. He commissioned artists from Furen University to produce religious fine art to demonstrate the indigeneity and value of the Church in modern society. Missionaries designed Chinese-style catechism aides to depict faith as a form of the Chinese good life. On the other, these works inculcated a conservative set of traditional Catholic moral norms more in keeping with the China passing away. In response to the New Culture & Anti-Christian Movements, Catholic posters used indigenization to reaffirm traditional
moral duties while representing them in indigenous language and new technology.

- Lydia Gerber, Washington State University

*Toward an independent Hakka Church: The contributions of four western educated Chinese Basle missionaries in the 1870s and 1880s in Guangdong*

This paper focuses on contributions by members of the second generation of Chinese evangelists for the Basel mission, the four so-called “Chinese brothers” Jiang Yunzhang, Chen Minxiu, Li Cheng'en and Chan Asi to the transformation from a missionary-led to the indigenous Hakka mission church Chongzhenhui 崇真會 in Guangdong. All four of them had been baptized as children and grown up in Christian households closely connected with German Protestant missionaries. They had received their schooling in missionary institutions in Guangdong, and they had been sent to Europe in the 1860s and 70s to be educated in missionary seminaries. It argues that in spite of many challenges they encountered, their role as mediators between Württemberg Pietism and the ideals of Chinese culture led to gradual change and actively contributed to the eventual independence of the Hakka mission church Chongzhenhui.

- Xi Chen, Yale University

*Wu Yifang and the Registration of Ginling College, 1929-30*

The paper reviewed the process of Ginling College’s registration from 1925 to 1930 through crosschecking the official archives, the memoir, and the secondary sources. Ginling resisted registration at first as its missionary faculty and the Ginling College Committee insisted on the free proclamation of Christianity and compulsory religious courses. Nevertheless, the Nanking Incident in 1927 forced Ginling to comply with government regulation by appointing a Chinese president, Wu Yifang. Besides, the evacuation of the missionaries during the political upheaval enabled the group of Chinese faculty and alumnae to assume leadership, who later assisted Wu in getting Ginling registered. Through her negotiation, Wu successfully downplayed the disagreements between the missionaries and Chinese faculty on registration and persuaded the GCC to adopt a new mission statement. By getting Ginling registered smoothly, Wu ensured Ginling’s survival and prosperity after the political upheaval in 1927 and also successfully claimed decision-making power for herself.

**Responding**

Anthony Clark, Whitworth University

A21-111

Christian Systematic Theology Unit

Theme: Horizons of Hope in Philosophical Theology

Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Judith Wolfe, University of Saint Andrews, Presiding
Amid ongoing and emerging societal turmoil and divisions, it seems difficult to talk about hope—let alone to hope. Material unrests are paralleled by debilitating anxiety in both academia and wider society. Established intellectual and ethical assumptions appear increasingly plausible, making it seem fanciful that a theological or philosophical framework rooting itself in the Christian tradition should be able to offer orientation. However, as the political theorist Martin Wight once observed: ‘Hope is not a political virtue: it is a theological one’. In light of the intractable conflicts of the world, tending towards despair, it is more crucial now than ever that Christian theology should bring its unique resources to the table. In contradistinction to many other theoretical accounts of reality, Christian theology is a priori committed to hope. This session considers how Christian theology’s unique commitment to hope changes the way we orientate ourselves in the world.

Panelists

King-Ho Leung, University of Saint Andrews
Amber Bowen, University of Aberdeen
Darren Sarisky, Australian Catholic University
Oliver Keenan, University of Oxford
Oliver Crisp, University of Saint Andrews
John R. Betz, University of Notre Dame

Business Meeting

Natalia Marandiuc, Southern Methodist University, Presiding

A21-112
Comparative Studies in Religion Unit
Theme: Querying Eco-Aesthetics
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Roberta Sabbath, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Presiding

Especially for those who are invested in contemporary issues pertaining to ecology, environmentalism, wildlife preservation, words such as dystopian, apocalyptic, existentially challenged, unsustainable come to mind at the close of the year 2022. We who dwell amid and belong to a global community that must confront climate change, ecological crises, unsustainable consumption, destruction of oceans, habitat devastation, wilderness, and wildlife preservation and more. This panel seeks to stock take “Eco-Aesthetics,” what it is, how it is informed, practiced, and expressed. Straddling eco-criticism, eco-feminism, and eco-justice concerns, the panel brings into mutual conversation the terms ecology and aesthetics—two terms that are not often brought into conversation with each other, at least in the context of the AAR.

- Janice Poss, Claremont Graduate University

*Brancusi’s Faith in Art “Bird in Space” in Conversation with Romanian Orthodox Icons*
This paper will demonstrate the Comparative Theological concept of “suchness” (de bzhin nyid- འེ་བཞིན་ཉིད) or “essence” by putting Eastern Orthodox Icons and Tibetan Buddhist T’angkas in an eco-aesthetic conversation with the nature-oriented, secular sculptural work of Parisian-Romanian artist, Constantin Brancusi (February 19, 1876 - March 16, 1957). Brancusi’s deep spirituality, rarely discussed, will be explored and revealed through eco-religious, rather than an art historical lens. My research will demonstrate that his own sculptural philosophy was built on the influence of eastern Romanian Icons and Iconography often based in nature. In addition, this innovative, secular, sculptural iconography of nature can inform and cultivate greater understanding of Western Christian Visual Religion, particularly from a Roman Catholic observer. I will use Brancusi’s sculpture series, Bird in Space, as the eco-aesthetical hermeneutic informing, through seeing, how theological concepts connect us to God. Brancusi is the early twentieth century sculptor that worked primarily in bronze, marble and wood.

- Edward Arnold, Columbia University

*Guhyasamāja and Kālacakra systems of Unexcelled Yoga Tantra and Eco-Aesthetics*

Abiding as a bodhisattva, aspirationally or actually, the practitioner of Unexcelled Yoga Tantra recognizes the complete interdependence of all other living beings stuck in survival mode and transforms meditatively their own subjectivity into an archetypal enlightened embodiment through a series of processes that divinize objective reality in order to accelerate spiritual evolution, their own and others. This appropriation of enlightened identity pivots on the semiotic reconstruction of objective reality that envisions the environment, on a cosmic scale, as an extension of that identity, whereby the earlier dependence is thoroughly inverted. Whereas the social environment of norms and hierarchies becomes subverted, through the infamous (and inaccurate) indulgence in “tantric” sex and murder, the physical environment becomes the play of the deity, appearing as a mandala, a highly symbolic and aesthetically charged representation of enlightened awareness. Drawing on the Guhyasamāja and Kālacakra systems of Unexcelled Yoga Tantra, I will unpack these processes and their visual representations.

- Nayawiyyah Muhammad, California State University, Long Beach

*Environmental Aesthetics and Islam: An Analysis of Eden and Heaven in Islamic Narratives*

According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* environmental aesthetics or eco-aesthetics originated as a reaction within the philosophy of art.[1] Eco-aesthetics examines a broad range in the relationship between aesthetics and environmentalism. This paper offers an eco-aesthetics investigation and analysis of the connection between Islamic earthly and other-worldly manifestations of gardens. The two objectives of this paper are: (1) to explore the ecological aesthetics of the Garden of Eden and the heavenly garden of the afterworld (Heaven) from Qur’anic perspectives, prophetic traditions,
Islamic translations, and exegetical works; and (2) to analyze the connection and influence upon Muslim environmental ethics. Using methods that utilize traditional philological analysis, close reading, discourse analysis, and textual hermeneutics, I argue that in Islamic worldviews, the eco-aesthetic features of Eden and Heaven are contemporary concerns, informing aspects of societal degradation and environmental degradation.

- Cara Judea Alhadeff, Independent Scholar

*Promiscuous Crossings: Transforming Climate Chaos through the Sephardic Jewish Body*

Our collusion with corporate and imperial forms of domination sustains our techno-euphoric race into a techno-utopic future. Through word and image, stillness and movement, my intention is to disrupt the distinction between the interior and exterior of both psychological and physical, private and public experiences. My analog color photographs focus on unmasking industrial society's fossil-fuel addictions while attempting to transform convenience-culture consciousness. My images play with the relationship of petroculture to both institutionalized body phobia and our ambiguous complicity within economies of disconnection that reify our epidemic of individualism through greenwashing and environmental racism. Utilizing the Sephardic / Spinozian body (including my own), my surrealist theological political project rooted in Deleuze’s rhizomatic and schizo-analytic lines explores how socialized norms have become so deeply ingrained in us that our own imaginations distort our ability to question. Through a hyperbolic, carnal visual language, these polymorphic bodies provoke the fertility of uncanny congruencies embedded in an embodiment of climate justice—our ever-evolving pluriverse.

- Gwendollyn Ulrich-Schlumbohm, Claremont Graduate University

*Mothers of the Abrahamic Tradition and Eco-Feminism*

Highlighting women’s natural biological resources, and the clear selection by the Deity we can bring the feminine stories into the foreground. Women’s reproductive labor is the system that is put in a subordinate role yet populates the world. If the religious dynasties founded by Sarah, Hagar/Hajar, and Mary promote an egalitarian view then they should recognize and elevate women to the same level as their male counterparts. Sarah, Hagar/Hajar, and Mary and their contributive labor is traditionally held in a reductive position. Historically, these women are overshadowed by their patriarchal counterparts. (With the exception of Mary as the Deity actually impregnates her.) Due to the patriarchal natures of the societies when each of these women were pregnant, we see their physical and emotional labor diminished, when in fact they are the reason that these religions exist.

- Sarra Tlili, University of Florida
The two environmental ethics associated with the Qur’an are the ethic of dominion and the ethic of stewardship, but a close reading shows the implausibility of these associations. Those who claim that the Qur’an gives humans dominion over the rest of creation appeal to themes that seem on the surface to denote a hierarchical paradigm; however, closer analysis reveals that important nuances of these themes are disregarded. More sympathetic evaluations ascribe to the Qur’an the more environmentally attuned yet still problematic notion of stewardship, which they derive mainly from the Qur’anic notion of “khalīfa,” (presumably, vicegerent) failing to note the anachronistic nature of this interpretation. Contrary to these positions, in this presentation I will argue that rather than giving humans any ascendent role, the Qur’an seeks to integrate them in the creaturely order.

A21-113
Books under Discussion
Confucian Traditions Unit
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Aaron Stalnaker, Indiana University, Presiding

A dominant view in Western thought is that human beings are subjects who relate to objects and other subjects through actions that spring purely from our own intentions and will. Chinese thinkers, however, show how mistaken this conception of action is. Mercedes Valmisa’s book is the first monograph dedicated to the exploration and rigorous reconstruction of an extraordinary strategy for efficacious relational action devised by Confucian and other Chinese philosophers, one which attempts to account for the interdependent and embedded character of human agency—what Valmisa calls "adapting" or "adaptive agency." Valmisa breaks new ground in Chinese and comparative thought by constructing meaningful theories of action that generate fresh ways to understand humanity and relationality, as well as agency, orientation and initiative. This panel will bring Valmisa together with three scholars of Chinese philosophy to think through her work.

Panelists
Michael Ing, Indiana University
Sarah Mattice, University of North Florida
Julianne Chung, York University

Responding
Mercedes Valmisa, Gettysburg College

Reviewers
Gil Raz, Dartmouth College
Recent books by Susannah Crockford (Ripples of the Universe: Spirituality in Sedona, Arizona), Andrea Jain (Peace Love Yoga: The Politics of Global Spirituality), Dennis LoRusso (Spirituality, Corporate Culture, and American Business: The Neoliberal Ethic and the Spirit of Global Capital), Amanda Lucia (White Utopias: The Religious Exoticism of Transformational Festivals), and Sean McCloud (American Possessions: Fighting Demons in the Contemporary United States) suggest that the everyday work and life worlds created by the economy of consumerist neoliberal capitalism has created new modes of self and identity that follow market logics. In this roundtable discussion, these authors will address the following questions: 1. How do you define neoliberalism (or for some a neoliberal habitus) and, more specifically, neoliberal spirituality/religion/supernaturalism? 2. What kinds of work do you see neoliberal spirituality/religion/supernaturalism doing? 3. Some of your work discusses a propensity for/combining of conspiracy theories and neoliberal spirituality. Can you speak about that?

Panelists

Amanda Lucia, University of California, Riverside
James Dennis LoRusso, Georgia State University
Susannah Crockford, Ghent University
Andrea Jain, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis

Business Meeting

Kristin Scheible, Reed College, Presiding
academics who have taken up the challenge of working as theologians with qualitative methods of enquiry. Qualitative research has much to offer theology, yet, in doing so, what is meant by theology and indeed what it means to be a theologian undergoes significant revision. The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Theology and Qualitative Research is born out of excitement around these developments. The book contains 50 chapters by some of the most prolific researchers in the field.

**Panelists**

Peter Ward, King's College, London  
Rachelle Green, Fordham University  
Clare Watkins, University of Roehampton  
Easten Law, Georgetown University  
Knut Tveitereid, MF Norwegian School of Theology, Religion and Society  
Bonnie Miller-McLemore, Vanderbilt University

**A21-116**  
**Ethics Unit**  
Theme: **Collective Action Problems and Religious Ethics**  
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Frederick Simmons, Princeton Theological Seminary, Presiding

Given the contemporary expansion and intensification of myriad interdependencies and conflicts of interests, some of the most important opportunities and challenges for religious ethics now involve collective action problems—roughly, situations in which a group of individuals do not achieve possible outcomes they all prefer to outcomes that result from each individual acting in their own self-interest. We therefore invite proposals concerning collective action problems and religious ethics. How might religious ethics contribute to redressing collective action problems? How might these ethics exacerbate them? How should the escalation of collective problems affect religious ethics, if at all?

- Creighton Coleman, University of Virginia

*Pentecostal Contempt and Collective Action*

Collective action typically requires a level of social trust where disparate groups can cooperate to achieve a shared outcome. Pentecostalism as a growing political force has the potential to greatly affect the future of collective action. Rather than cooperation, though, contempt has become a prevalent form of Pentecostal political engagement. This paper analyzes the theological components of Pentecostal contempt and explores its relationship to collective action. Ultimately, this paper argues that Pentecostal contempt has a distinct theological quality and a problematic relationship to collective action. To make this case, I first outline the theological dynamics at work in Pentecostal contempt. I then consider Pentecostal contempt’s relationship to populism—a potential driver of collective action—arguing that it is unlikely to create a populism that might spur collective action. Finally, I argue that Pentecostal contempt’s emphasis on “conversion
from” and its closed system of knowledge production pose barriers to collective action.

- Jeremy Sabella, Dartmouth College

*Solidarity and Grace: Sustaining Collective Action in the Digital Age*

This paper examines how social media has altered the form and function of collective action and the role of religious ethics in fostering sustainable movements. It begins by exploring the work of technologist Zeynep Tufekci, which highlights both the astonishing ability of social media to catalyze movements and inability to sustain them. It then draws on Reinhold Niebuhr’s work on how religious ethics both elicits and tempers ethical passion in service of social movements. It concludes by exploring how a Niebuhrian conceptual framework might be used to channel the ethical passion that social media elicits into effective collective action.

- David Robinson, Regent University

*Kenotic Ethics and the Problem of Ecological Collective Action: Recovering Hegel’s Social Ethics in a Time of Climate Catastrophe*

Those who are least responsible for climate change are most vulnerable to its catastrophic effects. This inequity is a major impediment to collective action on a truly global scale, leaving many people groups to focus on their own self-interest. Does “kenotic” ethics, construed by ecotheologians as the self-restraint of those in privileged or affluent cultures, provide an answer to this problem? Although self-limitation is a welcome emphasis, I argue that it is neither kenosis nor is it sufficiently collective. Drawing on Hegel’s social ethics, as well as the work of contemporary neo-Hegelians, I argue that true divestment of the self involves encounter and struggle through which we learn what it takes to truly recognize one another. That process includes reckoning with the ways that climatic conditions affect particular expressions of social freedom, as well as identifying how existing systems of “development” or distribution can entrench patterns of misrecognition.

- Mary Nickel, Princeton University

*That they may all be one: Religious Resources for Collective Action*

Many religious ethicists have, for some time, turned their attention to matters of social and structural sin. As the proposed paper argues, the problem with much of the extant literature on social sin is its failure to acknowledge that he solution to collective action problems, as Elinor Ostrom showed, is collective action. Religious ethicists have reason to focus on such collective action. Not only does the foregrounding of collective action deserve the consideration of religious ethicists, but religious ethicists have resources for motivating collective action: religion. In the second half of the paper, I turn to two examples of historic collective action in the United States, to show how religious resources might be drawn on for ameliorative collective action projects. The first is the
case of unionizing coal miners in Appalachia in the early twentieth century. The second focuses on the African American women who organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott.

**Business Meeting**

Nichole Flores, University of Virginia, Presiding  
Frederick Simmons, Princeton Theological Seminary, Presiding

**A21-135**  
**Exploratory Session**  
Theme: *Global-Critical Conceptions of Self and Persistence: South Asia, Africa, and East Asia*  
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Timothy D. Knepper, Drake University, Presiding

This roundtable follows up the 2021 Global-Critical Philosophy of Religion (GCPR) exploratory session by tackling head-on several basic, sometimes overlooked, methodological issues and critical problems that persist across the philosophy of religion. Issues faced by philosophers of religion include incommensurable terminology, access to texts, anachronistic engagements across widely divergent social-historical periods, and the influence of Enlightenment conceptual frameworks. The current proposal takes up these issues with a session that culminates a year of research on “self and persistence” that specifically draws on resources from Africa, South Asia, and East Asia. Panelists directly address the theme by asking: who are overlooked peers for the field? What are the contents of their research? Who are their interlocutors? How might conventionally-trained philosophers of religion engage them? The short, interactive presentations will provide ample substance for an engaging discussion of the whole.

**Panelists**

Agnieszka Rostalska, Ghent University  
Ana Bajzelj, University of California, Riverside  
Anil Mundra, University of Chicago  
Marie-Helene Gorisse, Ghent University  
Louis Komjathy, Independent Scholar  
Herbert Moyo, University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Gereon Kopf, Luther College  
Yuko Ishihara, Ritsumeikan University  
Maki Sato, University of Tokyo

**Responding**

Nathan R. B. Loewen, University of Alabama

**A21-117**  
**Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe**  
**Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching**
Theme: **Teaching Climate ‘Crisis’ in the 21st Century**
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Amanda Nichols, University of Florida, Presiding
Jeremy Sorgen, University of California, Berkeley, Presiding

In light of increasing political polarization around issues of climate change, environmental and social justice, and inclusivity, this session poses the critical question “how do we effectively teach climate ‘crisis’ in the 21st century?”. Ongoing debates about the deleterious effects of anthropogenic climate change have tended to produce disproportionately pessimistic outlooks from scientists and academics. In turn, much of this research has focused primarily on the impeding catastrophic and apocalyptic changes to the health and viability of the world’s ecological systems. This session seeks to disrupt this one-sided narrative. Panelists will reflect upon their own teaching pedagogy and scholarship and offer their thoughts about how we can effectively teach solutions-oriented approaches to climate crisis that challenge patriarchal assumptions, promote diversity and inclusivity, and leave room for hope. Working at the intersections of religious, gender, and environmental studies, the invited panelists have demonstrated records of teaching excellence and innovative pedagogical approaches.

**Panelists**
Carol Wayne White, Bucknell University
Catherine Keller, Drew University
Elaine Nogueira-Godsey, Methodist Theological School in Ohio
Jacqueline Hidalgo, Williams College
Karen DeVries, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

A21-118
Hinduism Unit
Theme: **Swaminarayan Hinduism: Extending Categories of Knowledge and Practice within Hindu Studies**
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Andrew Kunze, Purdue University, Presiding

This panel takes a multidisciplinary approach to exploring Swaminarayan Hinduism, a Hindu community that has risen exponentially in prominence over the last century. Founded in 1801 by Swaminarayan (1781-1830), the tradition has since given rise to a dozen distinct denominations and is highly visible both in India and in the diaspora. Over the past decades, studies of Swaminarayan Hinduism have shed light on Hindu encounters with colonial reform, the growth of diasporic Hinduism, devotional media production. Our panelists build on this body of work with diverse methodological approaches: textual study of early manuscripts, visual analysis of Swaminarayan’s portraits, ethnographic attention to gendered experiences of asceticism, and a reflexive survey of Swaminarayan Hinduism’s status in the field of Hindu Studies. In attending to sectarian logics of faith, theological commitments, and modes of practice, the panel reassesses
academic discourse on knowledge production and practice within and about Hindu traditions.

- Iva Patel, Augsburg University

*When an Ant meets an Elephant: Discourses of Manifestation in Early Swaminarayan Literature*

Through a rhetorical analysis of Swaminarayan’s designation within the community’s earliest literature as God manifest, this paper rethinks the coupling of temporality and divine manifestation within Hinduism and Hindu Studies. It considers the factors under which devotees believe an authentic manifestation of God is possible, within the relative modernity of the nineteenth century. In 1803, within two years of Swaminarayan’s leadership of a formerly Vaishnava community, his newly ordained sadhu (ascetic), Nishkulanand Swami, composed the community’s first lyric work—the Yamadand (Yama’s Punishment). Here, he addressed Swaminarayan as God manifest, avatari (source manifestation), who was pratyaksh (present before the eyes), and capable of granting two key salvific benefits: freedom from the bonds of death and rebirth, and liberation from agonies in Yamapuri [Yama’s domain]. The poet’s repeated assertion of God as proximate and sensorially available through Swaminarayan disrupts prevalent notions of God as distant but only conceptually proximate through devotional practices.

- Cynthia Packert, Middlebury College

*The Power of the Portrait in 19th century Swaminarayan Visual Culture*

This paper examines mid-late 19th century portrait images produced as integral components for educating and nurturing a devotional community centered on Swaminarayan’s distinctive new Vaishnava religious teachings. The earliest images of Swaminarayan were produced during his lifetime, especially the important 1822 painted portrait image that Swaminarayan commissioned from the artist Narayan Suthar of Bhuj, Gujarat, now enshrined in the Kalupur Swaminarayan Temple in Ahmedabad. After Swaminarayan’s death in 1830, other -sadhu--artists took up the task of memorializing his divine legacy. Prominent among them was Kadia Rupa Kachra (d.~1920), a carpenter-artist from Jamnagar, Gujarat, who is renowned for picturing Swaminarayan in both iconic form and engaged in worldly activities. Drawing upon a variety of sources, including contemporary portraiture and Krishna—lila- conventions, Kadia Rupa Kachra is admired for creating vivid, large-scale, full-bodied representations that extend and expand the legacy of Swaminarayan’s teachings through innovative visual imagery.

- Emilia Bachrach, Oberlin College and Conservatory

*Gurus of the “Practical & Spiritual”: Asceticism and Women’s Leadership in Swaminarayan Traditions*

Drawing on preliminary ethnographic research that considers how ascetic and non-ascetic experiences are collectively essential to the construction of female piety in
Swaminarayan Hinduism in Gujarat, this paper confronts enduring stereotypes about Indian asceticism as disengaged from the social world and about women’s agency as contingent on subverting, rather than cultivating, conservative religious norms. As part of an ongoing research project, this paper focuses on observations of a women’s assembly at the Shree Swaminarayan Mandir in Kalupur, Gujarat, as well as in-person and virtual conversations with several female leaders and community members. In analyzing women’s personal experiences of cultivating piety, this paper shows how central tenets in Swaminarayan Hinduism, such as satsang (devotional gathering), bhakti (devotion), and vairagya (detachment from lust, greed, ego, etc.), are integrated (albeit in various ways) into the everyday lives of ascetic and non-ascetic women and men alike.

- Hanna Kim, Adelphi University

*Devotion, Curated: on BAPS, Swaminarayan Studies, and their Orthodoxies*

Collectively, the growing multidisciplinary research on the Swaminarayan Sampraday contributes to a new field, Swaminarayan Studies. This scholarship has grown in tandem with the visibility of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, one that is materially anchored to a global temple network and the circulation of practices and discourses beyond India. Of interest are BAPS’s willing engagement with its publics, including academics, and its embrace of technologies for the dissemination of its teachings. In conversation with recent and older research on BAPS, this paper suggests that BAPS provides Swaminarayan Studies an opportunity to probe the production of knowledge by BAPS and its interlocutors. What informs BAPS’s curation of its public presentation and what do researchers see? This paper argues that BAPS research draws attention to various orthodoxies that inform the study of Hindu devotionalism and the Hindu diaspora, and this invites reflection on de-provincialising less-examined assumptions in Swaminarayan Studies.

**Responding**

Arun Brahmbhatt, Saint Lawrence University

**A21-119**

*Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit and Religion and Ecology Unit and Religions in the Latina/o Americas Unit*

Theme: *Indigenous Ecologies: Decolonial Approaches to Environmental Practices*

Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Renan Dos Santos, University of São Paulo, Presiding

This session explores environmental catastrophe as de- and anti-colonialism. They outline how Christian environmental organizations engage with and adapt to Indigenous nations in shared environmental initiatives as well as how Indigenous rituals are central to survivance and flourishing. Indigenous Hawai‘ian and Samoan relationality and ethics in both native practitioners as well as in hybridized forms of Christianity generate sustainable practices such as pre-colonial farming that balanced fish, coral, and plants and protected the nutrient cycle.

- Frances Flannery, James Madison University
  Brian Kolia, Malua Theological College

*Climate Change as Decolonization? Reimagining a Post-Catastrophe World through Reciprocal Relationality: Shaping Indigenous Futurity Outside of and Within Colonizer Religions*

The latest science paints a dire portrait of a climate future that will deconstruct the consumptive, technological-industrial systems that generate climate change. Ecological thinkers such as Lynn White Jr. (1967) and Bron Taylor (2009) have traced the roots of the ecological crisis to the Christian view that humans were created to have “dominion” over the animals (Genesis 1:28). As we search for models of religion that can take us into a sustainable future, we suggest that the key lies in opening to perspectives drawn from indigenous religion on human relationality with the rest of nature. We draw on examples from Hawai’ian and Samoan religion that illustrate a respectful and reciprocal relationality between humans and the rest of nature. Whether shared by practitioners of indigenous religion or hybridized local forms of Christianity, we suggest that amplifying this reorientation to deep relationality is what is necessary to thrive in a post-catastrophe world.

- James Waters, Florida State University

*Leaving “Stewardship” at the Door: An Anticolonial Approach to Indigenous-Christian Environmental Activism*

Christian organizations approached allyship with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe (SRST) during the #NoDAPL protests of 2016 in diverse ways. Broadly construed, however, there were three approaches, all of which revolved around ecological stewardship. First, some Christians openly employed the concept of stewardship amid the protests. Alternatively, other Christian groups allied and supported the SRST sans-stewardship rhetoric. A third approach bracketed appeals to environmental stewardship while in indigenous spaces but still used the concept outside of those contexts. After reconstructing and taxonomizing these approaches, I argue that although each offered unique advantages, those groups that bracketed stewardship discourse proved to be the most effective in helping the SRST achieve their anticolonial goals. I suggest that Christian groups replicate such an approach in near-future indigenous-led environmental collaborations but, in light of indigenous critiques of stewardship as tied to settler epistemologies, encourage Christian leaders to phase out stewardship approaches.
altogether.

Rebecca Mendoza Nunziato, Harvard University

Reknitting Kinship with Copal Incense: Applying Ritual Relationality from Indigenous Mesoamerica to 21st Century U.S. Contexts

In 1519, Indigenous priests greeted Cortés with clouds of incense smoke. Bernal Díaz del Castillo recorded: “They began to fumigate us… they burnt copal and touched the ground with their hands and kissed it.” This type of ritual was a regular occurrence across Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica. Copal resin was harvested and offered as the blood of trees, a particularly powerful entity imbued with the sacred life force called teotl. Though separated by over 1,500 miles and 500 years, Chicano Danzantes in Denver, Colorado and across the Southwest U.S. continue to burn copal and kiss the earth. Meanwhile Harvard museums hold hundreds of ancient copal fragments in basement collections. In this paper, I center copal as an animate entity–both ancestral and present. This paper presents ancient Mesoamerican metaphysics and ritual relationships as a counternarrative to settler-colonial ontologies. Ultimately I contribute decolonial frameworks from which to address urgent ecological catastrophes such as the over-harvesting and objectification of copal.

Jonathan Anderegg, Oregon State University

Repentance and Remembrance before Reconciliation: Christianity, Colonialism and the Rebuilding of Trust after Ecological Tragedy

In our current time of uncertainty and ongoing ecological catastrophe, it is easy and common to try to forget the wounds caused by our society’s quest for dominance over nature and material wealth. Those within the Christian tradition similarly might prefer to forget the implicit (and sometimes explicit) support provided to the process of dispossession of Native Americans in the pursuit of extractive wealth generation. In this paper, I will describe how forms of environmental justice and Indigenizing philosophy attempt to bridge divides between people and the nature they’ve exploited by finding grounds for agreement on what constitutes justice and a restoration of kinship. Importantly, I will suggest that environmental organizations grounded in, and appealing to, the Christian tradition need to find ways to build trust with Indigenous communities which acknowledge generations of support for exploitative environmental practices while seeking to value Indigenous sovereignty.

Responding

Meaghan Weatherdon, University of Toronto

A21-120
Interreligious and Interfaith Studies Unit
Theme: Advancing Interreligious Studies: An Interactive Workshop

421
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Marianne Moyaert, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Presiding
Younus Mirza, Shenandoah University, Presiding
Hans Gustafson, University of Saint Thomas, Minnesota, Presiding
Margarita M. W. Suarez, Meredith College, Presiding
Barbara A. McGraw, Saint Mary's College of California, Presiding

Continuing to develop the field of Interreligious Studies, this year we focus our popular interactive workshop with presentations and conversations around the following topics: 1) Teaching Strategies, 2) New Publications in the Field, 3) Outside the Ivory Tower, 4) New Lenses for Viewing the Field, and 5) Centering Minoritized Perspectives.

After a pair of very brief presentations, each group will have substantial time for facilitated conversation and brainstorming around the topic. Presentations will be repeated so participants can engage two of the five topics.

- Jeannine Hill Fletcher, Fordham University

  *Decentering White Supremacy through Teaching our Institutional History*

  This paper will offer a unique pedagogical intervention with the model of using institutional history as a leverage for de-centering White Christian hegemony and repairing the damage of White supremacy as it has informed our educational institutions. Grounded in the anti-racist necessity of knowing our own history, such a pedagogical approach to interreligious studies in an institutional history asks us to know our history in three distinct American moments: the displacement of those formed by indigenous wisdom, an economy of enslavement with rich religious diversity and America’s configuration of segregated and multi-religious communities through immigration law and real estate systems.

- Loye Ashton, Aoyama Gakuin University
  Nancy Klancher, Bridgewater College
  Guy Nave, Luther College

  *The Overlooked Benefits of Virtual Exchange and COIL for Expanding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Interreligious and Interfaith Studies*

  Virtual Exchange (VE) and Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) are proven ways to provide affordable, scalable, and equitable access to global learning experiences for many students who could never afford to participate in study abroad or student exchanges. Yet VE/COIL has largely been overlooked as a teaching and learning strategy for the field of religious studies. Three papers focused on using VE/COIL for interreligious studies and interfaith studies will explore ways that we can remedy this oversight and grow the participation of VE/COIL in our field for the benefit of our students. Two main questions will guide the papers in conversation: how can we use VE/COIL to increase opportunities for students to participate in direct interreligious and
interfaith studies experiences, and how can we use VE/COIL to advance learning objectives in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in the field of religious studies?

- Lucinda Mosher, Hartford International University for Religion and Peace

*Georgetown Companion to Religious Studies*

While many continue to speak of interreligious studies as an emerging field, perhaps it has, in fact, now entered its adolescence. An interactive workshop provides an excellent opportunity to consider this. Evidence in this possibility’s favor is offered in a recently released comprehensive volume of essays about interreligious studies: its history, current challenges, trends, emphases, signature methodologies, pedagogies, and partnerships with other disciplines. With the assistance of several of its contributing authors, this new book’s editor will provide a brief description of its structure and themes. Workshop participants will then converse about its contents and applications, what it reveals about the progress of the discipline, and what sorts of publications will be needed as the field continues to mature.

- Shannon Frediani, Starr King School of Theology

*Decolonizing Interreligious Education: Developing Theologies of Accountability*

The foundation of this paper is the publication, *Decolonizing Interreligious Education: Developing Theologies of Accountability* (May of 2022). It offers multiple possibilities for how the field of Interreligious Studies, and Interreligious Education in particular, can challenge White Christian Supremacy. The text provides an entry point into forging a decolonial framing of interreligious education achieved by expanding the Interreligious lens to include generating accountability for harm done to multiple populations most impacted by White Christian Supremacy. It draws upon the lived experience, unaddressed grief, resilience, and scholarship of communities negatively affected by systemic injustice to broaden the scope of interreligious education to respond to the need for accountability and redress of harm done. It highlights the role that the field of Interreligious Education can play focused on countering oppressions, addressing systematic injustice and reframing interreligious rituals as potential sites for resilience and countering essentialization of colonial histories.

- Syed Atif Rizwan, Catholic Theological Union

*Interreligious Dialogue at the Crossroads of Social Justice: The Case of Formerly Incarcerated Citizens*

Through the lens of interreligious dialogue of action, the Muslim Spirituality and Life Management (MuSLiM) Certificate Program (CP) was developed as a faith-based theological education and spiritual formation program offering returning citizens (formerly incarcerated) an opportunity to explore their spirituality and develop important life-management skills. The program came together with the help of Muslim and Catholic
faculty and students, as well as two additional individuals who themselves were survivors of mass incarceration and who have dedicated their lives to accompanying other survivors as counselors, community organizers, and public advocates. MuSLiM CP serves as a concrete example of doing interreligious dialogue where classroom training was brought into real life. It also serves as an example of how interreligious dialogue can be decentered from Christian power by creating an opportunity for minority groups (e.g., a Muslim professor and a student) to take leadership roles inside a Christian institution.

- Fatimah Fanusie, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies
- Alisha Tatem, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies
- Christine Gallagher, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies

Untapped Potential: Interreligious Leadership In The Field

How does the investment in interreligious leadership cultivate an interreligious society? Our presentation will illustrate how a fellowship model integrates different ways of applying interreligious learning and leadership within diverse fields of practice in the world. Our work as program directors at the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies prioritizes the development of interreligious leadership in three sectors that lie outside of the university classroom: religious communities, secondary school classrooms, and nonprofit/civic organizations. Across our fellowships, we focus on learning and relationship-building as key components of an interreligious society. Our work demonstrates that people of different religious and professional backgrounds hold untapped potential to pave the way for pluralistic understanding at multiple levels in order to build an interreligious society.

- Linda Bredvik, Heidelberg University

Sites of Narrative Overlap: Religious diversity through a linguistic lens

People’s religious identities are lived out not only in yearly festivals and public commemorations but, more frequently, in the quotidian rituals and interactions of daily life. What do these lived identities in the midst of religious diversity look like from a sociolinguistic perspective?

One way participants work to communicate across their religious differences is to seek sites of narrative overlap, points at which they are connected by their life trajectories. As Hill Fletcher (2007) notes, people typically do not compare notes on religious abstractions but rather look for points of “living interconnections” or sites of mutuality. Within the interactive workshop setting, I will use observations and excerpts from intercultural and interreligious encounters to focus a sociolinguistic lens on how we talk about and among religious differences.

- Adil Hussain Khan, Loyola University, New Orleans
Towards a Theory of Interreligious Relations

This paper will demonstrate how conventional assumptions about interreligious relations can be traced to colonial understandings of the category religion, which determine what we classify as interreligious. I argue that interreligious relations, as we understand it today, developed through the rise of secular nationalism, when religion and politics were purportedly separated as a means of reordering European power structures aligned with Christianity during the formation of the modern nation-state. This rearrangement of power gave rise to Christian ecumenism, which helped pave the way for an evolving secular governance that eventually developed into multicultural pluralist societies in a postcolonial world. This paper shows how the assumptions that underly contemporary interreligious relations have little to do with the relationships of people with different religious identities, as one might have expected, but instead serve to promote national narratives of pluralism that uphold the liberal ideologies that authorize Western multicultural societies today.

- Mahjabeen Dhala, Graduate Theological Union

Transformative Interfaith Engagement: Centering Minority Perspectives

Besides revealing the systemic injustices upon which our societies are built, the events of 2020 also witnessed the natural coming together of communities in times of crisis. Interfaith responses to the spread of a killer virus and an unjust system brought groups together in solidarity and compassion, revealing our interconnectedness in humanity and spirituality and iterating the need for developing transformative interfaith studies. In this paper, I will draw upon my experiences of teaching at an interreligious institution and being a cohort member of the Aspen Institute’s Inclusive America Project to emphasize the centering of minority perspectives at three key junctures of interfaith initiatives: planning with integrity, engaging with intersectionality, and sustaining inclusion. I will ask: What prompts us to study the other? How can genuine allyship be fostered to reconcile the imbalance of power? How do we assess the impact of interfaith work on systemically disempowered groups?

- Hisham Qureshi, University of Georgia
  Andrew Smallwood, Emory University
  Nadia Talebi, University of Georgia

Experience and motivations of minority students who prioritize their religious, secular, and spiritual (RSS) identities to form and operate interfaith-based student clubs on public campuses.

Demand for mental-health counseling has increased among college students over the past 20 years (Center for Collegiate Mental Health, 2021, 11). The 2019 Covid-19 pandemic has further exasperated mental-health issues among students (American College Health Association & Healthy Minds Network, 2020). Also, a longitudinal study involving 136 higher-education institutions has identified that religion or spirituality are
significant sources of joy and strength for college students (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm, 2011, 3). Yet, minimal resources are allocated to support the growing demand for religious diversity and spirituality on college campuses (Patel, 2018, para. 4). This paper provides a narration from graduate and undergraduate perspectives to argue that minority students who prioritize their religious, secular, and/or spiritual (RSS) identities experience a lacuna in their university support services, leads them to form their own student communities under interfaith-based platforms. Additionally included are benefits and challenges of operating interfaith-based student clubs.

**Business Meeting**

Rachel Mikva, Chicago Theological Seminary, Presiding
Feryal Salem, American Islamic College, Presiding

**A21-121**
Full Papers Available
Islam, Gender, Women Unit
**Theme: Gender, Space, and Time**
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Fatima Seedat, University of Cape Town, Presiding

This IGW workshop session focuses on the field of Islam and gender, and Islamic studies more broadly, by thinking about spatiality and temporality and its intersections with gender. We are interested in thinking about space, physically, materially and also more expansively, whether as geography, location, position, belonging, perspective, or the dynamic of relationship. Time and the dynamics of temporality are envisioned as they intersect with ways of being also determined by race, class, religion, location, movement and migration. IGW encourages submissions that explore the meanings of geographical diversity (Islam in Africa, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia,) change over time, migration, indigeneity, and digital Islam. We especially welcome submissions that deconstruct normative categories such as center/periphery, authenticity/orthodoxy and center the voices of marginalized communities.

- Anna Piela, Northwestern University

*Articulations of the White habitus among Polish White female converts to Islam*

Abstract: This paper addresses the question of how the racial habitus of Polish White female converts (PWFCs) to Islam is articulated in different social settings. We draw from in-depth interviews with thirty-five PWFCs living in Poland and the United Kingdom. While the notion of habitus has been used to analyze socialization into Islam, racial habitus has not been analyzed in relation to White converts to Islam. We argue that White habitus is an important concept that elucidates racial positioning among White converts in multiracial Muslim settings. Whiteness, often indexed in the data as “Europeanness”, is foundational for the PWFC Muslim identity. Further, we extend the understanding of how Whiteness operates through the analysis of the White habitus among those who occupy non-normative places in racial and religious hierarchies. Thus,
this paper also contributes to a growing body of scholarship on decentering Whiteness in Eastern Europe.

- Sadiyya Shaikh, University of Cape Town

*Ibn ʿArabi and Mystical Disruptions of Gender: Theoretical Explorations in Islamic Feminism*

Drawing on the work of thirteenth-century Andalusian Sufi Ibn ʿArabī (d. 1240), this paper explores the ways in which mystical ideas present a radically destabilizing view of human nature. Bringing Ibn ʿArabī’s ideas into a contemporary feminist conversation on gender, I theorize gender, arguing that his mystical method pushes the reader to the limits of a binary and patriarchal rationality, resulting in a productive entanglement of normative gender categories. Paradox, ambivalence, and contradiction—organic elements of Ibn ʿArabī’s Sufi epistemology—facilitate generative spaces of tension that creatively interrupt fixed conceptions of gender. I argue that within this Sufi cosmology, apophatic modes of being demand an existential mode of receptivity, fluidity, and constant movement—all of which can be applied to critiquing gender hierarchies and heteronormativities within Muslim traditions while reimagining more capacious alternatives. The paper contributes to a larger Islamic feminist decolonial project of rethinking the Muslim gender archive.

- Feyza Burak-Adli, Boston University

*Sufi Ethics, Neoliberal Aesthetics, and Gendered Religious Authority in Turkey: The Case of Shaykha Cemalnur Sargut*

Rifaiyye is an upper-class Turkish Sufi order led by an unveiled female shaykha named Cemalnur Sargut. She imagines Sufism as a totalizing lifestyle aimed at developing greater capacities to see and love God in the fluidity of everyday life. Drawing on long-term fieldwork research, this paper demonstrates the intersections of gender, class, and religious ethics in shaping Rifai moral selfhood through one of the unique ways in which Shaykha Cemalnur trains her students: decorating their luxury houses. It will analyze the content of mystical ethical reflections I collected from the disciples to shed light on the ethical implications of her aesthetic interventions into their private spheres as part of their spiritual training. By highlighting the reflective and relational nature of pious self-formation, it shows how the Rifai teachings are imbricated with modern social imaginaries informed by the neoliberal market dynamics, upper-middle-class *habitus*, globalization, and local cultural norms in modern-day Turkey.

**Business Meeting**

Saadia Yacoob, Williams College, Presiding

A21-122

Japanese Religions Unit
This panel presents four examples displaying the implications of the dissemination and mobility of religious discourses in peripheral areas of Japan from the eighth to the early nineteenth century. While focusing on different case studies, each panelist engages with the overlapping question of movement and adaptation of religious practices outside the main centers. The example of local preachers shows the perils and the socio-religious implication of preachers traveling to the countryside during the eighth and ninth centuries. This historical period is also analyzed from the perspective of the ordination platforms established in the remote provinces of Shimotsuke and Dazaifu. Overlooked dynamics emerge in our third case study, which considers how Sōtō Zen’s exclusion from the Ise universe shaped new networks of real and imagined space. This panel concludes with the example of the martyr shrines that illuminates the understudied phenomenon of provincial religion during the early modern period.

- Bryan Lowe, Princeton University

*The Promise and Perils of Movement: Mobile Preachers and the Study of Eighth- and Ninth-century Japanese Buddhism*

Monks in eighth- and ninth-century Japan were constantly on the move. Priests from major monasteries in the capital traveled to the countryside to preach. Other more informal preachers, including lay women, journeyed between provincial villages and even from the periphery to the capital’s markets to deliver sermons. This paper uses the example of traveling preachers to question a number of binaries that haunt the study of Japanese Buddhism including elite versus folk, court versus countryside, and state versus popular. It argues that travel often bridged supposed gaps between differing social statuses and geographic regions. At the same time, movement carried risk, particularly for those on the margins of society. Danger always lurked in the shadows of mobility’s promised potential. My paper offers a fresh perspective on early Japanese Buddhism by considering the capital and its monasteries not in isolation but as part of a broader network enabled through monastic movement.

- Abigail MacBain, Columbia University

*Precepts in the Peripheries: The Three Ordination Platforms of Nara, Dazaifu, and Shimotsuke*

The Chinese precepts master Jianzhen, or Ganjin, established Japan’s first ordination platforms at Tōdaiji and Tōshōdaiji soon after his arrival in 754. These spaces marked where Buddhist novices received monastic precepts based upon a vinaya text and thereby transitioned into fully-ordained monks. They also contributed to court interests in better accounting for and controlling Japan’s monastic population, especially with the addition of ordination platforms in the rural areas of Tsukushi and Shimotsuke. In this paper, I examine the implications behind establishing these representations of government...
oversight over Japanese monasticism in the rural countryside. I also propose three theories for why they were developed in those locations and what the platforms tell us about Buddhist practice and movement outside Japan’s capital region.

- Marta Sanvido, University of California, Berkeley

*A Kesa for Amaterasu: Conceptual and Spatial Mobility in Sōtō Zen’s Trialectics of Ise*

Few places in Japan have had a greater religious magnitude than Ise. The proximity to the Ise complex and its cultural capital has reshaped religious dynamics emerging from the rich body of works produced by influential religious actors. What were, however, the consequences of the exclusion from the Ise universe? This paper investigates the case of Sōtō Zen communities as a representative example of less prominent religious actors existing in-between the intellectual peripheries and the spatial proximity of the Ise shrines and symbols. This analysis adapts Edward Soja’s trialectics of spatiality to investigate three case studies that showcase the interplay of real, imagined, and real-and-imagined space of Ise in the Sōtō secret corpus. In sum, this study argues that the multiple mobilities emerging within the geographic and intellectual exclusion from Ise favored alternative forms of conceptual and geographic movement that reflect the interaction between religious centers and marginal monastic communities.

- Takashi Miura, University of Arizona

*Deifying Those Who Died to Save the Village: Rural Shrines Commemorating Tokugawa Protest Martyrs*

This paper examines the emergence of "martyr shrines" in Tokugawa Japan, dedicated to leaders of peasant protests who were executed by the government for organizing "illegal" protests. These shrines were highly localized institutions, known only to their immediate rural communities. I argue, however, that the widespread–albeit discrete–emergence of the martyr shrines represents a new religious current in Tokugawa Japan. Their emergence constitutes an aspect of “religion on the peripheries,” in that they were constructed outside of urban centers such as Edo and Osaka. By examining the histories behind the martyr shrines, we can shed light on the lives of rural historical actors and illuminate how they sought to overcome what they perceived as injustices imposed by corrupt rulers at the center. To do so, this paper examines case studies from Imabari (present-day Ehime Prefecture), Karatsu (Saga Prefecture), and Morioka (Iwate Prefecture), representing wide-ranging regions of the Japanese archipelago.

A21-123
*Men, Masculinities, and Religions Unit*

Theme: *Masculine Love, Intimacy, and Kinship*

Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Linda G. Jones, University of Pompeu Fabra, Presiding

While traditionally undertheorized, intimacy is central to masculinity. This panel asks how
different theological and aesthetic traditions inform how men perform intimacy. Drawing from archival research, ethnographic fieldwork, and music criticism, the papers explore masculinity as biological and spiritual reproduction, ecclesiological and eschatological formation, and kinship. Each paper analyzes an example of masculinity from the contemporary US: a Catholic men’s group, Evangelical street missionaries, and Tupac Shakur and his friendships. Together they show a range of how men understand and interpret Christianity as part of their intimate lives as men. Through these papers, we see how men and their religious communities neither adopt what they see as feminine forms of intimacy, nor reject intimacy. Instead, they pursue distinctively masculine forms and ideas: the Christ-warrior within the heterosexual family, the spiritually reproductive preacher, and models of intimate Black friendship across boundaries of incarceration or even life and death.

- Madeline Gambino, Princeton University

"That Man Is You!" Superabundant Love and Catholic Revitalization in Paradisus Dei

This paper analyzes the framework of superabundant love in That Man Is You! (TMIY). TMIY is the flagship program of Paradisus Dei, a 501(c)3 organization seeking to strengthen Catholic marriages. A life of superabundant love—acceptance of God’s love, as well as man’s own love for his Church and family—is TMIY’s promise to men, whom TMIY frames as requiring programmatic support to become more loving husbands and fathers. Catholic lay masculinities have received less scholarly attention than women’s Catholic identities, even as many communities worry about low levels of men’s participation in the Church. Simultaneously, studies of Christian small groups have focused on Protestants, leaving underexamined the recent proliferation of Catholic programs. At the nexus of these concerns, this paper argues that TMIY locates Catholic renewal in men’s openness to and capacity for superabundant love. It examines programmatic and promotional materials and interviews with TMIY participants.

- Kyle Byron, University of Toronto

Spiritual Reproduction: Christian Evangelism and the Intimacies of Missionary Kinship among Men

This paper focuses on how male-identified Christian evangelists understand their work as spiritual reproduction. Drawing on two years of fieldwork with men’s street evangelism groups in the San Francisco Bay Area, I explore how these men use notions of masculinity and the heteronormative family to frame Christian evangelism as a form of non-sexual reproduction in which men reproduce other men as their spiritual children. The concept of spiritual reproduction draws parallels between sexual reproduction and religious conversion, using the biological familial structure of man, woman, and child as a model for the spiritual familial structure of evangelist, Jesus Christ, and spiritual child. Exploring these relationships in ethnographic detail, this paper asks how the practice of spiritual reproduction creates and sustains networks of spiritual kinship among men, as well as what these forms of attachment and intimacy tell us about the complicated relationship between explicitly heteronormative forms of Christianity and the often-
• Bryson White, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

Black Male Intimate Bonds in the Shadow of (Social) Death: Tupac Shakur and Black Male Intimacy

Despite the polyvalent explorations of Tupac Shakur’s musical catalogue, few have investigated how Shakur explores male intimacy in the context of friendship within his artistic production. As scholars explore the intimate bonds in the life of slain artist, they understandably tend to center his relationships with the women of his life namely his mother Afeni Shakur, actress Jada Pinkett Smith, and actress Jasmine Guy. This paper is an exploration of how Shakur conceives of male intimacy within two categories central to his artistry; death and the prison. I frame this conversation with Shakur’s visual representation of his classic song, “I Ain’t Mad at Cha,” as a love letter highlighting heterosexual male intimacy. Furthermore, I argue that Tupac’s depiction of a black heaven is foundational to his conceptualization of intra-male intimate bonds.

Business Meeting

Sarah Imhoff, Indiana University, Presiding
Alyssa Maldonado-Estrada, Kalamazoo College, Presiding

A21-124
Mormon Studies Unit and Religions, Medicines and Healing Unit
Theme: Exploring the Religio-Medical Imaginaries of Mormonism
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Janan Graham, Harvard University, Presiding

While scholarship on Mormonism(s) has rarely been placed at the center of studies in health and religion, this roundtable suggests that it is critical to understanding the histories of contemporary discourses of alternative medical health practices in North America. This group of scholars unites around the idea that centering non-majoritarian religious movements can shed new light on debates over what practices create a healthy body and who has the authority to claim that knowledge. Drawing on a variety of theories and methodologies, we seek to move beyond a narrow understanding of Mormonism as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, to include Mormon experiences, broadly defined, as a fruitful line of inquiry regarding embodiment, religion and medicines more broadly.

Panelists

Cristina Rosetti, Utah Tech University
Brittany Romanello, Arizona State University
Kristine Wright, Princeton University
Eden Consenstein, Princeton University
Responding

Emily Clark, Gonzaga University

Business Meeting

Sara Patterson, Hanover College, Presiding
Taylor Petrey, Kalamazoo College, Presiding

A21-125
Mysticism Unit and Open and Relational Theologies Unit
Theme: Relational Cosmologies and Mystical Practices for Ecological Repair
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Jon Paul Sydnor, Emmanuel College, Boston, Presiding

Cosmologies of separation deem God, humanity, and creation to be discrete and have been used to justify centuries of extractive colonialism and environmental degradation. What might sacred cosmologies of connection yield instead? How might alternative relational cosmologies serve to open humankind to the mystical abundance resident within nature and more fruitfully ground an ecological ethics of both repair and resistance to impending climate catastrophe? This panel considers these questions from a range of religious and mystic perspectives. The traditions of Indigenous peoples of the Americas, panpsychism, and the mystical traditions of Judaism all present resources for reconceptualizing humanity’s relation to the world and the divine in more ecologically sound ways.

- David Seidenberg, Northampton, MA

Moshe Cordovero's Prescient Ethics

The Kabbalist Moshe Cordovero had an understanding of inter-species ethics and human obligation to other species that could be deemed one of the most ecologically attuned of any ethical system in Jewish civilization. Most especially, in his book Tomer Devorah, Cordovero extends principles that other wise only apply to humans, like "love your neighbor" to other animals or other species. This paper will explore this system, and well as the question of how it emerges from Cordovero's mystical theurgy, theology, and experience. How do basic Kabbalistic ideas about God's image, about reincarnation, about soul repair, figure into Cordovero's new formulations? What is the trendline of Cordovero's thought from earlier to later works, where does he stand in relation to earlier Kabbalists, and who among later Kabbalists resonates with Cordovero's more radical statements about inter-species ethics?

- Natan Margalit, Aleph Ordination Program

The Piaseczner Rebbe’s Mystical Creation Myths: Renewing our Relation to Creation
Although biblical creation myths have been interpreted as giving humans dominion over creation, Jewish mystical traditions have reinterpreted the biblical creation myths in unitive ways. This paper will examine the work of the Polish Hasidic master Kalonymus Kalman Shapiro (1889 – 1943) in his work *Derekh HaMelekh*. It will examine the various ways that Rabbi Shapiro uses creation myths in this commentary as a vehicle for his goal of encouraging people to serve God by recognizing that all of creation is a manifestation of God. In his mystical versions of creation, the human being is not an independent entity as much as a co-arising nexus of our relationships with the world. New creation myths such as these will be vital in shifting our current destructive relationship to creation that has brought us to the brink of climate disaster.

- Michael Putnam, Brown University

*The Voice of Stone: Panpsychism and Decolonization in the Desert*

The arches which surround Moab, Utah have become icons of the region, attracting millions of tourists with the promise of recreation in a barren wilderness. But for members of the Indigenous tribes which have occupied Southern Utah for thousands of years, these arches are neither barren nor “wild,” as they are enmeshed within living religious practices. For decades, Indigenous people have claimed that human activity, especially increased noise, is causing the arches to degrade. Although the National Parks Service has historically ignored these claims, geologists from the University of Utah have recently corroborated them by using instruments which enable them to "listen" to the stones. In this paper, I examine the overlapping discourses surrounding the arches. Drawing upon the philosophy of panpsychism, which holds that the material world is conscious, I develop a model for a decolonization of the National Parks.

- Axel Marc Oaks Takacs, Seton Hall University

*‘You are standing on red ground!’: Restoring Trampled Land in Nishnaabeg Cosmologies of Relation in Dialogue with Christian and Islamic Sources*

This paper will begin by exploring critiques of Christian cosmologies of separation, subjugation, and supremacy from authors indigenous to Turtle Island. The works of Vine Deloria, Qwo-Li Driskill, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Robin Kimmerer variously shape this critique; however, special attention to Simpson’s Nishnaabeg critiques will be given. Taking seriously Nishnaabeg embodied resistance to settler colonialism uncovers the covert and overt harm cosmologies of separation endemic to colonial Christianity have engendered. This harm remains embodied in neocolonial practices of human subjugation and extractive capitalist practices of environmental degradation. What indigenous authors enable us to see is the ways in which the theologies of the past remain the politics and economics of the present. The paper then turns to a sustained engagement with Simpson’s Nishnaabeg intelligence, brilliance, and grounded normativity, effectively describing a Nishnaabeg cosmology of “nonhierarchical relation” in which there is a “continual creation of Nishnaabeg ontology, axiology, and epistemology.” This cosmology offers “Nishnaabeg conceptualizations of
Aki [land, earth] [that] are at their core profoundly relational.” This cosmology renders “radical resurgence” an embodied spiritual practice. Radical resurgence draws from Nishnaabeg brilliance, intelligence, and grounded normativity and means “nonhierarchical relationships between land and bodies, bodies meaning the recognition of our physicality as political orders, and our intellectual practices, emotions, spirituality, and hubs of networked relationships.” The paper concludes by exploring both Christian and Islamic resources for land-based restorative practices that bring together spirituality and embodied resistance. Attention to these sources is necessary because the relationship between Muslim empires and Christian kingdoms fueled the colonization of the Americas (see Alan Mikhail’s God’s Shadow [2020]), and as such the restoration of trampled lands is a uniquely Islamic-Christian endeavor, to say nothing of global demographics that position Muslims and Christians in the Global Majority. There will be no restoration without Muslims and Christians working together in solidarity with indigenous peoples against empire, settler colonialism, and extractive capitalism.

Responding

Joy R. Bostic, Case Western Reserve University

A21-126
North American Religions Unit
Theme: Finding American Religion in Unexpected Places
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Isaac Weiner, Ohio State University, Presiding

This session brings together studies of four sites that orient disparate populations in the United States-- tattoo parlors, poultry farms, protests, and H Mart supermarkets-- for a conversation about how we located, and study, American religion in unexpected places.

- Adrienne Krone, Allegheny College

Jews and Chickens in the Anthropocene

In the mid-twentieth century as broiler chicken breeding began to dominate the poultry industry, Jewish Holocaust refugees were rebuilding their lives on chicken farms. And now Jewish farmers are working to resurrect heritage breeds with the hope of rendering broiler chickens extinct. The modern broiler chicken (Gallus gallus domesticus) population has “a combined mass exceeding that of all other birds on earth” (Bennett, Thomas, Williams et al. 2018) Humans have been so integral to the population expansion of broiler chickens, that some scholars argue the chicken exemplifies the “unprecedented human reconfiguration of the Earth’s biosphere” during the Anthropocene (Bennett, Thomas, Williams et al). This paper focuses on the interesting case of the chicken in the era of mass extinction and the perspectives of Jewish farmers as they aided in the expansion and eventual rejection of broiler chickens and in the destruction and eventual revitalization of heritage chicken breeds.
Mihee Kim-Kort, Indiana University

“To Keep in Their Place”: The Confession of 한아름 (H Mart) as a Mode of Self-Surveillance and Means for Survival

This paper explores H Mart acts as a confession—a mode of self-surveillance and means for survival. I show how the social and economic success of H Mart, its deployment of the language of progress, its involvement in processes of neo-liberal capitalism with its ideals of multiculturalism and inclusion legitimizes the presence of Koreans in the U.S. as exceptional participants in wider American society. But, I look to highlight here how amid its success H Mart is a way of "keeping them in their place," to maintain the legibility of the Korean figure in the U.S.—not only as a method of surveillance but for the sake of assimilation into a body politic that capitalizes on foreignness through procedures of security. I look to simultaneously demonstrate how the store as a cultural production is both confession and a confessional space that offers through nostalgia a means for survival for the Korean to be legible to the U.S. nation-state.

Michael McLaughlin, Florida State University

“We’ll Just Have to Get Guns and Be Men”: Armed Households, Church Kitchens, and the Gendering of the Black Panther Party

While popularly depicted as armed men ready for violent revolution, the Black Panther Party put more energy into building social programs. Understanding themselves as colonized subjects of White America, the Panthers implemented a series of “survival programs” designed to ensure their community survived American racial capitalism until the revolution. They found critical support from local religious leaders who offered their church buildings as sanctuaries for the Panther’s revolutionary activities. This paper utilizes Charles Long’s understanding of religion as “orientation in the ultimate sense” to argue that, despite their Marxist ideology, the Black Panthers’ organizing work was intertwined with religion as it served to orient their community toward new and better ways of living as Black people in urban America. In particular I contend that challenging Moynihan-era concerns about Black gender and family norms played a significant component to the Panthers’ work orienting their community’s lives.

Marie Pagliarini, Saint Mary's College of California

The Power of Spiritual Tattooing

This paper will analyze spiritual tattooing in the San Francisco Bay Area as a mode of religious revolution and regeneration and explore the ways that tattoos function to work against despair, oppression, and isolation. The paper is based on 55 1-hour interviews conducted in (mostly) Oakland, CA. One common theme of my interviews is trauma and even catastrophe. Almost every person I interviewed spoke of suffering, loss, and grief—stories of sexual abuse, racism, colonialism, transphobia, homophobia, immigration, political asylum, incarceration, losing children, and the fear of environmental
apocalypse. Through spiritual tattooing, people make themselves the center of religious meaning and seek connection to the sacred through powerfully transformative bodily and material practices, overturning the world “as we know it” in powerful ways. This paper will explore how and why spiritual tattoos serve as sources of personal, political, and cultural power and how this “out of the box” form of religion fits within and makes sense in the contemporary North American religious and cultural context.

Responding

Chad Seales, University of Texas

A21-127
Books under Discussion
Philosophy of Religion Unit and Theology and Religious Reflection Unit
Theme: Devotion: Three Inquiries in Religion, Literature, and Political Imagination (University of Chicago Press, 2021)
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Kris Trujillo, University of Chicago, Presiding

This panel explores the intervention made by Devotion: Three Inquiries in Religion, Literature, and Political Imagination (University of Chicago Press, 2021) into a broad set of fields that include religion and literature, philosophy of religion, critical theory, ethics, and political theology. How does one’s devotion to literature shape their political and ethical investments? How do the practices of reading and writing cultivate new habits, socialites, and forms of life? And how does literature provide an opportunity to grapple with what is and is not imaginable in the face of crisis? These are some of the questions that this dialogue between co-authors Constance Furey, Sarah Hammerschlag, Amy Hollywood, and respondents aims to address.

Panelists

Noreen Khawaja, Yale University
Joseph Winters, Duke University
Martin Kavka, Florida State University

Responding

Constance Furey, Indiana University
Sarah Hammerschlag, University of Chicago
Amy M. Hollywood, Harvard University

Reviewers

Michelle Voss Roberts, Emmanuel College, University of Toronto

A21-128
Religion and Politics Unit and Women and Religion Unit
Theme: Abortion and Religion: Experiences of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Women in the US
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Michal Raucher, Rutgers University, Presiding

The dominant cultural and political narrative in the US is that religion (and particularly Christianity) is opposed to abortion. At the same time, 62% of women who have abortions identify as women of faith and most religious people in the US support the legality of abortion. However, very little research has examined how women understand their abortion decisions within the context of their lives as religious women. No one has studied how a woman’s religious identity shapes her decision to terminate a pregnancy or how religiously-identified women in the US understand the meaning and value of their reproductive decisions to end a pregnancy. Since the summer of 2021, our five-member research team has been conducting interviews with women who self-identify as Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. We have conducted 40 interviews as part of the pilot study in North Carolina, and by the AAR meeting in 2022 we will be several months into phase two of the research. This roundtable discussion will explore and analyze preliminary findings from this research.

Panelists

Monique Moultrie, Georgia State University
Zahra Ayubi, Dartmouth College
Teresa Delgado, St. John's University
Rebecca Todd Peters, Elon University

Business Meeting

K. Christine Pae, Denison University, Presiding
Boyung Lee, Iliff School of Theology, Presiding

A21-129
Religion and Popular Culture Unit
Theme: Buffy the Vampire Slayer at 25: Perspectives on a Religion and Popular Culture Original
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
David Feltmate, Auburn University, Montgomery, Presiding

_Buffy the Vampire Slayer_ debuted in March of 1997 and almost immediately inspired a range of popular culture scholarship that continues to this day. As one of the most discussed popular culture phenomena, Buffy has a legacy of discussion in Religious Studies circles. This panel considers the series’ ongoing relevance for religious studies through the lenses of ethnic, gender, and theological studies.

- Christina Pasqua, University of Toronto
Given the ongoing allegations against Joss Whedon and his feminist mythology, this paper will reflect on a few episodes from the Buffyverse—"I Robot...You Jane" (Buffy, S01E08) and "Billy," (Angel, S03E06)—that illustrate how popular culture and its highly-praised creators struggle with and replicate biblical narratives about women as easily seduced or deserving of physical violence due to the media they consume and their embodied sensuality. Through a close reading of these episodes, this paper seeks to complicate the feminist legacy of Buffy the Vampire Slayer. The idea is not to diminish aspects of the show that have contributed to offscreen understandings of feminism and/or feminist and queer activism as a result of leading characters like Buffy and Willow, but rather to explore how Whedon’s version of feminism, in particular instances, is manufactured for the male gaze and to elevate masculine ideals. These episodes offer insight into the gendered dimensions of media and pop cultural theory, particularly on the question of where religion lies — in word or image, mind or body, original or translation; dichotomies that occupy both religious studies and Whedon’s pair of television series.

Elissa Cutter, Georgian Court University

“Not to obey you, of course, because that’s anachronistic and misogynistic”: Authorial Intent in Interpreting Buffy the Vampire Slayer

On the twenty-fifth anniversary of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, this paper considers how much we separate and not separate art from the artist. Scholars of religion and popular culture have been doing this for some time, as Joss Whedon identified himself as an “angry atheist,” but this question has become more complicated because of accusations against Whedon for his treatment of women. This paper raises questions about the ethical evaluation of art and “cancel culture” through the lens of the character of Anya. Parallels can be drawn between the influence of Xander on Anya’s conversion narrative and Whedon’s influence on the show. Thus, using perspectives from literary theory, popular culture studies, the religious understanding of conversion, and feminism as an ethical critique, this paper uses Anya’s story to examine how much we can separate art from the artist and to illustrate the fruitfulness of our analysis when we do.

Kristine Whaley, Saint Petersburg College

The Real Power of Buffy: How Buffy and the Invisible Girl Affirm a Theology of Empowering Relationships

Buffy the Vampire Slayer has depicted numerous types of relationships, but the focus on the strength of relationship and the empowerment that comes from them is a central theme. From the first season's episode "Out of Sight, Out of Mind" until the finale, key events demonstrated that without true community, the characters would not be whole. "Out of Sight, Out of Mind" gives physicality to this brokenness, a principle that is highlighted by seeing the Scoobies share power, Buffy defy the tradition of isolation for slayers, and the final action of empowering potential slayers. Through these moments, we
can see a depiction of the theological theme of God's empowerment of creation through immanent relationship.

- Ellen Posman, Baldwin Wallace University

*Willow Rosenberg as the Original Jewitch*

The term "Jewitch" came into being during the span of time in which Willow Rosenberg, identified early in the Buffy the Vampire Slayer series as a Jewish girl, began to practice witchcraft and self-identify as a witch. Though Willow never uses the term "Jewitch" for herself, her style of being both Jewish and Pagan is one that was reflecting, or being reflected in, the lived community. The concept of Jewitch has become a contested one in the years since, but the issues raised in both communities of Jewitches speak to larger issues of feminism in Judaism, so the feminism central to the Buffy Universe is also enacted in these communities.

**Responding**

Juli Gittinger, Georgia College & State University

A21-130

**Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism Unit**

Theme: *Postcolonial Perspectives on Christianity: Middle East, India, and North America*

Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Adrian Hermann, University of Bonn, Presiding

These three papers bring together postcolonial perspectives on Christianity in the Middle East, India, and North America. The speakers will discuss issues of power and appropriation in regard to how Western scholars' manuscript catalogues constructed the field of Eastern Christianity, the symbolism of St. Kateri Tekakwitha as a colonial and ecological icon, and the challenges of the Thomas Christians to Portuguese colonization in the seventeenth century.

- Maroun El Houkayem, Duke University

*Power and Appropriation: Manuscript Catalogues*

Colonialism facilitated the construction of numerous academic fields, including the field of Eastern Christianity. Western scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were able to access certain spaces and objects. Moving these objects to the West, was an essential step in the development of this field. Yet, as this paper will demonstrate, "moving" did not necessarily entail displacing the physical object. It took many other forms, one of which was cataloguing manuscripts. To demonstrate how this project was inscribed in the intellectual, religious, and cultural currents of nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe, I analyze the travel journals of various German and British scholars through both ritual and postcolonial theory. This paper, therefore, will argue that these lists were also part of the colonial and orientalist enterprise of exerting power and
appropriating cultural objects, even if they were not transposed to the West.

- Karl Johnson, University of Colorado

*Colonialism, Ecological Appropriation, and Mohawk Catholic Devotion in the Representation and Celebration of St. Kateri Tekakwitha*

St. Kateri Tekakwitha, a Mohawk woman who died in 1680 at Kahnawake and was canonized in 2012, has long been a symbol of ecology and pre-anthropocene innocence for white Catholics and those concerned with the environment. For Native American Catholics, she has come to represent Native Catholic identity triumphing despite centuries of colonial oppression. However, scholars and journalists have not deeply investigated her relationship with her own people, the Mohawks. The Mohawks of Kahnawake and Akwesasne have for the past-century become famous for sovereignty movements, refusal of both the American and Canadian states, and their rejection of Christianity in a return to traditional observances. In this paper, on the contrary, I ethnographically engage with Mohawk Catholics who are devoted to Kateri, regarding her as a “sister” and not a far-away, exalted figure, and appreciate both her Catholicism and her indigenous identity, while I also trace the history of her appropriation.

- Clara Joseph, University of Calgary

*Portuguese Colonization and the Freedom Struggle of the Thomas Christians of India in the Seventeenth Century*

Why and how did the native Christian community of India—the Thomas Christians—challenge Portuguese colonization in the seventeenth century? In response to scholars who either see Indian Christians as colonial products or as pro-colonial, and in response to scholars who see a seventeenth-century rebellion, known as the Coonen Cross Oath, by these Christians as directed solely against the Church, this paper foregrounds the colonial context to produce a different reading. The paper examines key primary sources to propose that Thomas Christians sought non-violent modes of resistance in seeking alternative markets to trade their black pepper, and even controversially joined local rulers in establishing relationships with competing European markets, including the Dutch East India Company. The paper argues that a series of strategies, rather than the single event of the Coonen Cross Oath, constitutes a non-violent freedom struggle of the Thomas Christians against Portuguese colonization.

**Business Meeting**

Kathy Chow, Yale University, Presiding
Adrian Hermann, University of Bonn, Presiding

**A21-131**
Books under Discussion
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Unit
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Rebecca Carter-Chand, Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandell Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, Presiding

The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Mass Atrocity, and Genocide explores the many and some-times complicated ways in which religion, faith, doctrine, and practice intersect in societies where mass atrocity and genocide occur.

The volume is intended as an entry point to questions about mass atrocity and genocide that are asked by and of people of faith and is an outstanding reference source to the key topics, historical events, and heated debates in this subject area. The panel features a Handbook editor and four of the 39 international contributors to the Handbook, which span five continents and whose work cover four millennia. Each explores the intersection of religion, faith, and mainly state-sponsored mass atrocity and genocide, and draws from a variety of disciplines. The volume is divided into six core sections, and the panel features contributors from four different sections among: Genocide in Antiquity and Holy Wars, The Genocide of Indigenous Peoples, Religion and the State, The Role of Religion during Genocide, Post Genocide Considerations, and Memory Culture.

- Shawn Kelley, Daemen University

*Genocide in Antiquity*

This chapter investigates the logic of the common practice of mass extermination in the ancient world, paying particular attention to the Roman assault on the Jews of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Kelley 2016, 7–15). I will begin by identifying examples of genocide, focusing on exterminatory commands and imperial assaults on the ancient Jewish people, arguing that genocide in the biblical world is best understood in terms of imperial assaults, rather than the exterminatory commands. I will then use a single example—the Roman destruction of Jerusalem (70 CE)—as a way of illuminating how and why genocide was conceived, carried out, and justified in the biblical era.

- Kerri J. Malloy, San José State University

*Renewing the world: disrupting settler-colonial destruction*

The tribes of northwestern California hold their world renewal ceremonies at the world’s physical and spiritual centers: the Yurok at Kenek, the Karuk at Katemein, the Wiyot at Tuluwat, and the Tolowa at Yontocket. The duality of these physical and spiritual places forms the socio-historical matrix of each tribe’s individual and communal identities. Tribal identities, religion, law, and worldview are intercon-nect by the region’s geography—“the mountains and rivers, forests and prairies”—and are unable to exist on their own. Segmenting the physical, spiritual, and knowledge experience within the
region’s belief systems is impossible, as they work together to give meaning to faith.

The Yurok, Karuk, Wiyot, and Tolowa have been disrupting settler-colonial attempts to erase their religious beliefs for over a century and a half. As the second decade of the twenty-first century starts, it is unknown what attempts will be made to relegate the world renewal ceremonies to the pages of history. The non-Indigenous world has not attempted to understand Indigenous people’s religions as more than a new age phenomenon. The world will continue to be renewed for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, in the hopes that they can live in balance with each other.

- Aria Razfar, University of Illinois, Chicago

_The power of one: narrative analysis and an Iranian Jewish Shoah survivor_

Holocaust (Shoah) literature is replete with stories of love, resilience, faith, and triumph of the human spirit in unfathomable conditions (e.g., Appelfeld 2004; Levi 1971). They also offer narratives of despair and chaos of a dystopian reality reflecting the madness of the time—a time where materialism and production efficiency supersede spirituality and humanistic relations. As Nazism swept across Europe, some Jews wrote diaries in which they attempted to make sense of the surrounding chaos. Their purpose for writing varied from personal reflections to providing a historical record for future generations. These writings provided an escape from the immediate sense of darkness and despair creating a platform for hope, possibility, and an alternative imagination.

- Khyati Tripathi, University of Petroleum and Energy Studies, Dehradun

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“Nature and Death” in the 1947 India-Pakistan Partition Genocide

As a death researcher, I am intrigued by how the deaths during the 1947 India-Pakistan Partition function as different forms of death—physical death, social death, death of honor, and death of the material—and how these forms qualitatively differ within a genocidal society. This chapter explores the killings perpetrated during the 1947 India Pakistan Partition genocide, with particular focus on the role of religion. In order to better understand the personal impact of the violence, I accessed interview summaries of 50 Partition witnesses from India and Pakistan through the 1947 Partition Archive (www.1947partitionarchive.org). For the purpose of this chapter, my focus within the eyewitness interviews was on the journey of the migrants from the moment Partition was announced until they reached the other side (or the “designated state”), as was required by their religious affiliation. It was during this liminal phase that death by violence, malnutrition, and disease was witnessed by many people. I examined their narratives to understand the experiences of witnessing deaths, any associated emotions, and its effects on the interviewees.

- Rubina Peroomian, University of California, Los Angeles
Religion: A Driving Force But not a Major Cause Of the Turkish Genocide of Armenians

The presentation of my chapter in the Routledge Handbook of Genocide will begin by the evaluation of the characteristics of the Ottoman rule built on discrimination, stigmatization, religious intolerance, and hatred toward Christian Armenians, the indigenous peoples of the eastern highlands of the empire. This will reveal the root causes of the state genocidal policies in periodic massacres of Armenians, culminating in the genocide of 1915-1923.

As the Armenian literary responses and testimonies demonstrate, religion was a major player in the conduct of both victims and perpetrators: Armenians, as a targeted people of faith, accepting martyrdom for the sake of the Christian God and Muslims killing as in a gratifying religious ritual to the God of Islam. However, I will argue that religion was only used as a stratagem to secure wide-ranging participation of the masses, without which the realization of the Young Turk grand scheme of pan-Turkism was impossible.

Responding

Sara Brown, Center for Holocaust, Human Rights & Genocide Education

Business Meeting

Kate E. Temoney, Montclair State University, Presiding
Benjamin Sax, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies, Presiding

A21-140
Sacred Writes
Theme: The Risks of Going Public: An Interactive Workshop
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Elizabeth Bucar, Northeastern University, Presiding

Institutions benefit from the attention public scholarship can garner, but are ill-prepared to address the harassment public scholars face. Minoritized scholars are the targets of disproportionate, intense, and even violent abuse when they “go public” with their research, and scholars who work on topics like global Islam, Hindu nationalism, or white Christian supremacy are almost guaranteed to face trolling and backlash when they engage the media. Failure to address the risks of public scholarship can discourage scholars from entering public conversations that desperately need their voices, perspectives, and expertise.

This interactive workshop will provide space to discuss the professional and personal risks of producing public-facing scholarship. Facilitators will offer some initial framing for small groups discussion on risk, train participants to “dox” themselves and remove existing private information, and provide guidelines on how to ask colleagues and administrators for support. We will conclude by brainstorming together concrete strategies for risk assessment and mitigation. Please bring your laptop and be prepared to discuss, collaborate, and work!
Panelists

Megan Goodwin, Northeastern University

A21-132
Books under Discussion
Space, Place, and Religion Unit
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Jeanne Halgren Kilde, University of Minnesota, Presiding

This proposed roundtable has two intended goals: (1) to introduce a new interdisciplinary collection of essays on religious spaces—across the globe, across time periods, and across religious traditions—to the AAR/SBL community and (2) to assess the state of the field of critical studies of religious space. Taking a new collection of essays as its jumping-off point, this roundtable will feature those who originally organized the AAR’s Space, Place, and Religion program unit and have conceptualized and edited this volume, which builds on the unit’s mission to focus on critical methodology as a means of bringing together scholars who study diverse spaces. Current methods range across many disciplines (religious studies, geography, sociology, history, architecture, anthropology, etc.) and represent many approaches (hermeneutical, critical spatial, ethnographic, digitalization, phenomenological…) Thirty years into the “spatial turn” in the study of religion, it is time for critical assessment of the field and its contributions.

Panelists

Barbara Ambros, University of North Carolina
David Bains, Samford University
Susan L. Graham, Saint Peter's University
David Simonowitz, Pepperdine University

Responding

Matthew Mitchell, Allegheny College
Katie Oxx, Saint Joseph's University, Philadelphia

Business Meeting

Brooke Schedneck, Rhodes College, Presiding

A21-139
Status of People with Disabilities in the Profession Committee
Theme: Status of Persons with Disabilities in the Profession Committee Meeting
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Devan Stahl, Baylor University, Presiding
Panelists

Sarah Jean Barton, Duke University
Leonard Curry, Vanderbilt University
Heike Peckruhn, Daemen University
Nicholas Shrubsole, University of Central Florida
Rebecca Spurrier, Columbia Theological Seminary
Michael A. Walker, North Park University
Sandy Stevens, American Academy of Religion

A21-133
Study of Islam Unit
Theme: Recovering Historical Constructions of Islam
Monday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Shankar Nair, University of Virginia, Presiding

This panel will explore different historical approaches to understanding Islamic discourse.

- Daniel Watling, University of Chicago

  Recovering Almohad Islam: Apocalypticism and Takfīr

  This paper considers the historiographical task of recovering the apocalyptic and takfīrī elements of Almohad Islam. I begin from the hypothesis that Ibn Tūmart (1080-1130), the founder of the Almohad Caliphate (1121-1269), elaborated a novel expression of Islam (called “Almohadism”) distinct from Sunnism, Shi‘ism, and Ibādism. The Almohads believed that Ibn Tūmart was the infallible imām and mahdī and that rational knowledge of God was necessary for the validation of worship (‘ibāda) and, ultimately, salvation. This exclusivism, predicated on Ibn Tūmart’s messianic status, prompted the Almohads to declare all other Muslims kuffār (“unbelievers”). Although we have some evidence that the Almohads developed unique rituals to distinguish themselves from other Muslims, the Marīnids pursued a policy of de-Almohadization, destroying many Almohad-era sources. I argue that, despite de-Almohadization, post-Almohad historiography offers accounts of popular religious practices in former Almohad territories that can help us document Almohad ritual and doctrine.

- Khan Asfandyar Shairani, University of Notre Dame

  Shah Wali Allah, Revivalist Mystic or Modern Reformer?, 1703-1762

  Shah Wali Allah Dihlawi (1703-1762) epitomizes the Islamic religious scholar (‘ālim) par excellence in the mind of modern South Asian Muslims. Modern scholarship has taken the typical scholarly tack to view Wali Allah’s oeuvre as divided between hadith, mysticism, or politics, missing the complex interpenetration of Islamic cosmology and a particular genealogy within all of his ideas. In fact, for him, all traditions stems from the
mystical cosmology within which imagination plays a primary role. The privileging of hadith in his thought by modern scholarship, may be an outcome of work that focused on a particular traditionalist strand, the Deobandi school of thought, to the exclusion of these others. What does recentered his mysticism do for Wali Allah's contributions to other Islamic disciplines such as hadith and fiqh?

- Brannon Ingram, Northwestern University

_Ghulam Ahmad Parvez (1903-85) and the Category of Religion: Beyond ‘Islamism’ and ‘Modernism’_

The paper I am proposing for AAR 2022 focuses on the pivotal but understudied Pakistani scholar and political figure, Ghulam Ahmad Parvez (1903-85). Part of the modernist circles surrounding Muhammad Iqbal in Lahore in the 1920s and 30s, Parvez became influential among the Pakistani civil service in the 1950s and 60s, during which time he acted as an informal advisor to Pakistani president Ayub Khan (1907-74). The paper explores Parvez's critique of the category of "religion" and why he denied that Islam was a "religion" at all. For Parvez, "religion" is private, apolitical, and individualistic; Islam is public, political, and collective. Interestingly, despite being a token modernist, his ideas about "religion" are virtually identical to similar claims in Islamist contexts, such as that of Abu'l A'la Mawdudi (1903-1979). The paper will use these similarities to trouble the distinction between "Islamism" and "Islamic modernism."

- Arzu Yalcinkaya, Uskudar University, Turkey

_Sufi Intellectuals in the Late Ottoman and Early Turkish Republican Era: The Bridging Role of Kenʻän Rifā‘ī and and Veled Çelebi İzbudak_

This study examines two Sufi intellectuals whose work attempts to reconcile the polarizations between Anatolian-Sufi tradition and secularism surrounding the birth of Turkish Republic (1923). New secular regulations consistently repressed the traditional lifeways, including Sufi practices, that newly-made citizens of the Turkey had practiced during the Ottoman era (1299-1923). Drawing on the oeuvres—discourses, commentaries, memoirs—of Kenʻän Rifā‘ī (1867-1950), and Veled Çelebi İzbudak (1869-1953), my paper will analyze how these era-spanning scholars developed unique arguments for the continuity of Anatolian-Sufi tradition, despite the closure of Sufi lodges. Mainstream historiography of this critical “transitional” period from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic (1908-1925) has depicted Sufi responses as monolithically “against” secular reforms. Meanwhile, revisionist studies fail to thoroughly study many cases of prominent Sufi intellectuals who not only fully complied with new secular regulations, but also argued that the new Republic presented no contradiction practicing the core values of Sufi tradition.
Monday, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM (In Person)
Patricia Sauthoff, University of Alberta, Presiding

This panel explores Śaiva and Buddhist tantric modes of health, healing, rejuvenation, and longevity in the Sanskrit and Tibetan traditions. Medicine has long been deeply intertwined with Indian religious traditions, yet until recently scholars have tended to compartmentalize Āyurveda (and other medical traditions) and religion as separate entities. In this panel we examine some of the ways in which medicinal knowledge was adapted to tantric teachings and practices. We devote special attention to the use of mantras and maṇḍalas in healing traditions and connect tantric views of medicine to those of Āyurveda. One paper explores medical demonology in relation to mahāsiddha traditions, while another surveys medical knowledge in the Buddhist kriyātantra literature. A third paper concerns Śaiva visualization techniques for longevity. Bringing the subject into modern times, the final paper examines the application of mudras, mantras, and yantras for therapeutic purposes in contemporary Śrīvidyā.

- Adam Krug, University of Memphis

*Pathology as Script: Medical Demonology and the Buddhist Mahāsiddhas*

This paper focuses on the application of a demonological paradigm in my research on the ascetic culture of the early Buddhist mahāsiddhas who authored *The Seven Siddhi Texts*. I demonstrate that features of the Buddhist mahāsiddha traditions such as the rejection of ritual and the adoption of transgressive modes of behavior are only properly understood in light of the ritualization of medical demonology in the Buddhist kriyātantra literature and the Āyurvedic literature’s pathologies of possession. This perspective allows us to correct misinterpretations in the field concerning statements in the Buddhist mahāsiddha literature that prohibit the performance of a variety of ritual practices. The paper concludes with a discussion of the adoption of the behavioral determinants of possession outlined in the three major Āyurvedic compendia and the *Netratantra* as a kind of “script” for the performance of the transgressive ascetic practices that came to define the Buddhist mahāsiddha movement.

- Shaman Hatley, University of Massachusetts, Boston

*Lotus, Moon, and Nectar: On the History and Imagery of Longevity Meditations in Tantric Śaivism*

This presentation examines Śaiva tantric meditation techniques for promoting longevity, looking at examples from a spectrum of pre-twelfth century *tantras*. While Buddhist tantric healing methods have received scholarly attention, as have, to a lesser degree, Śaiva tantric ritual practices for healing, Śaiva meditation practices for health and longevity remain underexplored. This is partly because mantric and ritual methods predominate in the early *tantras*. Techniques of meditative visualization for healing, “cheating death,” and even immortality nonetheless have a long history in Śaivism. This presentation traces the genealogy of several such practices, from the earliest extant *tantras* to sources of the tenth and the eleventh century, and explores the question of how
these techniques inform the rise of body-centered Haṭhayoga in the eleventh century.

- Ryan Damron, 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

*Medicine and Mantric Power: A Preliminary Survey of Medical Lore in the Buddhist Kriyātantras*

The Buddhist Kriyātantras contain an array of rites dedicated to healing and protection from disease, rites which utilize dhāraṇīs and mantras as the primary instrument for curing physical and mental illness. These mantras and dhāraṇīs are typically employed within a ritual framework that presumes a broad range medical expertise, ranging from theory to treatment, which can be traced to medical traditions outside a specifically Buddhist or tantric milieu. This paper will survey the body of medical knowledge preserved in exemplars of the Kriyātantra genre, and look closely at the possible precedents and sources of its theory and practice.

- Meera Kachroo, Saint Thomas More College

*Hermeneutics and Healing in Contemporary Śrīvidyā*

Twentieth century publications on Śrīvidyā typically coordinate traditional understandings of the subtle body with physiological, medical, and health-centered views of the anatomical body. The works of John Woodroffe and the sectarian Śrīvidyā literature similarly include an admixture of physiological and anatomical terms alongside the emic vocabulary of the theological tradition. For example, *kuṇḍālinī* becomes identified with the vagus nerve; *prakāśa* and *vimarṣa* are matched with melatonin and serotonin. In contemporary Śrīvidyā, this mixing of religion and science has moved beyond abstract speculation. In line with the tradition’s emphasis on the accrual and deployment of power, outspoken initiates have promoted practical applications for employing *mudras*, recitation of *mantras*, and application of *yantras* for therapeutic purposes. I argue that the signature exegetical strategy in this esoteric tradition—linguistic matching across sets, developing a matrix of associations—is the means of Śrīvidyā’s continuous (re)alignment with elite intellectual discourses, from *advaitavedānta* to neuroanatomy.

**A21-136**

**Women’s Caucus**

Theme: Recovering Herstories: Women on the Australian Continent

Monday, 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM (In Person)

Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI Australian Institute for Theological Education, Presiding

Herstories in Australia are often neglected and not recorded. Particularly those of women who have made noteworthy contributions to the field of religion. This panel will explore the stories of women on the Australian continent, including consideration of the way intersectionality impacts how they are told and heard. The omissions and inclusions are fuelled by colonial definitions of religion, biography, and perspectives on women that privilege western epistemologies and
hierarchies. A lack of coverage of women’s stories on digital and other publishing platforms means that their work is marginalized and unavailable as transformative wisdom within their local communities and the larger world. This panel will recover and explore the stories of women who (1) have represented their religious and spiritual traditions as leaders (2) are noteworthy as founders, practitioners, teachers, resisters, and researchers of the world’s religious and spiritual traditions and (3) do not have significant biographical information published about them in on accessible formats digital platforms.

- Michelle Eastwood, University of Divinity, Melbourne

_Aunty Jean Phillips – Indigeniety and Invisibility_

The story of indigenous spirituality in the lands now called Australia is complex and often untold. While a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are Christian, their faith has often come at the hands of colonisers who deny and forcibly dispossessed them of their traditional spiritual practices. Still today, stories of Indigenous religious leaders remain untold because they are not written down in whitefella ways. This paper will present the story of senior Christian leader Aunty Jean Phillips and explore why her story has not yet been told.

- Cathryn McKinney, University of Divinity, Melbourne

_Biographical Encounter: A Posture of Dissent_

How can we hear the narrative of the absent women (in particular) who cannot or will not be present to speak and be heard? For a biographical discourse to be encountered with and in, a voice needs to be present, a narrative engaged with, and a life acknowledged in the hearing of (biographical) content – or does it? What are the alternatives to an understanding that biography can be encountered in ways other than marks that memorialise and a narrative of existence that acknowledges significance? This paper will assert that while biography can indeed represent the noteworthy – evidence of significance – we can recognize that for many women biographical presence is absent. We can adopt a posture of dissent and engage with an objection to this absence in a manner that can be held in parallel to recorded biograph. We can think about this posture, this way of being in the world, as a declaration that insists that despite no recorded sketch-in-time, a sort of writing can occur, a breath of presence can be located and claimed as evidence that – this woman’s significant life has been acknowledged and held in biographical honour.

- Deborah Fulthorp, Grand Canyon University

_Harbinger Mary Florence “Molly” Ayers: Shattering Colonialist-Centered Epistemologies within Australian Pentecostal Spirituality_

Western epistemologies and androcentric colonialist hierarchies are often built upon the backs of the underrepresented whose stories fail to be written or considered. On the
continent of Australia, the impact of colonialism obscures the stories of women who were spiritual forerunners and religious leaders. One such harbinger of Pentecostal spirituality, Mary Florence, “Molly” Ayers impacted the continent of Australia and beyond with her message and methods constantly shattering gender norms. Her work and campaigns ranged among the Aboriginal people with the Australian Inland Mission, to various parts of New Zealand, Britain, the USA and beyond. Her preaching style attracted “great crowds” and she was recommended and worked alongside notable historic Pentecostals such as Carrie Judd Montgomery, Smith Wigglesworth, and Pandita Ramabai.

- Rosalind F. Hinton, LAOUTLOUD

*Kathleen McPhillips: Feminist Frameworks for Exploring Religion-State Complicity in Gender Violence*

*Kathleen McPhillips* is a senior lecturer and sociologist of religion and gender in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Newcastle, in Australia. I will trace Dr. McPhillips’ scholarly journey to her most recent co-edited volume with Naomi Goldenberg, “The End of Religion: Reappraisals of the State.” Dr. McPhillips’ new framework deconstructs the agreements between religion and the state that “ground and replicate regressive patriarchal attitudes” in every generation (27).

**Responding**

Tracy McEwan, University of Newcastle, Australia

**A21-141**

Religion in Premodern Europe and the Mediterranean Unit and SBL Art and Religions of Antiquity Unit

Theme: The Magic of the Crafted Image: Paintings, Talismans, Assemblages

Monday, 9:00 AM-11:30 AM (In Person)
Karen Stern, Brooklyn College, Presiding

A sizeable theoretical literature, bridging religion, art history, anthropology, history, and archaeology, has come to regard images not as passive objects of ritual or decorative activity but as agents in a world of vital things. Papers in this session consider the multiple agencies of assemblages, amulets, paintings and wax candles, objects that invite consideration in these new frameworks. As far as possible, contributors to this session will interact with Laurel Kendall’s *Mediums and Magical Things: Statues, Paintings, and Masks in Asian Places* (Berkeley, 2021) in their consideration of particular artefacts (or stories of artefacts).

- Mai Lootah, Rice University

*Visionary Practices in Royal Courts: Images and Text as Divinatory Agents in the Fālnāma*

The Fālnāmā, an illustrated book of omens, was one of the divinatory tools that seemed
to be quite common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in three Muslim empires of Turkic origins; the Mughals in the Indian sub-continent, the Safavids in Persia, and the Ottomans in the rest of the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and North Africa. This paper studies a selection of astrological illustrations in two Fālnāma manuscripts; a Persian (H. 1702) and a Turkish (H. 1703), archived in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library in Istanbul, Turkey. Coupling the approaches of Laurel Kendall in her Mediums and Magical Things and Richard Emerson in his “The Representation of Antichrist in Hildegard of Bingin’s Scivas” with Peter Moore’s paradigm of ‘four elements of mystical experience,’ this paper attempts to assess the manner by which the Fālnāma’s illustrations provoked the visionary’s imagination, and then elicited his or her interpretation.

- Ilona Rashkow, State University of New York, Stony Brook

“Help Me Get Pregnant ... and then Protect Us” – Fertility Amulets and Talismans in Ancient Israel

Eastern cultures (including ancient Israel) turned to the protective magical powers of a variety of amulets, charms, and talismans. Depending on their specific purpose, amulets could be inscribed with various biblical verses, prayers (especially the Priestly Blessing), or combinations of the letters of the multiple names of God. Facing the possibility of barrenness, childbirth complications, difficulty in lactation, and high infant mortality rates, women performed a variety of rituals in order to keep away the evil demons who caused infertility or to attract benevolent ones to assure reproductive success. Amulets in the form of deities have been found in excavations and were probably worn by women during pregnancy. This paper explores the use of amulets and talismans in relation to fertility in Ancient Israel.

- Nicole Archambeau, Colorado State University

Wax Objects in Medieval European Healing

In 1374, during a resurgence of plague and mercenary warfare, the city of Montpellier constructed a wax-coated cloth tube the length of the palisade walls. The goal of this candle-like object, as it burned day and night, was to protect the city from disease and attack. But how could a candle protect the health of a city? What expectations did the makers and users of such a candle have to justify the expense of this difficult and potentially expensive project? What could a candle do? This paper explores the shapes, materials, and uses of wax objects like candles and ex-votos to better understand their role in maintaining access to miraculous health care and protection.

- David Frankfurter, Boston University

The Theory of the Graphic Assemblage

The concept of the assemblage in modern materiality theory involves the converging and
interacting agencies of different things in a particular space or a particular situation. In Religious Studies the assemblage is most usefully illustrated in the domestic altar (as explored in recent work on both Afro-Caribbean and ancient Roman examples). In such cases the selection of images and accoutrements stages multiple, generative interactions among the subjects on the altar. But how can these principles be applied to the graphic assemblage, i.e inscribed amulets, paintings, mosaics, graffiti, and “magical” charms? Using a range of objects meant to exert power in the world (from early Egyptian Christian amulets and inscribed gems to illustrated incantation bowls), this paper will propose some ways to apply notions of assemblage to two-dimensional, graphic artifacts and to the craftsmanship involved in their format.

A21-142
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe

Plenaries
Theme: Environmental Justice in Times of Catastrophe
Monday, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM (In Person)
Mayra Rivera, Harvard University, Presiding

Panelists will draw on the research to discuss the contributions of an environmental justice framework for analyzing and narrating the differential effects of climate catastrophe and imagine the common good.

Panelists

Christopher Carter, University of San Diego
Hilda Lloréns, University of Rhode Island
David Walsh, Gettysburg College

A21-144
Program Committee
Theme: Program Committee Meeting
Monday, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM (In Person)
Whitney Bauman, Florida International University, Presiding

Panelists

Monica Coleman, University of Delaware
Ann Gleig, University of Central Florida
Derek Hicks, Wake Forest University
Robert P. Jones, Public Religion Research Institute
Lerone Martin, Stanford University
M. Cooper Minister, Shenandoah University
Reiko Ohnuma, Dartmouth College
Atalia Omer, University of Notre Dame
Jin Y Park, American University
Jeremy Posadas, Austin College
A21-143
Professional Development - Mentoring
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons

Status of People with Disabilities in the Profession Committee
Theme: Open Conversations Luncheon
Monday, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM (In Person)
Devan Stahl, Baylor University, Presiding

The Status of People with Disabilities in the Profession Committee (PWD) will host a luncheon for conversation for scholars and students with disabilities, as well as anyone interested in disability issues in the Academy. The gathering will offer opportunities for mentoring and informal connections with colleagues.

A21-145
Women’s Caucus
Theme: Women’s Caucus Business Meeting
Monday, 11:15 AM-12:15 PM (In Person)
Elizabeth Ursic, Mesa Community College, Presiding

All are welcome to join the Women’s Caucus Leadership team. Come and learn about our many projects and plans for 2023.

Panelists
Deborah Fulthorp, Grand Canyon University
Kimberly Carter, California Institute of Integral Studies
Elizabeth Freese, Auburn Seminary
Ulrike Auga, Humboldt University, Berlin
Cristina Lledo Gomez, BBI Australian Institute for Theological Education
Rosalind F. Hinton, LAOUTLOUD
Colleen D. Hartung, 1000 Women in Religion Wikipedia Project
Tracy McEwan, University of Newcastle, Australia
Theresa A. Yugar, California State University, Los Angeles
Mahjabeen Dhala, Graduate Theological Union
Jonathon Eder, Mary Baker Eddy Library
Julia Berger, Montclair State University
Emily Silverman, Graduate Theological Union
Colette Qualtieri, Arizona State University
Winifred Whelan, Saint Bonaventure University

Responding
Elaine Nogueira-Godsey, Methodist Theological School in Ohio
A21-200
Professional Development - Employment
Academic Relations Committee and Applied Religious Studies Committee and Graduate Student Committee
Theme: What Can Religion Departments Do To Support More Diverse Careers?
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Susan E. Hill, University of Northern Iowa, Presiding

Join us for a wide-ranging conversation about how Religion departments, particularly those with graduate programs, could advise and support more diverse career outcomes for young scholars of religion. The conversation will center diverse perspectives – faculty, graduate student, professional development advisor, graduate affairs dean – and address possible curricular changes, staff and faculty initiatives, admissions and recruitment, internships, partnerships, and mentorship opportunities, not to mention highlighting all the reasons that make Religion scholars invaluable in and outside the academy. This roundtable discussion encourages attendee engagement.

Panelists
Amy Defibaugh, American Academy of Religion
Rebecca Alpert, Temple University
Tyler Fuller, Boston University
SueJeanne Koh, University of California, Irvine
Joshua Lazard, Boston University
Steven Ramey, University of Alabama

A21-203
Theme: Honoring the Scholarship, Sisterhood, and Scholastic Legacy of Dianne M. Stewart and Tracey E. Hucks
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Rachel E. Harding, University of Colorado, Denver, Presiding

Dianne M. Stewart and Tracey E. Hucks are not only two of the most prominent Africana religious studies scholars, their friendship, their colleague-sisterhood, and their marasa-ibeji consciousness (Clark 1991) truly embody their transdisciplinary theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of the Africana religious world. Having been informed by and influenced a range of fields including Womanist and Black theologies, African American religious history, African religious studies and philosophy, African diaspora religious studies, and history of religions, this session will examine either collectively and/or comparatively their theoretical and methodological approach to the study of religion, and their contributions to the field of Africana religious studies more specifically. This session focuses on not only the legacy of their collective work and collaborations but also their forthcoming two volume collaborative project, Obeah,
Orisa, and Religious Identity in Trinidad, which will be published with Duke University Press in 2022. This session offers space to explore their scholar-sisterhood and how it not only has informed and fostered their collaborative research and writing but also how Africana religious practices, theologies, methodologies (e.g., ethnography, historical analysis, etc.) and onto-epistemologies have influenced their collegiality and their mentorship of proceeding generations in the field.

**Panelists**

Jacob K. Olupona, Harvard University  
Thomas A. Tweed, University of Notre Dame  
Teresa Delgado, St. John's University  
Adam Clark, Xavier University  
M. Kamari Clarke, Yale University  
Musa Dube, Emory University

**Responding**

Tracey Hucks, Colgate University  
Dianne Stewart, Emory University

**A21-204**  
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe  
**Animals and Religion Unit**  
**Theme:** Catastrophes of Conscience: Valuing Life on Multiple Scales  
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)  
Katharine Mershon, Western Carolina University, Presiding

Religion has always played a key role in shaping the relationship between the human and more than human world. The scale upon which moral worth is given – or not given – to the more than human world has played a key role in normalizing exploitative logics that have led us towards global climate catastrophe. These three papers examine the intersection of power, relationship, and ideology between humans and the more than human world. The first paper invites us to value life at the level of soil microbes and asks “what do good or restored relationships with compost and soil microbes look like?” The second paper examines the tension between valuing the lives of non-human animals and those (often marginalized) folks whose livelihood is tied to their slaughter. The last paper explores Skidi-Pawnee notions of community with and agency of non-human animals through an analysis of sacred stories within the tribal community.

- Emma Lietz Bilecky, Princeton Theological Seminary

*Compost, Cooperation, Catastrophe, Consent: Toward an Ethics of Soil-making across Species and Scales*

Making and thinking with compost facilitates processes of grieving many deaths (those of individuals and species alike) and transforming relations which produce ecological
degradation, especially those perpetuated by settler forms of agriculture, tillage and food production. Compost as a site of interspecies cooperation may catalyze more robust theological responses to climate shocks and catastrophe. However, uncritically redemptive engagements with compost and soil communities risk over-simplifying and worse, neglecting the political dimensions and ethical obligations of cooperation across these life-scales. In light of catastrophe’s ongoing existential threats, what do good or restored relationships with compost and soil microbes look like? How might theological and ethical frameworks play a role in guiding less extractive and more reciprocal relationships to this “multispecies muddle”? I suggest that restored relations for restoring soils must attend to the differential power dynamics, histories and responsibilities across species and scales to resist collusion with catastrophe’s causes.


- Barbara Ambros, University of North Carolina

*Rescuing Cattle and Bestializing Butchers: Animals and Marginality in Early Modern Japan*

This paper analyzes Japanese Buddhist morality literature promoting the protection of cattle and horses and the establishment of livestock sanctuaries in the context of the status system and the marginalized position of leatherworkers in early modern Japan. A complex mechanism of delineating the categories of humanity and animality was at work in late-eighteenth- through mid-nineteenth-century morality literature. The marginal status of early modern leatherworkers, who specialized in labor that brought them into close contact with non-human animals and death, situated them beyond the ontological boundary of the human and denied them full soteriological potential. By contrast, cattle and horses were portrayed as paragons of virtue and included in the community of moral subjects. In their fervor to save cattle and horses from slaughter, proponents of livestock sanctuaries demonized and dehumanized outcast leatherworkers whose trade they portrayed as inhumane and defiled, thus reinforcing status-based discrimination through discourses of animal protection.

- Reva ShieldChief, University of Arizona

*Skidi-Pawnee Relationality Kinship epistemologies guiding Skidi-Pawnee Values and Mores; Religious expression in everyday living*

This paper focuses upon the relationality between animal-persons and human-persons, animal-person agency, animal-person and human-person relationships that influence *Skidi “wolf”-Pawnee and Southband (Kitkehahki "Republican," Chaui "Grand,", and Pitahawirata "Tappage") Pawnee ontologies, and epistemologies. Written stories, and anthropological accounts are sifted through tribal cultural experience, societal understanding and the role story plays in tribal religious/spiritual epistemology. These relationships are expressed in stories, ceremonies, two tribal dialects (South band and
and respective land bases. Most are interactions between animal-persons and human-persons exemplifying, strong cultural values. George Bird Grinnell’s documentation of a Skidi story “The Dun Horse,” is as informative as Dorsey’s written account of “63. The Unfaithful Bundle Keeper,” a Kitkehauki story. Both stories exemplify some very fundamental values, societal constructs, and morality regarding community, the role of sacred women, motherhood and children born outside of a formal union. A tribal society’s non-Eurowestern, acuity regarding religious piety and sacred responsibility.

Business Meeting

Christopher Carter, University of San Diego, Presiding
Eric Meyer, Carroll College, Presiding

A21-205
Full Papers Available

Anthropology of Religion Unit
Theme: Global Religious Pluralities: Interfaith Encounters in the Pursuit of Social Change
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
James Walters, London School of Economics and Political Science, Presiding

This panel will explore novel interfaith initiatives that utilise communal relationships built on religious piety and faith in order to find collective grassroots solutions to contemporary global challenges. Under the rubric of ‘religious pluralities’, papers will investigate how faith provides a model to confront seemingly intractable issues such as human conflict and the destructive nature of the Anthropocene. Papers will examine how religious pluralities come into existence, their global significance, and the role of women in sustaining their significance. Pluralities will not be seen as singular or based on any officially sanctioned idea of interfaith pluralism. Rather, pluralities speak to a larger conceptual proposition that there are a multitude of religious & interfaith connections not easy defined through Western-Christian or secular paradigms of social cohesion. Accordingly, this panel will examine pluralities as new assemblages that mobilise personal and communal relationships with the divine as a basis for transformational action.

- Lindsay Simmonds, London School of Economics and Political Science

Women of Faith: Peacebuilding in the Israel-Palestine Region

All too often, religion is held accountable for being the root cause of conflict. Yet increasingly, governments have come to recognise not just the importance of, but the necessity to include faith leaders as a contingent representative body within any peacebuilding initiative, whether they are grassroots projects or high-level diplomatic talks. Given the proclivity of conflict areas worldwide who’s population are deeply religious and committed to the instructions of their faith as well as their faith leaders, this might be considered a most worthwhile development. And yet, despite this arguably positive shift in both thought and action, what has emerged as a result of this ‘inclusive’ policy, is the often-times ‘exclusion’ of women as religious representatives at decision-
making tables. This paper seeks to examine if, how and why this phenomenon plays out within peacebuilding initiatives in the Israel-Palestine region, within which women of faith play a markedly prominent role.

- Chris Chaplin, London School of Economics and Political Science

**Redefining Plurality: Religious Belonging and Interfaith Encounters amongst Grassroots Faith Activists in Indonesia**

As home to the world’s largest population of Muslims, as well as significant Christian, Buddhist and Hindu communities, Indonesia is celebrated for its religious diversity. However, a small but vocal group of conservative Islamic activists have been markedly successful in lobbying politicians to circumscribe the rights of religious minorities. To counter such political pressure, religious communities have developed innovative approaches to foster interfaith dialogue. Through ethnographic examination, this paper explores two such efforts amongst religious communities in Jakarta and Yogyakarta. Expanding upon growing anthropological interest in the connection between ethnographic enquiry and scripture, the paper pays particular attention to the spaces and liminal moments through which new pluralities emerge. It argues that efforts to create interreligious subjectivities offer new insight into the process through which pluralities come into existence. Yet they are also transformative experiences, that ultimately redefine the contours of religious belonging, citizenship, and the social implications of faith.

- Hanane Benadi, London School of Economics and Political Science

**The Religious Temporalities of Climate Change in the Middle East**

In recent decades, scholarship on the social and cultural dimensions of climate change has proliferated and gained prominence within academic and international policy-making circles. Yet, this scholarship, while salutary and compelling, remains inattentive to the relationship between religion and climate change. Based on five months of fieldwork with religious climate change activists in Jordan and Egypt, this paper explores ways of thinking about climate change beyond the terms generated by global scientific and secular discourses. More specifically, it outlines how activists invoke the religious category of tribulation to describe the temporality of climate change. It then turns to consider how the framing of climate change as tribulation problematizes the categories of crisis and catastrophe often used by popular media and politics to describe climate change. Finally, the paper considers the different possible ethical and religious responses to climate change implied by the category of tribulation.

**Responding**

Craig Calhoun, Arizona State University

**A21-206**
Arts, Literature, and Religion Unit
Theme: Modernism and Religious Art
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Tracy Fessenden, Arizona State University, Presiding

This panel approaches the meaning of modernism through the eyes of painters whose artistic
innovations were motivated by religious and spiritual concerns. Their work draws into question
the assumption that modernism in art represents a rejection of a religious past. We explore this
question through a turn toward exploration of the artists’ intentions—and through the placement
of those intentions in their modern context. One of the strongest critiques of the idea of
modernism in the 21st century has been its claim to the universalism of a Eurocentric experience.
Anthropologists of religion in particular have introduced the idea of multiple modernities
resulting from distinct historical experiences and religious cultures. Papers examine a variety of
artists who embrace multiple spiritualities ranging from Judaism to animistic spirituality to
Christian Science to Mormonism. The session re-evaluates the lasting mark made by the idea of
“Modern Art” in relation to religion.

- Laura Perez, University of California, Berkeley

*The Politics of Telluric Animism and Interdependence in the Work of Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, and Luchita Hurtado*

Remedios Varo, Leonora Carrington, and Luchita Hurtado meaningfully crossed paths in
Mexico City during the 1940s-1950s, sharing an aesthetic and nature-based spirituality
characterized by a critique of materialism and narrow empirical reason; respect for nature
as animate; and respect for non-Christian cosmologies. In this paper, I will focus on the
politics of the telluric, animistic spirituality that Varo, Carrington, and Hurtado explored
in their painting. Varo especially drew upon esoteric and alchemical studies; Carrington
on ancestral Celtic beliefs; and Hurtado, on Indigenous understandings of animate nature.
Further, these artists centered the female body and experience. I will especially focus on
how these artists affirmed the idea of the interdependence of all life forms as necessary
knowledge, beyond patriarchal and colonizing Christianity and capitalist materialist
culture.

- Ann Braude, Harvard University

*Spiritual Paths and Artistic Innovation*

This paper centers paths to 20th-century artistic innovation in which a departure from or
repurposing of the figure emanates from spiritual sources not usually associated with
modernity. It focuses on three figures: Christian Science abstract expressionist Vicci
Sperry (1900-1995), Hyman Bloom (1913-2009), who combined visual exploration of his
Jewish immigrant past with images inspired by Theosophy, Asian religions and
Spiritualism, and Betye Saar (b. 1926), occultist and assemblage artist known for pioneer
works of Black feminism. Inspired by movements positing a spiritual reality beyond the
physical, they used modern techniques to convey a direct experience of ineffable,
transcendent reality beyond materiality. These case studies suggest alternative narratives to those of liberal Protestant intellectuals who appealed to modern art as an antidote to popular material expressions of Christianity, as well as those offered by American Jewish thought-leaders who championed abstract paintings that seemed to leave particular religious traditions behind.

- Colleen McDannell, University of Utah

‘Doing Realism, That’s the Rebellious Thing’: Latter-day Saint Art Renewal

This paper argues that a movement within the secular art world, notably contemporary realism, has made it possible for influential Latter-day Saints to “modernize” the visual arts displayed in their temples. During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, there was an increase in temple building, a renewed stress on temple-going, and a desire to improve the quality of temple art. Rather than reject all modern fine art, as they did in the 1960s and 1970s, church leaders have found that some contemporary Latter-day Saint artists produce realist paintings that “make sense” within a religious and artistic context. My paper draws from interviews with church leaders and artists—as well as on-line art examples—to better understand how modern art is adopted and adapted by an institutional religion.
Augustine remarked, “Our fragility is threatened every day by the accidents which never stop happening in human affairs” (s. 109.1). This theme of the fragility of human life and the accompanying matters of grief and loss arguably pervade all of his thinking. Augustine deeply grieved the successive deaths in the years preceding his ordination to the priesthood of his mother Monnica, his son Adeodatus, and his friend Nebridius. Augustine also lamented catastrophes such as the sack of Rome and any number of other eruptions of violence in his native North Africa. Papers explore the whole emotional register of grief and loss in Augustine including analytic resources he may supply or ones best applied to him, historical, philosophical and theological understandings of grief and those shaped by grief, situation specific forms of grief, ways of caring for the grieving, and the best use of Augustine's many underread sermons.

- Timothy Troutner, University of Notre Dame

*Leaving the Stoic Citadel: Chrétien, Augustine, and the Trauma of Human Death*

Augustine’s analysis of death in Book XIII of *The City of God* confirms the French phenomenologist Jean-Louis Chrétien’s contrast between Stoic and Christian therapies for grief in the Latin tradition and highlights the therapeutic potential of Augustinian theology for those struggling with grief and trauma. Augustine resists the claim that death is “good to the good” and the Stoic project of individual emotional self-mastery, which Chrétien labels the construction of an “interior citadel.” The insistence that “death is an evil” in Book XIII offers a more promising therapy, one which requires that death’s trauma be named and recognized rather than repressed, going beyond reliance on individual psychic effort alone. Perhaps surprisingly, it is Augustine’s much-criticized theology of sin which leads him to insist on acknowledgement of death’s trauma, just as it fuels his recognition of the necessity of solidarity, mutuality, and dependence in the face of grief.

- Justin Hawkins, Yale University

*Augustine's Pseudo-Stoic Virtue of Magnanimity as a Response to Suffering and Trauma*

This paper proceeds in two parts. The first part analyzes Augustine's discussion of the virtue of magnanimity as a response to suffering and trauma, particularly that of the Christian woman violated during the sack of Rome, which Augustine discusses in City of God I. After analyzing this treatment of magnanimity in City of God I, I turn in the second part of the paper to a constructive Augustinian account of magnanimity to reply to 20th century feminist objections against the standard Augustinian obsession with pride. Theorizing an Augustinian account of magnanimity thereby puts allows one to
assemble the pieces of a virtue that Augustine left disassembled, and constructively deploys that virtue to solve puzzles in more recent versions of Augustinianism.

- Kevin Grove, University of Notre Dame

_Grief Failed, Needed, and Shared: Augustine’s Preaching on Grief in Christ_

In his sermons and *Expositions of the Psalms*, Augustine is concerned with both the things human persons need to grieve and the consequences of humans’ failure to grieve. In these texts, Augustine configures grief and the grieving individual Christologically to communion and the community gathered before him. In order to show this Christological configuration, the paper traces how Augustine employs his exegetical hermeneutic of the whole Christ not to lessen or ameliorate grief, but to argue for its centrality in the Christian life. This thesis stands over and against highly individualized readings of Augustine on grief, largely produced in reading only the *Confessions*. Looking to the way in which Augustine preaches about grief in his sermons opens onto a communal context that not only relocates grief but requires it.

- Alex Fogleman, Baylor University

_With Christ in the Valley of Tears: Augustine on Grief and its Virtues_

This paper explores the nature and therapy of grief via Augustine’s exegesis of scriptural idioms that emphasize tears and weeping. After first sketching two predominant ways of analyzing Augustine on grief, both of which focus on *Confessions* and the role of reason, I turn to key exegetical passages--Jesus’ weeping for Lazarus (John 11), the Psalm’s language of the “valley of tears” (Ps. 84:6) and imploring God to “hear” one’s tears (Ps. 39:12), and the beatitude “blessed are those who mourn” (Matt. 5:4)--to enhance our understanding of grief. Augustine’s approach to grief is best interpreted not as a simple positive-negative evaluation but as located within the narrative arc of the Christian life. As such, I distinguish three related but distinct expressions of grief in the Christian life: the grief of humility, the grief of Christ-imitation, and the grief of the baptized faithful’s life in pilgrimage.

Business Meeting

Paul R. Kolbet, Yale University, Presiding

_A21-208_  
**Bioethics and Religion Unit and Religions, Medicines, and Healing Unit**  
Theme: *Pain, Suffering & Mortality: Religious Healing in Comparative Perspectives*  
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)  
Terri Laws, University of Michigan, Dearborn, Presiding

This session engages ethical themes on pain, suffering, and mortality, especially as they pertain to western Christian perspectives. The presentations represent a range of scholarly methods,
including bioethics, philosophy, ethnography, health surveys, and historical analysis. The first paper will explore the problem of "redemptive suffering" in Christian medical ethics in relation to the practical challenges of pain management. Another paper examines faith-based responses to the opioid crisis in southern Appalachia of the U.S. The next papers frames the Amazonian plant medicine ceremony as a site of spiritual “surgery” for Westerners. Our last paper takes an historical look at the New York Baby Welfare Association and its engagement with religious pluralism in progressive era New York City.

- Stewart Clem, Aquinas Institute of Theology

*Pain Management and the Problem of Redemptive Suffering in Christian Medical Ethics*

This paper critically analyzes the grammar of pain’s ‘participation’ in Christ’s suffering. It does so primarily by offering an account of pain as a distortion of a natural good—namely, the passion of the soul known to the medieval scholastic theologians as dolor (Latin, ‘pain’). I draw upon insights that arose within a theological debate in the middle ages among the Dominicans, Franciscans, and Cistercians on the nature of Christ’s bodily pain that he experienced on the cross. The account I develop, drawing on the Dominicans’ arguments, allows for a qualified defense of pain management through medication, insofar as this practice aims to remove obstacles to the contemplation that is requisite for living a good life. I also argue that this account makes room for the notion of redemptive suffering, but it does so without fetishizing bodily pain, insofar as it delineates clear limits on one’s ‘participation.’

- Brett McCarty, Duke University

*Attention, Agency, and Bearing Witness: Faith-Based Responses to the Opioid Crisis in Southern Appalachia*

People struggling with pain and/or substance use issues often struggle with attention and agency on at least two levels. First, on an individual level, being in pain can make it difficult to attend to the world as it is. Second, on a social level, people and communities struggling with pain and substance use issues are often hidden, stigmatized, and/or overlooked. Drawing from the author’s qualitative research with faith-based responses to the opioid crisis in southern Appalachia, this paper argues for the importance of the work of bearing witness for cultivating attention and agency in contexts where economic, criminal justice, and medical systems can be bent against such work. In this way, the personal witness of people living with pain and substance use issues can point to the need for social transformation and, in certain circumstances, catalyze it.

- Michelle Bentsman, Harvard University

*Amazonian Plant Medicine Ceremony as a Site of Spiritual “Surgery” for Westerners*

This paper explores Amazonian plant medicine ceremony within the Shipibo indigenous tradition as a therapeutic healing practice, focusing on three interrelated claims: 1)
Shipibo tradition of establishing direct relationships with medicinal plants is a powerful vector through which healing from illness and spiritual crisis are made possible, even for western participants; 2) these medicinal plants are regarded as teachers, masters, and doctors; and 3) their agency and capacity for radical transformation make the ceremonial container more akin to a surgical experience rather than a pharmaceutical one. Although the usage of ayahuasca in such ceremonies is often emphasized by western audiences eager to understand the ceremonial container via its pharmaceutical qualities, this may be at odds with an indigenous paradigm that attributes personhood to plants—a paradigm that supports ceremonial healing. Meanwhile, the experience of surgery has a number of helpful corollaries for western participants seeking healing.

- Jamie Marsella, Harvard University

"Thou Hast Laid the Little Children into Our Arms": The New York Baby Welfare Association and Religious Pluralism in Progressive Era New York City

This paper examines the role of interfaith collaboration in Babies Welfare Association, a city-wide preventative care network for women and children that was made up of hundreds of philanthropic, religious, and city-funded organizations, including orphanages, settlement houses, milk stations, benevolent societies, hospitals, and day nurseries. The organizations involved in the BWA reflected the changing religious and cultural exigencies of the city. As such, the BWA relied on the cooperation of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish medical and public health programs. By examining the relationship between the BWA as a government agency and the private religious organizations it relied on, this paper investigates the very ways religious plurality shaped the developing bureaucratic state of public health.

Business Meeting

Kyrah Malika Daniels, Emory University, Presiding
Kristy Slominski, University of Arizona, Presiding

A21-209
Buddhism Unit and Buddhist Philosophy Unit
Theme: Legacies of Violence: Trauma, Buddhism, and our Collective Bodies
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Kevin Buckelew, Northwestern University, Presiding

At this pivotal moment in the transformation of Buddhist Studies, a time when scholars are examining and challenging forms of privilege and oppression within the field, it is necessary to open to new methodological and theoretical tools—tools that can meet the complex matters before us. In our panel, *Legacies of Violence: Trauma, Buddhism, and our Collective Bodies*, we contend that working with Buddhist thought alongside Black feminist thought, Indigenous feminist thought, and transgender theory can allow us to forge more nuanced understandings of trauma, violence, and resistance within Black, transgender, and Indigenous Buddhist bodies and
collective communities.

Panelists

Ray Buckner, Northwestern University
Rima Vesely-Flad, Warren Wilson College
Natalie Avalos, University of Colorado
Kali Cape, University of Virginia
Sara Lewis, Naropa University

A21-210
Christian Spirituality Unit
Theme: Pandemic, Pilgrimage and Practice: Contemporary Spiritual Journeys
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
André Brouillette, Boston College, Presiding

Historically "pilgrimage" has been characterized by the need to traverse geographical boundaries in quest of "the Holy" elsewhere. The pandemic has forced a re-thinking of this popular sense of pilgrimage. This session re-situates the notion of "pilgrimage" to include the re-shaping of what it means "to travel" toward the unknown, whether near or far, thus engaging "the Holy" in fresh and unpredictable ways.

- Rafael Luevano, Chapman University

  Pandemic and Pilgrimage: Exodus of the Central American Caravans

  In Central America, since 2017 caravans traveling north to the US have evolved en masse to as many as 10,000 persons, stoking the sociopolitical and economic flames in this region. Caravans are fueled by severe insecurity in Central America, so asylum seekers flee to a transitory sojourn rather than face the pernicious terrorizations in their homeland. At the core of these sojourns is a spirituality of pilgrimage: a spiritual call to journey and a spiritual guidance from one location to another along with the transformation of the persons and group during the sojourn. All this is intertwined with the present COVID-19 pandemic. The spirituality of caravan pilgrims is endemic with this season of pandemic. This presentation will explore the compelling fear that led them to flee but more so the hope that motivates their journey north and changes their escape to spiritual sojourn: a pandemic pilgrimage to a ‘promise land.’

- Lisa M. Hess, United Theological Seminary, Ohio

  Bradley H. Hirschfield, National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership

  It's More Complicated Than We Know: A Longitudinal Study of Pilgrimages in Emergent Future Leadership

  How do we cultivate the force of faith without fanaticism? Can we raise a generation of
religious leaders who steward communities with confident conviction while living into the maxim: *It’s more complicated than we know?* This paper argues that pilgrimages, even pandemic-instigated virtual ones, promise institutions of faith learning an integrative “container” for doing just that—when held by a team of wisdom practitioners, rooted in differing traditions or none, inviting the Land to speak in artifact and silence. Sandra Schneider’s work in Christian spirituality, rabbinic wisdom in “Making Jewish a Public Good,” and Otto Scharmer’s *Leading from the Emergent Future* weave together in this 10-year longitudinal study and evaluation of a virtual pilgrimage toward co-shaping a more peaceable future. Pilgrimages, undeterred by pandemics, provide opportunities for leaders and the faithful in all of us to seek, learn new ways together, and return...all without ever leaving our homes.

- Samantha Miller, Whitworth University

*Off-Campus Courses as Immersive Contemplative Education: Optimal Conditions for Lasting Growth*

I have taught off-campus classes in either January or May for several years now, both a monasticism class and one titled “Backpacking with the Saints,” and both of them are some form of immersive contemplative experience. What I see each time I teach this is that when students are given the chance to immerse themselves in contemplative exercises and existence—as opposed to brief moments in the midst of daily life—they absorb the experience such that they continue contemplative practices beyond the classroom, even as they return to their busy lives.

Using texts on contemplative pedagogy such as *The Soul of Higher Education* in conversation with my own experience teaching immersive contemplative courses, I will argue that off-campus courses offer a unique opportunity for contemplative education that provides optimal conditions for students to consider themselves holistically and to make lasting changes in their own educations and lives.

- Kathryn Barush, Santa Clara University

*Art as Pilgrimage in a Time of Pandemic*

Many pilgrimages have been curtailed in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19, but pilgrims have faced travel delays and cancellations for centuries. Reasons ranged from financial hardship to agricultural responsibilities or ill-health. Then, as now, one strategy has been to bring the pilgrimage home or into the religious community. This presentation will focus on a few contemporary artworks created or engaged during the pandemic that link one sacred landscape to another - from the Camino in Spain to a backyard in the Pacific Northwest, from St. Kevin’s Way in Ireland to an urban neighborhood in Daly City, California, and from Glastonbury, England to home computers and mobile devices of pilgrims everywhere. While place-based pilgrimage is an embodied practice, this presentation posits that it can be experienced in its fullness through artworks including built environments, assemblages of souvenirs, and collective
viewing.

**Business Meeting**

Beringia Zen, Saint Agnes Medical Center, Presiding
David B. Perrin, University of Waterloo, Presiding

A21-211
**Christian Systematic Theology Unit**
Theme: **Theologies of Hope and Joy**
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Nicholas Adams, University of Birmingham, Presiding

The Ordeal of Hope in the Monastic Literature of Christian Late Antiquity, Liza Anderson, College of St. Scholastica

The Blood of Christ Mediating Hope Through Life or Death? Exploring the Theology of the Blood of Christ as Resurrected Life, Tammy Wiese, Emory University

The Gratuitous Joy of Salvation: Reconsidering Atonement with Julian of Norwich, Kathryn Reinhard, Gwynedd Mercy University

Wounded Words and Wounded Nature: The Phenomenality of Joy and Desire in Jean-Louis Chrétien and Gregory of Nyssa, Thomas Breedlove, Baylor University

- Liza Anderson, College of St. Scholastica

  *The Ordeal of Hope in the Monastic Literature of Christian Late Antiquity*

This paper offers a Christian theology of hope that is grounded in the monastic literature of Greek and Syriac late antiquity. Within Western Christian theology, hope is usually discussed in the context of eschatology, and it is oriented primarily towards the future. Within the monastic literature of Eastern late antiquity, however, hope was more often seen as a praxis for living in the present moment—faithfully doing the work that is put in front of one without falling into either presumption or despair. This practice of hope was often described as a struggle, or an ordeal. Reframing our understanding of hope in light of this literature to focus more on the present can be an asset in times when the future seems particularly bleak or uncertain, when we are called to strive for justice and peace without assurance that our efforts will bear fruit on this side of the eschaton.

- Tammy Wiese, Emory University

  *The Blood of Christ Mediating Hope Through Life or Death? Exploring the Theology of the Blood of Christ as Resurrected Life*

If we take the ‘blood of Christ’ to represent Christ’s resurrected life, then the normative
view of blood as synonymous with the death of Christ would need to be reimagined. This paper will consider possible soteriological implications of Christ’s death if the blood of Christ is not a symbol of his death, but is rather Jesus Christ’s resurrected indestructible life.

- Kathryn Reinhard, Gwynedd Mercy University

_The Gratuitous Joy of Salvation: Reconsidering Atonement with Julian of Norwich_

Soteriology is one of the theological loci where concepts of joy, justice, and hope intersect most dynamically. Yet within Western Christianity, with its near-exclusive emphasis on satisfaction theories of atonement, too often joy and hope are neglected in service of robust considerations of justice. While God’s justice is necessarily part of any consideration of salvation, emphasizing it at the expense of joy and hope can have deleterious consequences. Utilizing resources in the theological work of Julian of Norwich, this paper is a constructive attempt to rebalance soteriology by giving renewed attention to joy and hope. Julian characterizes God’s activities in accomplishing the salvation of humanity as a work fundamentally based in joy and pleasure. Because Julian is unable fully to conceive of sin and hell in light of her vision of God’s overpowering love, Julian ultimately describes a “liberated” God whose justice is freed through compassion.

- Thomas Breedlove, Baylor University

_Wounded Words and Wounded Nature: The Phenomenality of Joy and Desire in Jean-Louis Chrétien and Gregory of Nyssa_

In _Spacious Joy_, Jean-Louis Chrétien writes that nothing is more violent than joy. Is joy a wound or is it like a wound? What does joy have to do with reality of historical wounding? This paper engages Chrétien and Gregory of Nyssa to explore what the language of joy as wounding reveals about the character of human nature and human speech. Correlating Chrétien’s account of joy as the revelation of finitude’s constitution by a transcendent infinite with Gregory’s appeals to the language of wounding to describe the epeckasy of divine desire, I explore, first, how this language entails a particular picture of human finitude and, second, how the language of wounds receives a risky potency from the complexities of embodiment and violence. Finite speech, I argue, like finitude itself, eludes closure; the language of wounding marks both the grace and difficulty of contingency itself.

A21-213
Class, Religion, and Theology Unit and Religion and Economy Unit
Theme: Religion at Work: New Directions for Studying Religion in the Waged Workplace
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Heath Carter, Princeton Theological Seminary, Presiding

How does religion organize the workplace? In this roundtable discussion, panelists explore how
religion transpires in the waged workplace, which, like any other site in human life, is entangled with religion in a variety of ways. For instance, religion can work at the corporate and managerial levels to discipline workers in ways that align with neoliberal capitalism, even through programs related to workplace spirituality or diversity and inclusion. At the same time, workers themselves are often religious, and labor organizing is an important site for theological reflection and interreligious collaboration. Religion’s role in the waged workplace also shapes how we think about unpaid care work and unemployment, both of which are loaded with moral meanings worth unpacking. This conversation seeks to introduce creative tension and disruptive possibilities into how we study and practice religion, in and beyond the workplace.

Panelists

Lauren R. Kerby, Princeton University
Isaac Weiner, Ohio State University
George Gonzalez, City University of New York
Francisco Garcia, Vanderbilt University

Reviewers

Karen Baker-Fletcher, Southern Methodist University

A21-214
Comparative Religious Ethics Unit
Theme: Suffering and Evil in Nature: Comparative Responses from Ecstatic Naturalism and Healing Cultures
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Elaine Padilla, University of La Verne, Presiding

This panel is an important opportunity for four thinkers to gather together and present their comparative researches on "healing cultures for worldly sufferings and climate catastrophe" in thinking through the philosophical and religious implications of an ecstatic naturalist horizon of interpretation in addressing the place of values that sustain cultures of healing and the radical hope necessary for cultivating moral and political imaginations of democracy-to-come. With historical depth and ethical pragmatism, with subtle Western autocritique and multivocal Asian traditions, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, the demanding intensities of race, gender, democracy, and ecology come into a theological and philosophical solidarity for creating a therapeutic community of interpreters and a more sustainable life facing the urgent catastrophe in the Anthropocene with the radical hope of healing through suffering.

- Jonathan Weidenbaum, Berkeley College

Selving in a Dangerous World: William James, Buddhism, and Ecstatic Naturalism

Engaging in the Buddhist concept of anatta in comparison to the Selving process of Robert Corrington’s ecstatic naturalism and William James’ understanding of “the pure experience of self,” the purpose of this study is to explore another reconciliation of the
individual and active self with its broader context. In dialogue with the third century Indian Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna, Corrington outlines his Selving process: In ecstatic naturalism, the self is neither the complete illusion and product of vanity that Corrington’s interpretation of Buddhism takes it to be, nor is it the unchanging and substantial self of some Eastern and Western belief. It is common for those who explore the topic of personal identity to engage with Buddhism, a tradition which advocates the doctrine of anatta meaning no soul or eternal self. It is no surprise that there have been quite a few important comparisons of James and Buddhism on personal identity. This comparative study shows what ecstatic naturalism and Buddhism could offer a remedy for creating a healing culture for the human catastrophe and violence.

- Joseph Harroff, American University

*Redemptive Suffering with Tianming 天命: An Ecstatically Naturalist Reading of Sacred Selving in Early Confucian Ethics*

This study focuses upon some family resemblances perceptible between Robert Corrington's ecstatic naturalism as a theological stance and a Ru discourse emerging mostly from the Warring States Period (475-221 BCE) of Chinese history. Confucian role ethical discourse regarding the very possibility of redemptive suffering and Corrington’s appeal to immanent archetypes of non-perfectionist healing and characterological de-armoring can provide theoretical sustenance and ethical hope for those unwilling or incapable of believing in transcendental perfection or ontological transcendence. This study shows that we can use Corrington's ordinal phenomenology of natural complexes and his philosophical theology of ecstatic naturalism to approach a productive interfaith conversation with Si-Meng Ruist role ethical discourse, raising some vital questions regarding the significance of senseless suffering, moral tragedy, and radical evil in the context of elaborating a staunchly naturalistic theodicy.

- Desmond Coleman, Drew University

*On Being Sunk: The Salvific Experience of Blackness, Reading W. E. B. Dubois and G. W. F. Hegel*

This study engages W. E. B. Dubois’ famous ventriloquizing of the question perpetually thrown at him by the progressive whites of his time: “How does it feel to be a problem?” Instead of approaching that question through the metaphor of the Veil, as he does, this study explores this question through the metaphors of ‘sunkeness’ and ‘the Sunken Place.’ The former, ‘sunkeness,’ is a concept-metaphor used by G. W. F. Hegel throughout his work to speak of the determinate “mental and spiritual characteristics” of the “Negro race.” The later, ‘the Sunken Place,’ is a concept-metaphor used by writer-director Jordan Peele in his blockbuster ‘Get Out.’ While Hegel and Peele are writing centuries apart, and while it is unlikely that Peele borrowed this concept-metaphor from Hegel, the resonances and dissonances of their use of the notion of sunkeness vis-a-vis the meaning of blackness raises important questions about the logical and historical conditions of possibility of this connection (between ‘blackness’ and ‘sunkeness’), and
about the relationship between this connection and the lives of those people we call ‘black’.

- Jea Sophia Oh, West Chester University

*Fecundity and Healing of the Great Mother: Reading Corrington’s Nature and Nothingness via Yin-Yang Thinking*

This study seeks to provide a healing philosophical framework and analogy to address this time of rampant species endangerment and mass extinction, the global climate emergency, and the increasing rise of racist and xenophobic authoritarianism, by comparative reading of Robert Corrington’s Nature and Nothingness and Dao De Jing via the East Asian cosmology of yin-yang principle. Corrington calls nature’s encompassing power a god-ing capable of transcending ordinariness by enhancing both personal and social forms of life. This cultural optimization and divinization of life in Corrington’s notion of god-ing is similar to the Korean idea of salim. Salim represents the intrinsic healing power of nature and can make even wounded and dead things healed and revived if given the proper nurturance and timing. Despite the genderized degradation of both women and salim, activities of salim make things alive and enliven nature narrowly in a family and broadly in this planet. Salim cannot be genderized or essentialized as masculinity or femininity but “fecundity.” This unleashing power of life exists in nature, in every living and nonliving aspect of nature as the healing energy.

**Responding**

Robert S. Corrington, Drew University

**A21-215**

**Comparative Theology Unit and Society for Hindu-Christian Studies**

Theme: **God’s Body: Hindu-Christian Comparative Theology**

Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Bhakti Mamtora, College of Wooster, Presiding

While much has been done to expose and subvert the conceptual, epistemological, and metaphysical presuppositions underlying representations of Hinduism during the colonial period and to allow Hindu traditions to speak in their own voices, one of the most visible facets of Hinduism – the rationale of the worship of God with a bodily form – remains underexplored. Drawing from philosophical and theological work in and about Christianity, the three papers in this panel address issues indispensable to a discussion of God’s bodily form in Hindu traditions. The first paper considers and attempts to preclude an unattractive upshot of countenancing God’s body, namely God’s having parts; the second considers the epistemological value of mystical perception of God’s body; and the third considers how embodiment and personhood are great-making properties, possessed by the greatest possible being, namely God.

- Sarju Patel, University of Chicago
**Aquinas’s Bodiless God and a Hindu God’s Body: Hindu-Christian Philosophical Theology**

In the paper, I offer an example of comparative Hindu-Christian philosophical theology. Entering into a counterfactual world wherein a Hindu theologian like Rāmānuja or Madhva is immersed in Western philosophy, I discuss one promising mode of argumentation which she could have availed of in responding to arguments against God’s body raised by Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa Theologiae, Summa Contra Gentiles*, and *Compendium Theologiae*. A central assumption undergirding Aquinas’s arguments is that if God were to have a body, it would be material. This paper focuses on one entailment of this assumption: if God were to have a body, it would be composite and (*a fortiori*) have parts. Drawing on a discussion of contemporary metaphysics concerning the possibility of extended simples, I discuss how arguments in support of it could be employed by a body-affirming Hindu theologian in demonstrating that a body, of God, need not be composite.

- Sarang Patel, University of Chicago

**Perceiving God with Form: Circularity and Symmetry**

I consider the epistemological value of Hindu mystical experiences featuring God with bodily form. I engage with contemporary work in the epistemology of mystical perception, in particular, the foundational work of William Alston, *Perceiving God* (1991). Highlighting Hindu mystical perception that features God with bodily form—both from the Purāṇas and the modern period—I consider the implications of Alston’s prioritization of non-sensory experiences of God as authentic on the symmetry he draws between the doxastic practices of mystical and sense perception. In addition to, and indeed by, engaging critically and philosophically with Alston’s work, I seek to broaden the notion of mystical experience within the Western discourse of mysticism, as found in the seminal works of Walter Stace (1960) and William James (1902), which is at times dismissive of mystical experience consisting of bodily form.

- Akshay Gupta, University of Cambridge

**Divine Embodiment, Divine Personhood, and Perfect Being Theology**

According to perfect being theology, God is greatest being and thus possesses all great-making properties. In this paper, I draw on the resources of perfect being theology, as developed by Christian philosophers and theologians such as Augustine and Anselm, to argue that God is embodied and a person, albeit in a Hindu context. I examine the deity Kṛṣṇa, as he is conceived within the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Vedānta tradition, and argue that Kṛṣṇa’s divine embodiment and personhood are great-making properties. I thus make the case for Kṛṣṇa being the greatest being, which, in the context of perfect being theology, entails that God is an embodied person—a highly significant conclusion also in the context of Vedānta. I then respond to various objections that can be raised against the notion of divine embodiment and divine personhood, such as the objections that the
worship of such a God is idolatrous or anthropomorphic.

Responding

Francis X. Clooney, Harvard University

A21-216
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Cultural History of the Study of Religion Unit
Theme: Thinking the “world” at the brink of the planet: a roundtable conversation on theorizing the “world” in religious studies in an age of climate catastrophe
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Kathryn Reklis, Fordham University, Presiding

Building on the work of postcolonial critique in the shadow of climate catastrophe, many humanities disciplines have begun to wrestle with the legacy, meaning, and usability of conceptual categories such as “world,” “planetary,” and “global.” This panel is intrigued by the relative absence of such theorizing in the field of religious studies, beyond well-rehearsed debates about the universalizing, theologizing history of the “world religions paradigm.” This panel convenes a diverse group of scholars working across different subdisciplines in religious studies and theology to interrogate this lacuna and ask if thinking the world is a necessary component for religionists who wish to orient their work to the climate catastrophe. Using Dipesh Chakrabarty’s 2009 essay “The Climate of History” as a shared text, we will ask what “thinking the world” and “reading for the planet” might mean in the study of religion.

Panelists

J. Kameron Carter, Indiana University
Mayanthi Fernando, University of California, Santa Cruz
Willis Jenkins, University of Virginia
Pamela Klassen, University of Toronto
Kathryn Lofton, Yale University
Vijaya Nagarajan, University of San Francisco
Mona Oraby, Howard University
James Padilioni, Swarthmore College

Business Meeting

Marko Geslani, University of South Carolina, Presiding
Elizabeth Ann Pritchard, Bowdoin College, Presiding

A21-217
Ecclesiological Investigations Unit and Vatican II Studies Unit
Theme: “Nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts”: women, men and a church for the world in Joseph Cardijn’s theological vision
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Young women and men who had caught the vision of Cardinal Joseph Cardijn and honed their discipleship through the Jeunesses Ouvrières Chrétienne (JOC), Young Christian Workers (YCW), in the early decades of the twentieth century, recognised the resonate call of Gaudium et Spes to engage the world. Through a shared focus on the foundational statement of method published by Cardijn in 1963 as Laïcs en premières lignes, this international round table will argue for the significance of the Jocist theological method for the implementation of the vision of Vatican II and (counter to a significant gap in the historiography of both Cardijn and the Council) for the self-understanding of women in the church. We argue that both before and since the Council, Jocist theological method was decisive for women, enabling social and political activism as an attribute of Christian discipleship, and moving beyond stereotypes endorsed by church and wider culture.

Panelists

Alana Harris, King's College London
Katharine Massam, University of Divinity, Melbourne
Stefan Gigacz, University of Divinity, Melbourne
Charles Mercier, Legion of Christ College of Humanities

Responding

Ana Maria Bidegain, Florida International University

A21-218
Ethics Unit
Theme: Ethnography and Religious Ethics
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Elizabeth Agnew Cochran, Duquesne University, Presiding

While religious and theological ethics have often been conceived as normative disciplines, we hope to host a conversation that explores the roles of ethnography in religious ethics. For this conversation, the Unit is especially interested in proposals addressing ethnographic engagements with specific places and communities, and with the ways that race, gender, class, and sexuality affect religious identity and practice.

- Janna Hunter-Bowman, Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary

ethnography and theological ethics: undocumented immigrant led movements as agents under duress

This presentation features ethnographic engagement with undocumented immigrant-led movements for justice. It begins by describing an approach to ethnographic engagement shaped by Latin American participation research. It then turns to what this approach might contribute to theological and religious ethics concerned with the responding to
immigrants in an age of climate migration, namely the centering of undocumented immigrants as agents under duress for social and political transformation.

- Jeremy Sorgen, University of California, Berkeley

*Lessons of the Ethnographic Turn for Religious Ethics*

This paper engages with the ethnographic turn in religious ethics to argue that engaging culture *challenges* the common assumption that the work of ethics entails cultural criticism. Drawing on fieldwork with Christian pastors and faith-based organizers in Shamokin, Pennsylvania, I show how ethnography reveals the limits of religious ethics as cultural criticism, while opening new vistas for engaging a broader sphere of normativity, what religious ethicists sometimes call “culture,” but that in reality includes the entire sociocultural and biophysical nexus responsible for ethical subjectivity. A brief portrait of life in this post-coal community illustrates the nexus of relations with which ethicists must work if they wish to participate in social, cultural, and economic change. I argue that incorporating the lessons of culture will lead religious ethics to become more collaborative than critical and to work in ways that are irreducibly local.

- Eric Hilker, University of Virginia

*Surprised by the Neighbor: Ethnography as a Form of Encounter*

In a recent turn toward ethnography, many religious ethicists have followed anthropologists who understand their work to be in service to marginalized people. Such activist anthropologists do not attempt to remain disinterested spectators, but bring moral judgment to bear on the ethnographic situation. This is important work, but I want to suggest that the hope of religious ethics is found not only in understanding more clearly how to do what we know to be good, but that religious ethics might discover forms of life with as-yet-unknown goods. And this will require a form of encounter that remains vulnerable to the way ethnographic subjects might break one’s own concepts and categories. This paper articulates the shape of such an encounter by telling a story about Ishi, a Yahi man who came to the attention of anthropologists in 1911 and was billed as the “Last Wild Indian in North America.”

- Stephanie Thurston, University of Illinois

*Power, Ethics, and Identity: An Ethnographic Account of Religion at Brooklyn High*

How do plural democracies endure justly? Some form of this question undergirds much of the political theory over the past five decades. While later twentieth century philosophy was dominated by a Rawlsian deliberative proceduralism, in the 1990s, citizenship theory reemerged, emphasizing civic and moral virtue. Whether philosophers emphasize proceduralism or character, the question remains: How should religious symbols, practices, and language appear in the public square? In this paper, I use my ethnographic fieldwork to illustrate how religion functions in one such public space—a
Brooklyn high school. I structure the findings in three parts: power, ethics, and identity. First, students expressed concern about religion’s coercive power. Second, while students do not make explicit appeals to religious values in classroom discussions about social issues, I show how “religion” remains implicit in students’ public moral reasoning. Third, I illustrate how “Muslim” functions as a racialized and minoritized identity to be respected.

A21-219
Gay Men and Religion Unit
Theme: The Visions of “Inverts”: Gay Men and Religious Reversals
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Richard McCarty, Mercyhurst University, Presiding

The papers in this panel exemplify the ways in which the “gay” men use their own experience of sexuality to “invert” these prohibitions and the negative affects associated with them. Whether through a Talmudic counter to the Levitical prohibition against “gay” sex, the erotic possibilities of a Catholic eschatology, the reversal of the spectacle Black Queer grief at the Jeffrey Dahmer murders, or the “inversion” of God’s phallus into an all-embracing opening, the theological visions of men who have sex with men challenge the dominant understanding of gay men and their relationship to religion.

- Max Thornton, Drake University

*God’s Hole: Toward a Theology of Circlusion*

Much of the theology concerning sexuality, even queer theology, remains profoundly cissexist and phallocentric, consistently identifying maleness with possession of a penis. Can there be a sexual theology that is not cissexist? Can erotic encounter with God be conceptualized in a way that is not phallocentric? This paper argues that Bini Adamczak’s concept of circlusion offers a rich possibility for both sexual and theological thinking beyond the limitations of cissexism and phallocentrism. Circlusion inverts traditional notions of activity and passivity in sexual activity, reorienting our understanding of power and penetration in a way that allows a shift of emphasis from God’s phallus to God’s anus, as a queer cosmological metaphor of panentheistic enfolding.

- Tyson Herberger, University of Southeastern Norway

*Bar Hamedurei: The Potential Implications of an Ancient Denial of Leviticus’ Prohibition on Gay Sex*

Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are traditionally read as utterly prohibiting male-male penetrative sex. However, ancient biblical reception via rabbinic sages in the talmud and subsequent discussions in the middle ages show that this was not the only rabbinic understanding of these verses and some thought it instead applied to male-intersex relations. This paper will briefly trace this line of thought from a 4th century scholar.
named Bar Hamedurei through to the middle ages before focusing on how reincluding Bar Hamedurei's voice could have the potential to impact our understanding these verses and possibly even halacha (traditional Jewish practice) in relation to homosexual, intersex and potentially even trans individuals and their sex lives.

- Adam Beyt, Fordham University

*Erotic Intimacy and Eschatological Hope: A Mystical-Political Response to Michael Bernard Kelly’s Christian Mysticism’s Queer Flame*

This paper interprets Michal Bernard Kelly’s *Christian Mysticism’s Queer Flame* through the lens of the mystical-political theology of Edward Schillebeeckx. Kelly’s research on the erotic lives of gay men provides an alternative framework for harmful and idolatrous accounts of God. Christian accounts of humanity qua sexuality often limit sexual relationships to monogamous and heterosexual marriages. This theology creates an erotophobic and idolatrous account of God that, for many queer men, separates them from embodied desires and fulfilling relationships. In response to this, Schillebeeckx’s mystical-political describes a prayerful way of being in and for the world in response to the life, death, and believed resurrection of Christ. When brought into conversation with Kelly’s interviews, their collective work describes an account of God that dismantles idolatrous relationships, calls a new world into being, and validates the erotic experiences of God within the dynamisms of human lives.

- Aaron Brown, University of California, Riverside

*“I Just Wanted to See…“: Seeing and Black Queer Grief in the Jeffrey Dahmer Case*

Inspired by Langston Hughes’s ontological ruminations on *seeing* in his essay *Salvation*, and by the televisual optics of black queer grief in the TV broadcast of the Dahmer case, this presentation examines the black queer viscerality of *seeing* in spaces of grief as a life-affirming practice. Moving away from a corporeal, or fleshly, approach of *seeing* that determines the affective gravatas of spectacles of violence through the visual plane, I examine the ways that a black queer haptic of *seeing* develops a dialectic of being that intersects with the visceral experience of grief. I would like to expand on limited renderings of *seeing* through theorizations of the flesh in works such as *Scenes of Subjection* by Saidiya Hartman and *Blackpentecostal Breath* by Ashon Crawley. As a result of this expansion, we begin to reconsider the rules of engagements concerning racialized parameters of the consumptive optics of black queer death in television.

**Business Meeting**

Richard McCarty, Mercyhurst University, Presiding
Michael Pettinger, New York University, Presiding

*A21-220*
**History of Christianity Unit and Religions in the Latina/o Americas Unit***
Theme: **Faith and Power: Latina/o Religious Politics Since 1945**  
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)  
Jennifer Scheper Hughes, University of California, Riverside, Presiding

The editors of this new volume (Felipe Hinojosa, Maggie Elmore, and Sergio Gonzalez) propose a roundtable session for AAR 2022 to discuss the historic and contemporary implications of Latina/o religious politics in the United States. Our work brings together Latina/o historians and religious studies scholars to examine histories of resistance, community formation, and immigration politics. Our roundtable focuses on the post-World War II era, a period in which we argue a formal political engagement began among Latina/o religious leaders and laity. This engagement was spurred on by contemporary civil rights movements, increased immigration from Latin America, and political movements across the Americas. Each chapter in our book engages important moments in Latina/o religious politics that are framed within the larger processes of immigration, refugee policies, deindustrialization, the rise of the religious left and right, and the Chicana/o, immigrant, and Puerto Rican civil rights movements. Our roundtable will explore religion and religious politics as part of the larger ecosystem that has shaped Latina/o communities specifically and American politics in general.

**Panelists**

Maggie Elmore, University of California, Berkeley  
Sergio Gonzalez, Marquette University  
Felipe Hinojosa, Texas A&M University

**Responding**

Daniel Ramirez, Claremont Graduate University

**A21-221**  
**Indigenous Religious Traditions Unit**  
Theme: **Indigenous Entanglements: Queer Transness, Media, Festivals, the Doctrine of Discovery, and Decolonization**  
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)  
Gregory D. Alles, McDaniel College, Presiding

This panel includes three papers that explore a variety of indigenous entanglements. The first paper, "Queer Transness and Indigenous Peoplehood with/in Caxcan and Christian Festival Media," explores indigenous philosophies of Caxcan trans species peoplehood and produces a visually sovereign reading of the dance of "Los Viejos de la Chinana" at the Santo Santiago Festival in Moyahua, Zacatecas. The second paper, "The Doctrine of Discovery Podcast and Virtual Onondaga," shares the results of two major projects supported by the Luce Grant supported initiative, "200 Years of Johnson v. M'Intosh (JvM): Indigenous Responses to the Religious Foundations of Racism," which include an 8 episode podcast and a digital-virtual video game. The third paper, "The Zapatista Reclamation of Indigenous Land: The Unintended Result of a Decolonized Catholic Church" examines how Zapatism, in its relationship to the land and its practice of indigenous cosmology has moved from its Christian roots to become
something post-Christian in what might be considered by some to be a genuine Christian attempt at decolonization.

- Gabriel Estrada, California State University, Long Beach

*Queer Transness and Indigenous Peoplehood with/in Caxcan and Christian Festival Media*

The Moyahua Zacatecas Santo Santiago dance of “Los Viejos de la Chinana” includes a man dressed as an elderly woman monkey who is refused conversion to Catholicism as she dances with her boar-masked husband and flirts with the festival’s human men. This paper proposes to analyze the festival videos of the dance of Los Viejos de la Chinana to explore Caxcan trans species peoplehood. The initial finding links the monkey-masked woman to the spiritual practice of the nahualli, the transformation of humans into animal beings/spirits. While the Moyahua Catholic historian reads this dance as a strong admonishment to cease the Caxcan practices of the nahualli and of trans gender identities, a more visually sovereign (Richard 1995) reading would note that that dance in fact is part of the maintenance of the traditions with an emphasis on humor and transformation between genders and species that fits Caxcan peoplehood philosophies.

- Philip P. Arnold, Syracuse University
  Adam D. J. Brett, Syracuse University
  Jordan Loewen-Colón, Syracuse University

*The Doctrine of Discovery Podcast and Virtual Onondaga*

This presentation will share the results of two major projects as part of the Luce Grant supported initiative “200 Years of Johnson v. M’Intosh: Indigenous Responses to the Religious Foundations of Racism.” This initiative was made possible through collaborative relationships developed over 30 years between academic and Indigenous communities. The two major projects are 1) an 8 episode podcast featuring Indigenous scholars, activists, and students that amplifies Indigenous voices; and 2) a digital-virtual video game inspired by the story of the Peacemaker and the cultural significance of Onondaga Lake for the Haudenosaunee peoples. At its core, the project seeks to interrogate and critically examine connections between the Doctrine of Christian Discovery (DOCD), the Catholic Papal Bulls that undergird the Doctrine, and the Doctrine’s pernicious influence on United States Indian Law today.

- Pierre Bourgeois, Fordham University

*The Zapatista Reclamation of Indigenous Land: the unintended result of a decolonized Catholic church*

This paper examines the Zapatista uprising's religious roots and religion's influence on the Zapatista reclamation of indigenous land in Chiapas, Mexico. The paper begins with an overview of the indigenous struggle for land in 20th century Chiapas before turning to
the work of Archbishop Samuel Ruiz, who radically implemented aspects of Catholic Liberation Theology by empowering the indigenous to develop their own distinctive interpretation of Christianity, including the Exodus narrative of the “Promised Land.” This indigenous Catholic movement was integral to what became the Zapatista reclamation of Mayan land. Finally, the paper explores how Zapatismo, in its relationship to the land and its practice of indigenous cosmology, has moved from its Christian roots to become something post-Christian. The paper concludes by claiming Zapatismo offers both a glimpse of the potential results of a genuine Christian attempt at decolonization, and an explanation of why such attempts are so rare.

Responding

Eglute Trinkauskaite, Maryland Institute College of Art

Business Meeting

Seth Schermerhorn, Hamilton College, Presiding

A21-222
Islamic Mysticism Unit
Theme: Literary Symbols and Cultural Practices of Premodern Sufism: Recent Discoveries
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Tehseen Thaver, Princeton University, Presiding

These four papers advance the study of Sufi devotional and literary practices, focusing on figures and texts that range from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries. Responding to the themes of sainthood (walāya), the science of breath-control (ʿilm-i dam), wine imagery, and Nishapuri lament literature, these four papers make important contributions to the study of classical texts.

- Aiyub Palmer, University of Kentucky

The Social Basis of the Master-Disciple Relationship in al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi’s Kitab al-Hikma

Al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi has been interpreted by scholarship in early Islamic mysticism as eschewing the need for a master in the spiritual development of the aspirant on the path to gnosiss. This potential problem in the later Sufi tradition was addressed to some degree by attributing al-Tirmidhi’s own discipleship to the semi-mythical figure al-Khidr, since al-Tirmidhi has no known master. While the nature of al-Tirmidhi’s spiritual education vis-à-vis a spiritual master will likely never be completely resolved, al-Tirmidhi does give us insight into his views on the relationship between master and disciple in his Kitab al-Hikma. In this paper I seek to demonstrate that al-Tirmidhi valued the relationship between master and disciple and used the analogy of the hakim (spiritual doctor) as a way of explaining the nature of this relationship. Al-Tirmidhi’s approach will be contrast to other social modes of spiritual transmission and initiation within early Islamic mysticism.
Patrick D'Silva, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

One Breath, Two Aims: Classifying zikr and `ilm-i dam in early-modern Persian encyclopedias

This paper analyzes how early-modern Persian encyclopedias depict two breath-related practices: zikr (the “remembrance” of God typically associated with Sufi practice) and `ilm-i dam (the “science of the breath” that is translated from Sanskrit and Hindi into Persian dating as far back as the mid-14th CE). Even though these practices both rely in part on knowledge of the breath, they are consistently classified separately, with zikr grouped with Sufism and `ilm-i dam with the natural sciences. This paper poses two questions of the encyclopedia compilers: (1) why include these practices in an encyclopedia at all, and (2) why classify them as they did? In so doing, I put zikr and `ilm-i dam in conversation with the broader scholarly debate over conceptions of the esoteric body in the early-modern period with an emphasis on Persianate South Asia.

Arjun Nair, University of Southern California

Drinking Islamic Wine? Exploring a Cognitive Metaphor in Some Middle Period Islamic Texts

Shahab Ahmed has recently argued for a conceptualization of Islam that incorporates a notion of "Islamic wine-drinking". He argues that wine-drinking was not only a pervasive cultural and cognitive metaphor within Muslim societies, but also an indisputable social fact. In this paper, I pursue a line of inquiry drawing from literary and religious/theological primary sources that complicates Ahmed’s thesis. Although Ahmed describes the function of the vineal metaphor capably—it was "the pre-eminent and pivotal image for the deepest experience of the meaning of human existence in relation to the Divine"—he understates that aspect of cognitive metaphor that makes "wine" different from the "Real-Truth" it describes. For premodern Sufi readers of wine poetry, it was the “wine of love”, the “wine of trial”, the “wine of bestowal”, the “wine of command” or the “wine of recognition” that they celebrated, not the wine of the grape.

Jason Welle, Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies

Don’t Cry for Me, al-Qushayrī

This presentation examines the writings of al-Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), taking two elements as points of departure: the theme of catastrophe and the 2021 Brill Handbook for Sufi Studies, dedicated to Sufi Institutions. The paper focuses on al-Qushayrī’s reaction to the Seljuk conquest of Nishapur in 429/1038. Not all Nishapurians mourned this social upheaval: Ḥanafīs relished in their newfound dominance, and al-Qushayrī’s reaction was largely muted, his famous “Complaint” (Shikāya) notwithstanding. Richard W. Bulliet famously argued that the acerbic divisions between Ḥanafī and Shāfi‘ī families related less to disputes about doctrine or jurisprudence and more to different social visions about what an Islamic society should look like. The presentation thus
discusses al-Qushayrī with an eye to social and institutional questions, examining the reflections that this Ashʿarī-Shāfiʿī Șūfī master penned in a period that functionally banished him not just from the possibility of leadership, but from comfortable residence in his adopted home.

Responding

Parisa Zahiremami, University of Toronto

Business Meeting

M. Shobhana Xavier, Queens University, Kingston, Presiding
Cyrus Zargar, University of Central Florida, Presiding

A21-224
Full Papers Available

Nineteenth Century Theology Unit
Theme: Theodicy in Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Charles J. T. Talar, University of Saint Thomas, Texas, Presiding

The three very different papers in this session address how nineteenth-century religious thought plotted theodicy within a broader context of human progress and redemption. There is no denial of the existence of human catastrophe: the Middle Passage and the enslavement of Africans, Hegel’s “slaughter bank of history.” Nevertheless, African American and liberal Jewish thinkers as well as Hegel trust in history as a process in which communities and individuals would actively bring about the end of their suffering and the triumph of the good/divine.

- Nicholas Andersen, Tufts University

The Shape of Theodicy in Early Nineteenth-Century African American Thought

This paper investigates the dynamics of theodicy in the work of two early nineteenth-century African American intellectuals and activists, David Walker (d. 1830) and Maria Stewart (d. 1879). In particular, it uses theodicy—here conceived as the problem of making historical sense of Black suffering—as an occasion to query whether and how the influence of certain African diaspora social practices might be evident in their thought. My claim is that the salvation historical frameworks they construct, which make white slaveowners and perpetrators of anti-Black violence minor characters in the story of Black destiny, owe much to their inflection of biblical idioms with African-centered religious and historical sensibilities. That is, that the theodicies Walker and Stewart bespeak can render visible how early African American Protestants reinterpreted the Bible, as well as western religious and philosophical forms, according to Africana religious customs, beliefs, and attitudes, thereby transforming each.
Jörg Lauster, University of Munich

*Theodicy - Resistance from the Power of Thought and the Courage against Evil*

The philosophy of German Idealism shaped Protestant theology in the 19th century on both sides of the North Atlantic. This includes its philosophy and theology of history, which shows a keen eye for suffering and meaninglessness. Anyone who wants to think about "Religion and Catastrophe" today can receive important inspiration from it. Hegel wanted to show a plan of history. This was not naive optimism, but an expression of the power of thought. The human mind can find traces of meaning and significance in history. Evil, in all its meaninglessness, does not have the last word. So Hegel resists the indignation about the meaninglessness of history. In this concept theodicy is resistance to catastrophe through the power of thought and religion. Thus, what Hegel and his successors thought about theodicy also decisively changed the role of Christianity in the modern world.

Samuel Kessler, Gustavas Adolphus College

“*Theodicy and the Spirits of Evil in the Theological Writings of Rabbi Kaufmann Kohler (1843-1926)*”

This paper offers an introductory analysis of Kaufmann Kohler’s theological engagement with evil and theodicy. It begins with Kohler’s understanding of the role of theology in religious life and philosophy, then examines Kohler’s specific thoughts on evil and suffering, and finally places them in the context of nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Jewish Reform and liberal (German and American) Christian thought.

Responding

Hans Schwarz, University of Regensburg

Business Meeting

Sheila Briggs, University of Southern California, Presiding
Zachary Purvis, University of Göttingen, Presiding

A21-225
North American Hinduism Unit
Theme: *Engaged Hindu Publics and the Politics of Religious Difference on Campus: A Roundtable Discussion*
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Brian A. Hatcher, Tufts University, Presiding

This roundtable considers religious diversity on college campuses in intersectional contexts using Hindu student groups and dynamics of student engagement/contestation as focal points for shared reflection. Our goals are to explore how religion informs, shapes, and contradicts
configurations of race, gender, caste, class, and other positionalities students hold. Panelists will speak for 5-10 minutes, sharing their observations and reflections on campus religious life in general, Hindu student organizations, in particular, and the various intersections of political activism, faith-based apologetics, and lived experience of race, caste, class, gender, and sexual orientation.

**Panelists**

Dheepa Sundaram, University of Denver
Shana Sippy, Centre College
Brian K. Pennington, Elon University
Gaurika Mehta, Columbia University
Anuradha Sajjanhar, University of Minnesota

**Business Meeting**

Shana Sippy, Centre College, Presiding
Dheepa Sundaram, University of Denver, Presiding

**A21-238**

*Origen and Origen Reception Seminar*

Theme: **Desire, Authority, and Ideals in Origen's Biblical Scholarship**

Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Jonathan Zecher, Australian Catholic University, Presiding

The essays in this session wrestle with often overlooked motifs and structures that shape Origen's biblical interpretation.

- **Miriam DeCock**, Aarhus University

*Origen's Sources of Exegetical Authority*

In this paper, I will examine various sources of authority to which Origen lays claim as he interprets scripture. On occasion, in both his commentaries and homilies, Origen provided accounts of his engagement with and reception of three different, though connected sources of authority that contributed to, I argue, his self-presentation as an exemplary interpreter. These three sources of authority are as follows: 1) participation in the lineage of the apostles and other biblical authors, with a special emphasis on Paul; 2) angelic assistance, and, on occasion, the claim to have reached an angelic epistemological level himself; and 3) direct communication from the Logos, whom he understands to be Christ himself.

- **Anders-Christian Jacobsen**, Aarhus University

*The Erotic Theology of Origen*
The erotic desire for truth, beauty, and the good is a key element in Platonic philosophy and theology. In Origen’s Platonic inspired interpretation of Christianity, this erotic desire played an important role in his understanding of how the human soul answered the call to return to its divine origin. This paper will explore Origen’s use of erotic desire in his Christian theology of salvation. Furthermore, this paper will examine passages from Origen’s works which deal with movement, such as the Israelites journeys through the desert, explanations of Jesus as ‘the way’ in the Gospel of John etc. The question to be answered is: what role does erotic desire play as the driving force of this movement?

- John Solheid, University of Saint Michael's College

*The Human Condition and What to Do About It: Origen and Augustine in Dialogue*

Origen and Augustine both agreed that human nature was burdened by sin. They both understood the story of the human condition to be a drama of a fallen nature, alienated from its original dignity. However, each provided different explanations for the causes of this fallen humanity. While both understood that Adam and Eve had transmitted their original sin to their descendants, Augustine did not follow Origen’s position regarding the pre-existence of the soul. As important as these questions are, in this essay I will focus on the question that should logically follow: If human nature is fallen, what are we to do about it? I will take a closer look at the theological argumentation Origen and Augustine employed in order to flesh out their respective positions both on the origins of sin, as well as on the possibilities and constraints of life in the body.

- Joseph Carnes Ananias, Duke University

*The Spiritual Senses and the Spiritual Sense of Scripture: Origen’s Doctrine of the Spiritual Senses as a Condition for the Possibility of Spiritual Exegesis*

This paper explores the relationship between Origen’s doctrine of the spiritual senses and the method and content of his biblical exegesis. It begins with a critical assessment of recent scholarship on Origen’s doctrine of the spiritual senses, resisting attempts to identify a clear development in his thought or clear distinctions between metaphorical and analogical references to the senses, as some have proposed. Then, in conversation with *De Principiis*, the *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, and *Contra Celsum*, the paper develops a positive account of how the scope of the spiritual senses is related to Origen’s broader understanding of spiritual knowledge as ordered toward union with the Logos. The paper’s final section sketches an Origenian theology of the interplay between the spiritual senses and the spiritual exegesis of Scripture, arguing that for Origen, the cultivation of the spiritual senses emerges as an indispensable element of the activity of spiritual exegesis.

- Judy Kim, University of Notre Dame

*Who is the “Heretic” (Αἱρετικός) to be Shunned?: Origen’s Understanding of the...*
Apostolic Injunction in Titus 3:10–11

The present study explores Origen's scriptural exegesis through an interesting case: his understanding of Titus 3:10–11, a text that traditionally has been treated as a manual for disciplining the "heretic" (airetikos). We briefly conduct a historical survey to track the usage of airetikos/airesis in the New Testament and contemporary non-Christian literature, where airesis is used to designate a sect or sub-sect, but not an outside group. It is argued that joining Titus to the genuine Pauline corpus has contributed to the development of the "heretic" category in the early Christian consciousness. Origen is not the first to make this link, as Tertullian proves an interesting Latin analogue, and the two raise similar arguments. Titus 3 is understood to define Christian identity as obedience to Scripture's authority. But surprisingly, Origen's primary goal is not to exclude heretics, but wherever possible, to first persuade them with the truth.

- Daniel Johnson, University of Leicester

The Reception of Origen in the Christology of Isaac Watts

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the influence of Origen in late seventeenth and early eighteenth Christology in the writings of Isaac Watts, specifically regarding the doctrine of the pre-existent human soul of Jesus. From 1722 onwards, Watts published extensively on the doctrine of the Trinity, in response to the rise of Arianism among Dissenting ministers. Watts’ publications on the Trinity proved to be his most controversial works, particularly for his commitment to the doctrine of the pre-existent human soul of Jesus, in which he increasingly draws upon Origen to substantiate his arguments. Watts’ pre-existarianism centres around his doctrine of the Logos. To Watts, the Logos is the Wisdom of God, eternally originating within and proceeding from the Father. Before the creation of the world, this Logos is united with the pre-existent human soul of Jesus and becomes the Son of God. Watts claimed to derive much of this from Origen, using Origen to justify his position. This paper will discuss the specific places where Watts engages with Origen, and show how Watts’ interpretation of Origen’s Christology incorporates and differs from others who also drew influence from Origen.

A21-226
Practical Theology Unit
Theme: The paradigm of growth: practical theological challenges
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Hee-Kyu Heidi Park, Ewha Womans University, Korea, Presiding
Kirsten Donskov Felter, Centre For Pastoral Education and Research, Presiding

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, sustained and inclusive economic growth (Sustainable Development Goals https://sdgs.un.org/goals) is a key element in the Global Goals as a driver for progress worldwide. Economic growth is thus seen as a necessary means to meet an equal distribution and improvement of global wealth. However, while honoring values of sustainability and inclusion, the commitment to growth raises a range of questions to be dealt with, theoretically as well as practically. Growth has been a central
metaphor in the discipline of practical theology, whether it be religious education, spiritual care, or ecclesiastical practices, to name a few.

Three papers will be presented to start the sessions. However, the goal of this interactive and participatory session is to get into conversation with each other and to reflect on the growth paradigm in practical theology in conversation with each other.

- **Victoria Turner, University of Edinburgh**

  *The 'Missing Generation': Exploring the Consequences of the Growth Ideology to Younger Christians*

  This paper argues that the concentration on growth by traditional denominations in the UK hinders the formation of intergenerational relationships. The term 'Missing Generation' is most unhelpful in this regard as it distracts from the need to engage meaningfully with the young people who are attending churches and has resulted in youth work cuts in many of these churches and the platforms here young people can speak to the larger church being taken away. Additionally, the responsibility for growth is often put onto younger church members who are asked to explain their generation's absence. The answer they give, being the distance from their inclusive world-view and the structures of the church are often met with rebuke as churches want quick capitalistic marketing solutions to the decline rather than slow, gradual structural change. This paper argues that the preoccupation with economic growth is hindering the ability to create loving church communities.

- **Eliana Ku, University of Toronto**

  *Lament as Hospitality, the Essence of Community Building for Impossible Amalgamation Between Care and Growth amid the Tears of Global Refugee*

  Faced with the crisis of the quantitative and efficient aspects of church growth, this essay laments the pursuit of such church growth itself and seeks to examine how world crisis refugees are challenging the growth paradigm. The practical theological deliberation will be particularly focused on whether in the past, political and economic discourse, as well as the exclusion, racism, and suffering of refugees were heard and responded to in an appropriate way in relation to the issue of refugee survival. This study argues that evoking lament amid the time of the world's refugee crises, Lament is an important issue for community building based on spiritual growth while respecting the value of care and hospitality for those who are vulnerable and suffering.

- **Ryan R. Gladwin, Palm Beach Atlantic University**

  *Growth or Transformation?: Moving towards a decolonial and practical theology of transformation*

  This paper examines how the colonial-Christendom cartography and epistemology have
dominated the concept of growth in Latin American theories of mission and
development. First, the paper will detail how a colonial-Christendom cartography has
influenced theories of mission and development, that is, the formation of the
epistemology and social imagination that sees imperial centers as synonymous with the
Christian world as opposed to the primitivism and barbarism of the non-Christian world.
Second, the paper will detail the rise of Latin American Theological voices (liberation
theology and progressive evangelical theology) and how they have attempted to offer a
Latin American theology that is self-thinking and liberating. Third, the paper will detail
how decolonial thought has demonstrated the shortcomings of early Latin American
theology. Forth, the paper will demonstrate how the challenge of climate change
demonstrates a decolonial theology of mission and development.

A21-201
Professional Development - Publishing
Publications Committee
Theme: Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Alda Balthrop-Lewis, Australian Catholic University, Presiding
Jonathan Tran, Baylor University, Presiding

Why study religion? How should it be done? Titles in the AAR/Oxford University Press book
series “Reflection and Theory in the Study of Religion” answer these questions in powerful and
creative ways. They demonstrate religion's enduring vitality as well as the challenges and
opportunities that studying it presents. This roundtable features the current editors of the series,
three recent authors, and a past editor, who will discuss new theoretical approaches to the study
of religion, initiating a conversation that will help direct the future of the series.

Panelists

Mohammed Gamal Abdelnour, Al-Azhar University, Cairo and University of York, U.K.
Emily Dumler-Winckler, Saint Louis University
Ross Kane, Virginia Theological Seminary
Theodore Vial, Iliff School of Theology
Majid Daneshgar, University of Freiburg

A21-227
Qur'an Unit
Theme: Studies of the Qur'an
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Samuel Ross, Texas Christian University, Presiding

This panel features papers that provide studies on the Qur'an.

- Raymond Farrin, American University of Kuwait
Apocalyptic Themes in the Early Qur'an: A Statistical Review

This paper explores apocalyptic themes in the earliest suras of the Qur'an. It employs a refined chronology to focus on what are likely the earliest suras in the scripture (ones revealed ca. 610–14 CE). It statistically compares the topic of the approaching Hour to other topics in these early units, and it also compares the descriptions of heaven to those of hell. The paper shows that the subject of cosmic upheaval is a dominant message in the early Qur'an, and furthermore that the emphasis is on punishment awaiting the unbelievers rather than bliss awaiting the righteous ones. The paper concludes by connecting the message to its context. The paper suggests that this is a likely beginning for the unfolding scripture, given that the Qur'an’s appearance coincided with a time of great tumult in the Near East and that Muhammad began his mission preaching mostly to pagans in Mecca.

- Stephen Burge, Institute of Ismaili Studies

The Life-Giving and Life-Destroying Power of Water: Faith and the Signs of God in Surat Yunus

The theme that runs through Sūrat Yūnus (Q. 10) is water and the way in which God uses it to both bring life into being and to destroy it. This paper will explore first the way in which the āyāt Allāh are used to move people from unbelief to belief. The discussion will look at the way in which the theological discussions found in the first half of the sura are used in the ‘case studies’ found in the second half. The focus of the discussion will be on the (un)belief of Pharaoh. The second part will explore the use of water as something that creates and destroys life. It will ask what role waters play in the ‘theology of signs’ seen in this sura. Given contemporary debates about the climate catastrophe, it will end by asking what Sūrat Yūnus can offer to debates about the environment.

- Kathryn M. Kueny, Fordham University

The Melancholic Messenger: Tracing emotions of despair and an ethics of care in prophetic narratives

This paper examines premodern accounts that feature the prophet Muhammad’s struggles with melancholy, anxiety, and depression in response to traumas associated with the revelation. Part I summarizes how premodern Muslim historians, biographers, and physicians narrated traumatic episodes involving the revelation and the effects it had on mind and body. This section traces the emotions the prophet experienced and the reactions the public performed in response to his emotional turmoil. Part II explores how premodern authorities looked to distinguish what the prophet was enduring as a condition separate from madness, epilepsy, or possession. Part III argues such distinctions served to shape personal etiquette and inform pious and compassionate public responses to emotional eruptions that were shamed or condemned. The conclusion links pious intent with an ethics of care to curb more inapt and punitive reactions to trauma to promote
emotional well-being.

- Michael VanZandt Collins, Boston College

*Toward Rectifying Terrestrial Habits: Corruption in the Earth, Prophetic Action, and the Hope of Dialogue*

This paper examines the Quranic narrative of “corrupting the earth” (*fasād fī al-‘ard*). Recently, as a metaphor, it has shaped several Muslim responses to anthropogenic climate change. Given interest in the power of storytelling and adaptive reading as a strategic response, this comparative approach aims to cultivate a dialogical process for understanding the ethical implications of climate change. In particular, it proposes that this narrative illuminates critical aspects of the climate crisis, while also providing virtue keys for adaptation. From a comparative theological perspective, in the service of climate ethics, I argue that this paradigmatic metaphor contributes a different orientation toward the challenges of climate change, emphasizing prophetic action, the discipline of listening, and ultimately seeks to rectify “terrestrial habits.”

- William Sherman, University of North Carolina, Charlotte

*True Furqans and Pseudo-Qur’an’s: Secularism, Polemic, and Imitation*

Can a Christian polemic tell us something about the Qur’an and Qur’anic challenges to secular conceptions of language and literature? This paper suggests that a Christian imitation of the Qur’an published in 1999 known as *The True Furqan* can, paradoxically, enliven our understanding of the Qur’an and the Qur’an’s role as a piece of ‘literature’ and a language event beyond dominant Western approaches. The polemical and mimetic efforts of *The True Furqan* adopt the presuppositions of premodern formulations of *iʿjāz al-Qurʿān* and demand to be read through a Qur’anic literary hermeneutic, thus drawing attention to those aspects of the Qur’an that elude secular ideologies of literature. Namely, revelatory truth is proven or disproven by rhetorical beauty. Through a history and analysis of *The True Furqan* and its global, inter-religious reception, this paper therefore joins recent works that attempt to show how the Qur’an provides us a critical literary hermeneutic.

**A21-228**

**Religion and Sexuality Unit**

*Theme: Irreconcilable Manifestations? Rethinking Anglican universal gay subjects, spiritual power in the House of (Audre) Lorde, Black queer millennial spiritual survival*

Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Benae Beamon, Bucknell University, Presiding

This paper session explores how particular communities deploy religious rhetoric and create innovative practices to intervene in debates or conflicts around religion and sexuality. The first paper engages the conflict over the issue of homosexuality with the global Anglican Communion by paying attention to irreconcilable manifestations of faith and conflicting conceptions of
subjectivity forged within colonialism. The paper asks us to rethink the function and position of Western Anglican internationally-oriented "pro-gay" activism. The second paper explores how Audre Lorde's concept of the erotic is sought to manifest in the founding of a Black feminist church in Chicago that venerates Lorde and whose spiritual practices are based in the church founder's own background as a burlesque dancer and performer. The third paper discusses ways in which Black queer millennials are reclaiming, redefining, and reimagining their own identity of Black spirituality beyond western Christianity.

• Jane Nichols, Yale University

*Colonial Pasts, Neocolonial Presents: Faith and the Making of the Universal Gay Subject*

This paper engages the conflict over the issue of homosexuality with the global Anglican Communion by developing Paul Tillich's account of faith and putting it into conversation with Sylvia Wynter's genealogy of the category "Man." Through attention to differences in fundamentally-held anthropologies, Tillichian faith allows for a deeper understanding of the vast differences occluded by the formally shared Anglican Christianity of all involved. Analyzing the conflict and the conceptions of subjectivity which ground them within a trajectory of colonialism ultimately lead us to rethink the function and position of Western Anglican internationally-oriented "pro-gay" activism.

• Courtney Rabada, Northwestern University

*House of the Lorde: Audre Lorde, the Erotic, and Burlesque as Power*

House of the Lorde, a Chicago-based church which venerates Black feminist poet Audre Lorde, was founded in 2022 by performance artist Jenn Freeman. Freeman understands Lorde’s concept of the erotic – “an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered” – as inseparable from Spirit, and as the driving force behind her burlesque performances, her teaching, and the activist work she has been called to do in her communities. Using House of the Lorde as a case study, this paper explores the ways in which the erotic, as well as spirituality, are fundamentally generative and creative; the connections between Lorde’s concept of the erotic and activism; and the ways in which the erotic cannot be understood outside of its association with sex.

• Whitney Bond, Chicago Theological Seminary

*Where Two or Three Are Gathered: A Reclamation of Black Spirituality, Community, and Politics of Survival for Black Queer Millennials*

This paper discusses the ways in which Black Queer Millennials, specifically, are reclaiming, redefining, and reimagining their own identity of Black spirituality beyond western Christianity. Many Black Queer Millennials have returned to indigenous spiritual practices found within African derived religious traditions and Afro-Caribbean traditions,
such as Hoodoo, Ifá, and Santería; while others have reconstructed their own Christian identities by deconstructing the theological learnings from their own lives and lived experiences to reclaim their own spiritual identity. Additionally, community building serves as an integral component in how safety is established as they explore new faith practices on their own, and as Black Queer individuals who intentionally place their queerness at the center of their spiritual identity. The faith formations of Black Queer Millennials serve as a conduit to how their lived experiences shape their spiritual expressions beyond the tradition of Black church culture and makes space for new theological claims.

**Responding**

Thelathia Young, Bucknell University

**Business Meeting**

Claudia Schippert, University of Central Florida, Presiding
Sarojini Nadar, University of the Western Cape, Presiding

**A21-229**

**Religion and the Social Sciences Unit and Sociology of Religion Unit**

Theme: **Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations: Insights from Churches Across the US**

Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Rachel Schneider, Rice University, Presiding

Since March of 2020, the coronavirus pandemic has caused every facet of social life to change and religious life in the United States has been far from exempt. Technological advances like Zoom have allowed congregations to adapt quickly, but questions remain as to how and whether churches will be able to pivot out of the pandemic landscape in the long-term. At the same time, American religious congregations have grappled not only with the logistical and ideological challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, but also the polarization of the 2020 presidential election and the societal reckoning over structural racism following the high-profile police murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. This panel presents findings on the lived experience of religious life and congregational innovation during the pandemic through the collection of over 50 congregational case studies across the US as part of the “Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations” study.

- Arthur Farnsley, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis

**Religious Congregations’ Adaptation to Change in Indianapolis, IN**

Religious congregations usually approach social change with great caution. Over the past two decades, some have exploited virtual and digital communication strategies vigorously, but most have been slow to move online. A few have made systemic understanding of racism a primary concern, but most have focused on individual
character. A minority of congregations have fully embraced evolving understandings of gender and sexuality, but the majority have limited leadership opportunities for some members, even while gradually becoming more open to change. This paper will consider the factors that lead congregations in Indianapolis, IN, toward rapid adaptation to social change, especially as the pandemic accelerated many changes already underway. The paper will also consider factors that make such adaptation much slower and more difficult. Variables considered include theological tradition, race, ethnicity, social and economic class, political polarization, and the influence (or lack thereof) of local culture exerted on broader cultural assumptions.

- Isabela Rosales, Iliff School of Theology
  Grego Pena Camprubi, University of Denver
  Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi, Iliff School of Theology

*Congregational Life in the Time of Pandemic: Preliminary Results from Denver Case Studies*

In the Exploring the Pandemic Impact on Congregations study through the Hartford Institute for Religion Research, we are exploring twelve distinct, racially and denominationally diverse congregations in the Denver greater metro area and their responses to the ongoing COVID-19 Global Pandemic. The study focuses on the following guiding questions: How did congregations respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? What are the long-term consequences of COVID-19 on congregational life in the United States? What does congregational life look like post-pandemic? Through participant observations of several service attendances, interviews with church leadership, and member focus groups, we will begin to form a detailed picture of these congregations and their responses to the pandemic. Ultimately, we will share our findings with congregational and denominational leaders, providing helpful case studies and resources as we move forward in these spatially transformative times in religious practice.

- Allison Norton, Hartford Seminary
  Patricia Tevington, Hartford Institute for Religion Research

*Solidarity at Six Feet Away? Congregant Experiences in Different Worship Modalities and Gatherings in Hartford, Connecticut*

Sociological theory and empirical evidence have long demonstrated the importance in physical co-presence and emotional energy for the successful creation of collective effervescence and social solidarity in religious rituals. Amidst the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, many congregations have adjusted their traditional modes of worship and gathering. The role that innovations such as remote participation, social distancing, and other safety precautions play in shaping the individual religious experience and congregational identity is so far unexamined. In this paper, we examine in-depth congregational case studies of churches in the Hartford, Connecticut area to understand
how these variations on in-person, virtual, and hybrid worship services unfold and how they are experienced both by individual attenders themselves and across congregational profiles.

- Daniel Cueto-Villalobos, University of Minnesota

*Withdrawal, Introspection, and Mobilization: How Twin Cities Churches Respond to Crisis*

The Minneapolis team presents initial patterns from twelve protestant congregations in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. Using qualitative methods, they focus on churches’ responses to two exogenous shocks: the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd. They consider the congregations’ divergent responses to these “catastrophes” and their impacts on the local religious and denominational ecology and understandings of racial injustice. They present three themes present in churches’ responses: withdrawal, introspection, and mobilization. For many members of conservative congregations, frustrations with pandemic restrictions and institutional attention to racial injustice fueled exodus from churches with progressive politics and/or strict pandemic protocols. In contrast, in some mainline, progressive congregations the murder of George Floyd and subsequent protests and legal proceedings alongside the COVID-19 pandemic sparked an ongoing process of race-centered introspection and learning that endures today. Other progressive congregations responded by mobilizing politically in the local community.

**Responding**

Scott Thumma, Hartford Seminary

*A21-230*

Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe

Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit

Theme: Affective Apocalypses

Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Joel Mayward, George Fox University, Presiding

This session focuses on the religious and societal implications of visual culture, specifically as it concerns the various ways in which contemporary persons navigate catastrophe and crisis in and through their participation in and production of visually-anchored artifacts. Whose crises are accounted for and acknowledged? How does religious nationalism or colonialism create disaster? What resources do contemporary religious beliefs and practices provide for overcoming catastrophe? By engaging with a wide range of "visual culture" -- from participatory video gaming, to film, to KDrama -- papers in this session focus on the subjects of social adaptation, political activism, personal resilience, structural transitions, and other religious responses to catastrophe and crisis.
• Joel Clarkson, University of Saint Andrews

Gaming the Apocalypse: Participation in the Unthinkable in Video Games

In dialogue with Merleau-Ponty and James Gibson, this paper seeks to investigate the advent of popular video games themed around apocalypse. These games share a common theme with apocalyptic stories in old media formats such as film and TV in affording an affective engagement with unimaginable potentialities of human experience in a fictional environment. And yet, games offer a further facet of engagement by allowing the viewing subject to inhabit in-story characters in a way unavailable in old media. This paper thus considers gaming’s narratival agency, understood through both the limited sovereignty a player has over a character in a given game world, and through the enhanced somatic involvement in both player input and controller feedback. This exploration is conducted through phenomenological analysis of gameplay in two recent games: The Last of Us, and Everybody’s Gone to the Rapture.

• Joseph Kickasola, Baylor University

Hopeful Gesture after Catastrophe: Deafness, Signing, and Embodied Aesthetics in Sound of Metal and Drive My Car

This essay analyzes the experience of perceiving sign language—phenomenologically, aesthetically, and theologically—within Sound of Metal and Drive My Car. Here, atypical sensory/aesthetic experience embodies and entails religious experience amid catastrophic loss. Sensory loss sharpens other senses, beauty abides, and, deep meaningful experience may emerge from such limitation. Catastrophe opens onto religious and philosophical questions, and deaf characters are most proximal to hope. The hearing audience moves through the paces of multisensory loss, intensification, and aesthetic realignment toward otherwise hidden beauty and meaning.

The films contrast the “cessation” tendency toward silence in philosophy, and the “receptivity” tendency in certain religious traditions. Within receptivity, a different temporality emerges (Bauckham’s “eschatological” temporality), and its rhythms have religious dimensions (Eikelboom’s Rhythm: A Theological Category informs here). Within receptivity, time need not waste, and mitigation of personal control makes rebirth into meaningful temporality and spiritual rest unexpectedly possible.

• Meghan Beddingfield, Southern Methodist University

‘Maybe the world is finally coming to an end’: How the Global Boom of Kdramas Introduced Han to the Apocalyptic Genre

Korean han is rooted in experiences combining South Korea’s success story, Christian explanations of sin, divine wrath, and self-sacrifice, and a notion of impending doom which is terrifying and beautiful. Global streaming services have created several kdramas which explore questions of identity from a han perspective. Han alters Hollywood’s
apocalyptic expectations by incorporating individual and collective trauma that accounts for separation, loss of identity, and their subsequent emotions prior to any world-ending event. The apocalypse provides a framework for critiquing social injustices that lead to han. Three Netflix kdramas stand out for their examination of religion and institutional power-abuse: Sweet Home (2020), Hellbound (2021), and All of Us Are Dead (2022). These kdramas use the genre to scrutinize institutionalized fact-manipulation, browbeating and bullying, neglect of vulnerable populations, and silencing voices of dissent. The apocalypse is a salvific occasion: the opportunity to reveal and condemn injustices and the setting for reconciliation.

**Business Meeting**

Kutter Callaway, Fuller Theological Seminary, Presiding
Rebecca Moody, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Presiding

**A21-231**

**Sacred Texts, Theory, and Theological Construction Unit**

Theme: *New work in Sacred Texts, Theory and Theological Construction*

Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)

Jennifer L. Koosed, Albright College, Presiding

This "open" panel presents innovative and exploratory work that engages Critical Theory (broadly defined) and Continental Philosophy intersecting with either Sacred Text (including, but by no means limited to Jewish and Christian writings) and Theology (ideally projects that touch on all these elements).

- **Flora Tang, University of Notre Dame**

  *Biblical Hermeneutics through Decolonial Trauma Theory: Original Trauma and Intergenerational Trauma of Migration in Genesis 12, 20, and 26’s Wife-Sister Narratives*

  This paper considers the hermeneutical and theological implications of reading biblical texts through decolonial trauma theory. Taking Genesis 12, 20, and 26’s thrice-repeated “wife-sister narratives” as case study, I argue that reading the texts through decolonial trauma theory’s insistence of trauma’s intergenerationality and decoloniality offer a way to understand the texts’ repetition across the lives of Abram, Sarai, Isaac, and Rebekah. This hermeneutics also places the kyriarchal power dynamics of migration and empire in center stage, unveils the traumatic experiences of gender-based violence of migrant women, and establishes the text as a fruitful scriptural resource for constructive theologies of trauma and migration.

- **Abel Aruan, Boston University**

  *Nature as Divine Face: Creationality and Sacramentality Reconciled*
Anthropocene and catastrophe have made current theologians revisit Augustine’s discussion on nature. Some thinkers, N. Joseph Torchia, Gerhard May, Catherine Keller, and Whitney Bauman, focus on createdness of nature and how Augustine disputes Manichean dualism. Others, such as Charles T. Mathewes, Hans Boersma, and Karmen Mackendrick, focus on Augustine’s understanding of sacramentality of worldly existences. Understanding nature as having creational identity has been seen as denigrating nature and perpetuating the logic of domination and erasure of agency. On the other side, understanding nature as sacramental will appreciate the abundant presence of the environment. However, one cannot overemphasize Augustine’s one theological locus and neglect the other. Can we have another language by which we can see that Augustine-rooted thoughts of both creationality and sacramentality become necessary? Through dialogues with Emmanuel Levinas’s philosophical ethics, Jean-Luc Marion’s phenomenology, and Mark I. Wallace’s animism studies, I assert nature as divine face (*faciem Divina*). Through the creational lens, we agree that the divine owns that face. Through the sacramental lens, we can agree that that face entices us and speaks to us as we find the traces of the divine.

- Kaia D. S. Ronsdal, University of Oslo

*Spaces of Presence: Holding pieces of the (dead) other in our hands*

The paper grapples with theological and philosophical concepts in the encounters with dead migrant bodies – as that encounter challenges ethics, hospitality, and vocation. We work with examples of the bodies of dead migrants washing onto the shores of the EU or found on the threshold of the US, and problematize space itself as an agent in the encounter between the living non-migrant and the dead migrant. We ask, what is the human ethical mandate when space is populated and dynamic rather than vacuous and empty and how space’s agency changes what occurs in it between the living and the dead? Using spatial concepts, we suggest that space as an agent changes an object (a dead body) into an encounter from “present” to “presence” which is not seen merely as unfortunate imposition on the otherwise pristine landscape but which has a voice and calling to the living.

**Business Meeting**

Karen Bray, Wesleyan College, Presiding
Robert Seesengood, Albright College, Presiding

**A21-232**

**Secularism and Secularity Unit**

Theme: *Properties of the Secular: Occupied, Zoned, Surveilled, Meta*

Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Lucia Hulsether, Skidmore College, Presiding

The papers in this session consider the spatial qualities of the secular, with an emphasis on their production through state intervention and relations of private property. From the settler romances
of Dolly Parton’s Appalachia to the race-making and religion-making spatial entanglements of the *Lukumi v. Hialeah* case, from the construction of natural built environments in Boulder, CO to the aspirational repair of Mark Zuckerberg’s Metaverse, these scholars work within and across their scholarly cases to unearth new directions for the study of the secular and its material landscapes.

- **Drake Konow, University of Texas**

  “*Listen to the Sound of the Cherokee*”: Religion, Land, and Performative Sovereignty in Dolly Parton’s Sha-Kon-O-Hey!

  This paper takes up *Sha-Kon-O-Hey*! an album and musical production written by country musician Dolly Parton to mark the 75th anniversary of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. According to promotional materials, *Sha-Kon-O-Hey*! is a Cherokee term for the mountains meaning “land of blue smoke.” Cherokee references appear throughout the album and show. The lyrics “listen to the sound of the Cherokee” repeat, although native voices are not given any sonic space. I argue *Sha-Kon-O-Hey*! offers a version of settler colonialism where white people can take ownership of native lands without violence or bloodshed and settlers can both contain Native peoples and listen to the sound of the Cherokee, forcibly occupying their land without any direct encounter with Cherokee peoples. This is a religious performance of white settler colonialism where claims about sovereignty over land, peoples, and histories of violence take on a religious, mythical quality enmeshed in the secular.

- **Brandi Denison, University of North Florida**


  I consider Boulder, Colorado as a case study in the intersection among park development, notions of mediating spiritual experiences in nature, and the construction of secular space. This paper argues for including parks and campgrounds as primary sources in understanding how religious and secular identities are formed in relation to both cities and nature. Focusing on two moments in Boulder history (the emergence of a park system in the 1910s-20s, and the 1960s arrival of hippies to camp in the parks), I argue that Boulder residents cultivated a built environment that asserted the fundamental spiritual quality of nature as a means to cultivate democracy and inoculate against the ills of capitalistic pursuits. Relying on newspapers, oral histories, and city government reports, this paper focuses on the city of Boulder’s creation and maintenance of access to nature, both in the city and directly above the city in the mountains.

- **Nicole Carroll, Stanford University**

  “*In violation of everything this country stands for*”: Secularism, Space, and the Criminalization of Religion in Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. Hialeah
This paper examines the relationships between space, race, and the construction of “American religion” through the carceral mechanisms of secular governance exemplified by the 1993 Supreme Court case Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. Hialeah, in which the city of Hialeah criminalized the Santeria practice of animal sacrifice. What on the surface appeared to be a moral panic over the unnecessary cruelty of animal sacrifice is better understood as a racial and religious panic over space, the category of religion, and racialized American identity. By attending to space in Church of Lukumi Babalu Aye v. Hialeah, this paper brings to the fore the centrality of carceral practices in secularism's creation and enforcement of the conceptual boundaries of religion, race, and nation in space.

- Lacey Jones, Yale University

_Virtually Presence: Zuckerberg’s Metaverse and the Future of Repair_

This paper situates Mark Zuckerberg’s Metaverse within an intellectual genealogy of projects that take “the meta-” as a strategy for social repair. I trace a throughline from Husserl’s belief that thinking about thought could produce unity to our present-day cultural/theoretical obsession with mushrooms: a fungi that figures ranging from Anna Tsing to Merlin Sheldrake have used to suggest that thinking about "relation-as-relation" can be a tool for surviving our current crises. I then argue that the Metaverse extends this history by asking the question of virtuality’s ability to repair intimacy. Zuckerberg promises the “embodied internet” infrastructure of the Metaverse will allow us to “experience a much stronger sense of presence with the people [we] care about.” Is it something about its virtuality that separates the metaverse from the supposedly reparative meta- that preceded it? Does virtuality lay bare the meta’s promise of repair as false?

**Business Meeting**

Bradley Onishi, Skidmore College, Presiding
Lucia Hulsether, Skidmore College, Presiding

**A21-233**

**South Asian Religions Unit**

Theme: _South Asia Beyond the Indo-Persian: Scholarly Flows Between Iran and India_
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Nicholas Boylston, Harvard University, Presiding

This panel seeks to examine a set of diverse strands of Persianate discursive tradition in a broader effort to interrogate the Indo-Persian category, attending to the religious in full socio-historical and intellectual light. By attending to both particulars of juridical practice and the sociology of juridical culture, as well as philosophical ideas in doctrinal Sufism and the translation of Indic literature across pre-modern India, we aim to display a wide diversity of scholarly exchange in order to then examine different historical trajectories and trends, with an eye towards common transformations and patterns of disjuncture. While historians have long been interested in the Persianate cosmopolis, we take this further by putting multiple different
kinds of scholarly exchange together and pointing to common threads that might clothe stark
distinctions. The papers in this panel thus take on law, literature, and philosophical Sufism from
Iran to India from a number of angles.

- Nariman Aavani, Harvard University

*Intellectual Networks Between Iran and India in Mughal India: Muḥammad Dihdār
Shīrāzī (d. 1610) on Unity of Being (waḥdat al-wujūd)*

The issue of *waḥdat al-wujūd* is one of the most central questions in Islamic intellectual
history in the subcontinent. In my paper I examine a treatise on *waḥdat al-wujūd* by
Muḥammad Dihdār Shīrāzī called *The Subtleties of the Eternal Truths (Raqā’iq al-
ḥaqā’iq)*. I argue that a study of this text reveals that (a) the discourse on *waḥdat al-
wujūd* in Dihdār’s treatise is informed and shaped by preceding debates on the nature of
being that occurred in the discourses of falsafah, kalam, and theoretical Sufism in pre-
Safavid and Early Safavid Iran. In particular I show that it was the scholarly network of
Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī (1502) and his students that play the most central role in the
formation of central concepts in Dihdār’s text. Moreover, I discuss how Dihdār uses such
conceptual frameworks he borrows to absolve the advocates of *waḥdat al-wujūd* in India
of the accusation of heresy (*kufr*).

- Shahrad Shahvand, Harvard University

*A Legal Dispute in Mughal Lahore: Qadi Nurullah Shushtari (d. 1610) ’s Critique of the
Later Hanafi Scholars of Transoxiana*

This paper contributes to our understanding of the judicial practices of the Mughal
administration in India during the reign of Emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605), a topic which
is relatively unexplored due to a lack of court records and judges’ rulings. Specifically, it
considers a legal treatise authored by Qadi Nurullah Shushtari (d. 1610) and a judicial
opinion (*fatwa*) he issued as the chief judge of Lahore. Shushtari’s *fatwa* addresses a legal
controversy in Lahore between the majority Hanafi and the minority Shafi’i and Shi’i
population of the capital city regarding the amount of water that a pool in a public
bathhouse must contain to perform a sound ritual bath (*ghusl*). In this article, the problem
as described in Shushtari's *fatwa* is outlined and his response in the treatise is discussed.
As we argue, Shushtari makes such a distinction at the expense of the later Hanafi jurists
to bridge the gap between the contemporary followers of the three schools of law in
Lahore.

- Latifeh Aavani, Harvard University

*From India to Iran: The Narrative of the Shi’i Ulama on Islamic Reformism in the late
19th and early 20th centuries*

In the second half of the 19th century, there had been a shared concern among the Shi’i
jurists about the decline in Muslim societies and the need for reform. For the Shi’i jurists,
an urgent need to reform appeared for the Muslims world in general, and for Qajar Iranian society with all the calamities it faced in particular. The Shi’i Ulama in Iraq path to revival was through establishing the rule of law and creating a constitution with emphasis on limiting the power of the sultan, and the other was reform through modern law as state-craft, which was the outcome of the parliament. This paper will discuss a different approach to reformism form the Shi’i jurists that create a work on Islamic reformism in India based on knowledge and return to pristine Islam and how it influenced major political event in Iran including the constitutional revolution (1905-1911).

- Raihan Ahmed, University of Virginia

Re-Locating 15th Century Indian Sufism in the Global Islamicate: Mahāʾimī's Irāʾ ah al-Daqāʾiq

Recent scholarship on the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī outlines a diverse discursive formation of premodern Islamicate commentators (Ali 2021, Dagli 2016, Morissey 2020). In this context of global intertextuality, this paper examines the Konkan Indian Sufi ʿAlī al-dīn ʿAlī al-Mahāʾimī's Irāʾ at al-Daqāʾiq, a commentary on the Arabic translation of a Persian poem by Mulla Muḥammad Shīrīn Maghribī. Mahāʾimī's recasting of philosophical doctrines on the occasion of Maghribī's text discloses an aspect of his greater project of premodern Sufī internationalism, whereby a scheme of interpretation is imagined as the basis for solidarity among Yemeni, Central Asian, and Indian Sufis, while at the same time providing the narrative context that makes a distinct Indian Sufi identity legible. Commentary and reference to root texts serve to substantiate the authority of the hermeneut's perspective, as Mahāʾimī fashions a Konkanī Sufi synthesis through a bricolage of Arabic texts.

A21-202

Status of People with Disabilities, Racial and Ethnic Minorities, and Women in the Profession Committees

Theme: Lessons from the Pandemic: Creating a “New Normal” for Minoritized Communities

Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Devan Stahl, Baylor University, Presiding

The Covid-19 pandemic was a global disaster. Millions died and millions more will live with long term effects of the disease as well as the effects of prolonged isolation. The pandemic did not affect all communities the same, however. Marginalized populations experienced particular forms of precarity during the pandemic. Panelists in this special topics forum will discuss the ways minoritized communities were affected by the pandemic, what was learned, and lessons from the pandemic that should be carried forward.

Panelists

Nicholas Shrubsole, University of Central Florida
K. Christine Pae, Denison University
This panel explores crisis in the context of Islamic piety, gender, and authority in diverse Muslim environments that are mediated by technology and social media. The papers offer a timely and important exploration of the influence of rightwing political rhetoric on crisis, gender, and authority. More specifically, the panelists investigate the following questions: What are the ways in which non-heteronormative Muslims constitute a crisis for religious authorities? How do non-hegemonic male groups and religious leaders utilize online presence and technology to establish and authenticate their authority to their audiences? How does masculinity play into epistemic and spiritual authority in non-hegemonic male populations? In what ways do online activism, religiosity, and political identity converge amidst changing sites of religious authority. This panel will take these questions as our starting point and approach them from a variety of perspectives, while focusing on gender theory, digital religion, and affect theory as key frameworks.

- Walaa Quisay, University of Birmingham

“Feminizing Modernity: Anglo-American Neo-traditionalism and the Crisis of Muslim Masculinity”

In this paper, I examine the way neo-traditionalist shaykhs evoke a ‘crisis of masculinity’ to elucidate their larger critiques of modernity. These shaykhs – primarily white male converts – have come to represent an emerging trend within Anglo-American Islam that emphasizes the primacy of a notion of ‘tradition’ and sees a moral and political imperative in its resurrection. Their lectures are disseminated virtually and in religious retreats. In this paper I show that their traditionalism is not entirely theological in its scope; rather it represents an antidote to the felt-loss of modernity. As such, their critiques of modernity intersect with a concern for a purported impending ‘civilizational crisis’ in the post-Christian West and a larger crisis in post-traditional societies. I show how they thus construct a dichotomy between masculine tradition rooted in an ethos of chivalry or futuwwa and a feminized modern that represents both chaos and decline. In doing so, they posit that Muslims will have both spiritual and political success in the United States and Europe if they advocate for traditional patriarchy.

- Nicole Correri, Boston University

"Special Men - Qanoners and the the followers of the Infallible Shi'I Imams- exploring parallels in authority construction in non-hegemonic male populations"

This paper explores the ways in which non-hegemonic men redeem their authority and
power in the face of political crisis, defeat, and loss, with parallels drawn between male Trump supporters, specifically Qanoners, and contemporary and historic followers of the Infallible Shi‘i imams. The failure to be dominant may in and of itself constitute a crisis of masculinity in these populations where rhetoric is infused with religiosity and sacredness. These two seemingly disparate groups offer a case study in masculinity construction via digital communities and social media that reveals how specialness operates as a technology of power. This special class of men traffic in affective economies to re-establish their perceived lost status, via an emotionally laden connection and proximity to an observing figurehead. Sara Ahmed says, “In such affective economies, emotions do things, and they align individuals with communities—” (Ahmed, 118). These two case studies demonstrate how non-hegemonic men are linked through the affective economy to a hierarchy of power and their special insider status elevates their previously insignificant status and places them in a position of perceived victory, the really real victory.


- Amirah Fadhlina, Boston University

"Conditions of Possibility, Queering Islam, and the Rise of Trans Activism in Indonesia”

This paper explores different modes of activism and conceptions of authority promoted by two groups of gender nonconforming communities in Central and West Java, Indonesia: (1) third gender waria and Islamic piety (2) transgender youth and digital activism. Understanding the aktivisms of these gender nonconforming communities will help reveal competing visions of Islamic morality and variations in local cosmologies surrounding gender authority in Indonesia. Situating the problem of LGBTQ+ representation in an increasingly restrictive dynamic of religious and gender pluralism in Java, I ask: what linguistic and emotive modes of expressions do gender nonconforming populations use to convey their stance on gender and sexuality? How do these activists respond to popular male Islamic preachers who propagate anti-LGBTQ rhetoric in their digital and local dakwah (preaching)? By investigating these questions, I hope to address broader questions surrounding the paradox of social change in the world’s largest Muslim-majority nation. Using online ethnography to trace the visibility of queer activism and emerging counter-discourses promoted by male Islamic preachers, I argue that the internet has become a vital ground for the proliferation of new discourses on hegemonic masculinity and Islamized anti-LGBTQ moral panic in Indonesia.

- Garrett Kiriakos-Fugate, Boston University

“What then remains of religion?”: Neotraditional Muslim-American Men Preaching against Queer Threats to the Straight Cis-Gendered Path.

I analyze the digital discourses of neotraditional Muslim-American male preachers as they respond to questions about homosexuality and gender non-conformity. After the
Pulse nightclub shooting, these preachers proliferated a homophobic and transphobic discourse on sexual ethics and gender norms through their blogposts, articles, and videos. Preachers such as Ustadh Mobeen Vaid and other men who command religious authority in mainstream Muslim-American spaces online are primarily concerned about the preservation of their own interpretations of Qur’an, hadith, and Sunni jurisprudence. In defending the supposed stable notions of sexual norms and the gender binary, cis-heteronormativity becomes for them, as Juliane Hammer words it, “the linchpin of Islamic morality and sexual ethics” (Hammer, 28). Preachers also lean heavily on their interpretations of Sunni jurisprudence which allows them to simultaneously reject queer identities and uphold the cis-gendered straight Muslim couple as the epitome of Islamic piety. In this paper, my argument is twofold: 1. neotraditional Muslim-American preachers maintain their patriarchal authority by enlisting homophobia and transphobia within the medium of digital space and 2. their queerphobia thrives most in their reliance on essentialist and anachronistic interpretations of Sunni Islamic law.

Responding

Kristian Petersen, Old Dominion University

A21-235
Study of Judaism Unit
Theme: Jewish Thought and Women’s Lives
Monday, 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (In Person)
Andrea Dara Cooper, University of North Carolina, Presiding

In her 2020 article “Hadassah and the Gender of Modern Jewish Thought,” Cara Rock-Singer positions Jessie Sampter, Irma Lindheim, and Nima Adlerblum as modern Jewish messianic thinkers who “theorized Judaism in terms that exceeded the dominant framings set by male religious elites.” These women are unrecognized in the fundamentally gendered framework of modern Jewish thought because their work is rooted in their embodied, affective lives. The papers in this session take up Rock-Singer’s invitation to consider how Jewish women “engaged in metaphysical and epistemic questions about the Jewish people as constituents of social, historical, and biological systems and harnessed the intellectual resources of the Jewish tradition to nurture redemption in the physical, material world.” They consider: Emma Goldman within the context of early twentieth-century Russian Jewish culture; Nima Adlerblum’s critique of philosophical abstraction and focus on lived experience; and Liana Finck’s 2018 graphic novel Passing for Human as mood memoir.

- Marjorie Corbman, Molloy College

    The Seething Sea of Life: Emma Goldman and Russian Jewish Political Thought Between Apocalypse and Mutual Aid

The Russian Jewish, American-based anarchist leader Emma Goldman's thought was shaped by divergent discourses that circulated among the largely Jewish immigrant circles in which she was embedded. Prominent among these strands was the apocalyptic
vision of a new world created through revolutionary violence, reflective of the "millenarian" political culture in turn-of-the-century Russia. This tendency was in tension with Goldman's attraction to a vision of mutual aid based on the beauty of the natural world and in artistic reflection on the human experience. This tension came to a head after Goldman was deported in 1919 and returned to Russia during the Russian Civil War. Witnessing the apocalyptic call for a new world descend into catastrophe both for human communities and the land itself, Goldman renounced her earlier embrace of tactics of revolutionary violence and recommitted to a more modest but ecologically and aesthetically resonant framework of social and spiritual change.

- Sarah Zager, Yale University

*Abstraction and Lived Experience in the Philosophy of Nima Adlerblum (1881-1974)*

This paper explores how the work of Nima Adlerblum both anticipates and helps us further develop some of the key moves in feminist Jewish thought. It argues that Adlerblum’s simultaneous willingness to critique the abstract approach to Jewish philosophy that has characterized its scholarly reception allows her to treat a wider range of lived experiences—including experiences of infertility, rape, and get refusal—than appear in recent feminist scholarship in Jewish thought.

- Jessica Carr, Lafayette College

*Shadows, Secrets, and Sensitivity: Liana Finck’s Passing for Human as Mood Memoir, Biblical Commentary, and Sense of Self*

This paper analyzes the role of the visual in deconstructing and narrativizing gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, and mood “disorder” or being neuro-diverse in Finck’s work. “Mood memoir” responds to the life and positioning of those who are neuro-atypical to generate a new ethos, wherein people who are neuro-non-typical can speak for themselves. Her mother and father become symbols of two different types of histories. Rooting her sense of self in her mother symbolizes seeing her difficulty in retaining her sense of self as part of a long cultural process primarily the product of the place for women, especially Jewish women, in social worlds in Europe and the United States. The memoir asserts that this is the primary narrative through which Leola understands herself, but her father’s Asperger’s second-guesses any clear history of her sense of self as a culturally and socially produced phenomenon without reference to her biological reality.

**Responding**

Cara Rock-Singer, University of Wisconsin

**Business Meeting**

Andrea Dara Cooper, University of North Carolina, Presiding
Shari Rabin, Oberlin College and Conservatory, Presiding
Dreams and dreaming have played important roles in Tibetan Buddhist life for a millennium, at least. This panel looks at dreams in two kinds of Tibetan sources—manuals for dream yoga and autobiographical accounts. The first panelist will offer a typology of sources and consider how each genre treats the phenomena of the dream. The panel then turns to early dream yoga practice texts from the Kagyu and Nyingma schools. The last three panelists will focus on autobiographical sources. The panel will then open into a discussion between the participants and the audience on how these two kinds of sources can be brought into conversation with each other.

- Palden Gyal, Columbia University

*Bringing Light to the Dark Borderlands: Dreams as Missionary Technologies*

Tibetan Buddhists have conceived the borderlands as both wild and savage lands (*mtha’ ’khoṭ yul*) as well as fields of missionary activity. This paper explores the role of prophetic dreams and dream interpretations in the missionary efforts of Tibetan Buddhist lamas in the ‘dark borderlands’ in the 15th century. Examining life-writing, I discuss how dreams were interpreted and deployed as powerful tools of proselytization by the founder of the Geluk tradition, Tsongkhapa, and his disciples. Dreams not only prophesied and recognized the missionary fields (*’dul zhing*) of the first Kirti Lama, Rongchen Gendun Gyaltsen (1374–1450), and Tsakho Ngawang Drakpa (1365–?), but also guided their spiritual activities in the Sino-Tibetan borderlands of Ngawa (*rnga ba*) and Gyarong (*rgyal rong*). I argue that dreams and prophetic visions were deployed in the Buddhist civilizing mission by Tibetan scholars and monks. These ‘early Gelukpas’ laid the foundation of what came to be known as the Geluk tradition in eastern Tibet.

- Jacob Dalton, University of California, Berkeley

*Dream Yoga and the Transformation of Unconscious Fixations in Early Dzogchen*

According to modern psychoanalytic theory, by working with one's dreams, one can discover drives and anxieties latent within the dreamer and bring them into the conscious mind, thus, ideally, weakening their hold. When we turn to Tibetan Buddhist approaches to dreams, and specifically those seen in the earliest writings of the Dzogchen Nyingtik (Rdzogs chen snying thig) tradition, it may be no coincidence that dreams are addressed alongside working with one's unconscious habits (Tib. *bag chags*; Skt. vāsanā). Others have suggested that Buddhism's closest parallel to Freud's unconscious may be the foundation consciousness (Tib. *kun gzhi rnam shes*; Skt. ālayavijñāna), within which the unconscious habits are imprinted. Thus, here too, dreams are treated as manifestations of the unconscious and deployed toward therapeutic ends. How precisely dream practices
are used to affect these therapeutic transformations, and how these ends differ from modern, psychoanalytic goals, is the subject of this talk. Observations on how Nyingtik-based dream yoga practices changed between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries will also be offered.

- Dominique Townsend, Bard College

*Dreamers & Workers: The Fifth Dalai Lama’s Dream & Early Modern Tibetan Labor Relations*

This paper asks whether a dream recounted in a 17th century Tibetan biography (*phyi yi rnam thar*) might have impacted Tibetan labor relations. More broadly, what kinds of work can a dream be made to do? In the 1689 biography of Terdak Lingpa (1646-1714) composed by his brother and collaborator Lochen Dharma? (1654-1717) we find an account of a dream attributed to the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682). Just before the completion of Mindr'ling monastery's main temple in 1676, he dreams of a woman with a purple complexion and a giant black man. They call for the immediate construction of the temple with forceful claims about the benefits the place will bring to Tibetans. Immediately after we hear from the dream figures, the Dalai Lama insists that the workers be treated courteously, generously, and with respect. The framing of the dream suggests Mindr'ling's founders were in some way concerned about labor relations. Moreover, the passage demonstrates that information associated with dreams is marked as special and can therefore do significant rhetorical work. This paper engages multiple interpretations of the passage to explore how dreams work in Tibetan biography.

- Michael Sheehy, University of Virginia

*Dreaming Oneself Awake: Contemplative and Performative Dynamics in Shangpa Dream Yoga Manuals*

Asking, “What do dream yoga practitioners do in their sleep?” – the focus of this paper is contemplative and performative dynamics during Tibetan dream yoga practice. Given the diversity of dream practices described across different Tibetan Buddhist contemplative systems, this paper gives attention to dynamics described in dream yoga instruction manuals in the *Six Dharmas of Niguma*. The third of six dharmas or yogic techniques attributed to the eleventh century Indian Buddhist female adept Niguma, the yoga of dreaming is core to the sequence of practices detailed by Shangpa Kagyü scholars. The focus is six distinct procedures to be performed during dream yoga prescribed by the Tibetan yogin Khyung po rnal ‘byor (1050-1140), progenitor of the Shangpa order. To contextualize these procedures, references are drawn from several Shangpa commentarial instructions that detail the descriptive structure, mechanisms, and operations that comprise dreaming practice. Special effort is made to connect dots across seemingly discordant Tibetan discourses on the experience of dreaming and philosophy of dreaming, particularly across dream yoga instructions and autobiographical writings on dreams.
Kurtis Schaeffer, University of Virginia

_Dreamscape, Divination, Delusion: Making Sense of the Multiple Forms of Dream Literature in Tibet_

If the fact that Tibetan Buddhist literature contains a wealth of material about dreams, the actual scope and content of that material is less well-known. Serinity Young’s 1999 book, _Dreaming in the Lotus_, remains the only work that offers a comprehensive portrayal of dreams. Specific examples of dream theory and practice have been the focus of research, though little has been done to survey the many sources in which such theory and practice are found. A major challenge in this effort is the lack of a typology of discussions of dreams within Tibetan literature, which would entail both a description of the kinds of literature in which one finds dreams, the operative definitions of dreams within these different kinds, and the relationships between characterizations of dream within the multiple kinds of literature. This paper gestures in that direction, paying particular attention to the distinctive character of dreams within particular types of literature, and in particular the dreamscapes that are found predominantly in narrative literature, which sometimes offer robust descriptions of the dream-worlds in which the dreamer acts.

Benjamin Bogin, Skidmore College

_Lotuses Before They Bloom: Yolmo Tenzin Norbu’s Dream Cycle (Mnal Lam Gyi Skor)_

The _Collected Works_ of the Third Yolmo Tulku, Tenzin Norbu (1598’1644) includes a _Dream Cycle (mnal lam gyi skor)_ that shares much in common with secret autobiographies such as those of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Jigme Lingpa. Compared to those works, as suggested by the title, Yolmo Tenzin Norbu's text is more explicitly (though not exclusively) focused on dreams. Within its thirty-nine folios, the author records and interprets his own dreams as well as those of his parents, teachers, companions, and students. Some of the dreams and visions encountered included in the _Dream Cycle_ were later reworked as episodes of Tenzin Norbu's longer autobiography and reading the two together allows us to consider how the author conceived of the difference between a 'dream cycle' and an autobiography. Other dream narratives are followed by an enumerated list of symbols from the dream with one (or more) interpretations offered for each symbol. The _Dream Cycle_ includes a wide variety of literary forms ranging from reports of highly colloquial dream dialogues to ornate formal poetry and spiritual songs. Interstitial notes throughout the text add a further layer of interpretative material.

Responding

Janet Gyatso, Harvard University

Business Meeting
Brandon Dotson, Georgetown University, Presiding
Nicole Willock, Old Dominion University, Presiding

A21-237
World Christianity Unit
Theme: Gender and Social Reconstitution in World Christianity
Monday, 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM (In Person)
Janice McLean-Farrell, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Presiding

This session engages questions of gender and social reconstitution in the context of Christianity in the Global South. The first paper uses the 1941 World Women’s Day of Prayer as a case study in the reconstructing of the transnational mission encounter in Colonial. The second paper unpacks the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and concepts of exceptionalism in the context of U.S. evangelical mission work in Rwanda following the genocide of 1994. The third paper analyzes baptismal naming practices in sixteenth-century Guatemala. The fourth paper explores the leadership model of the pastor of the Discipulos de Jesus congregation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, building upon both bibliographic research on Latin American Pentecostalism and a one-year ethnographic study within this church community. The fifth paper links climate action, gender, and women’s empowerment in an investigation of climate change advocacy and the development of eco-theologies from Pacific Island women, with special attention to Kiribati.

• Sun Yong Lee, Princeton Theological Seminary

Kingdoms in Conflict: The 1941 World Women’s Day of Prayer Case in Colonial Korea

This paper reconstructs the transnational mission encounters in Colonial Korea, using the 1941 World Women’s Day of Prayer Case as a critical point of the complicated power dynamics between Western missionaries and Korean Christians, the colonizers and the colonized, and the world powers of Japan and the US. The WDP case demonstrates that controlling religion, Christianity in particular, was at the center of the colonial project of the Japanese government in Korea. Controlling religion had to be done beyond religion. It involved local church baptism, public affairs, and international politics. And it was within this dynamic, that Korean Christians shaped their understanding of self, God, the kingdom of God, and nation.

• Beck Henriksen, University of North Carolina

Hegemonic Masculinity and the Intertwining of U.S. Missionary Exceptionalism and Rwanda as Model Nation

This paper examines the interconnectedness of hegemonic masculinity and notions of exceptionalism in the context of U.S. evangelical mission work in post-genocide Rwanda. While in one sense site-specific, my project also has more extensive implications for questions about contemporary mission work, gender, and violence. I draw from research on The PEACE Plan, a unique church-state partnership between American megachurch
pastor Rick Warren and Rwandan President Paul Kagame begun in 2004. I begin with a brief outline of The PEACE Plan, with a focus on two iterations of hegemonic masculinity: masculinity as benevolent patriarch and masculinity as benevolent dictator. I then connect these expressions of masculinity to notions of ego and nationalist exceptionalism arguing that these dual benevolent hegemonic masculinities help construct The PEACE Plan as a contemporary site for both U.S. exceptionalism and Rwanda as a model nation.

- Mallory Matsumoto, University of Texas

*Baptismal Naming and (Re-)Building Indigenous Community in Early Colonial Guatemala*

This paper examines baptismal naming in sixteenth-century Guatemala in the context of indigenous adaptation to the sociopolitical upheavals of Spanish-led invasion, forced resettlement, and the imposition of Catholicism. As part of baptism, the first major Catholic institution that missionaries implemented in the Spanish Americas, indigenous aptizes received a new, European name. Distribution of baptismal names in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Santiago Atitlán, a predominantly Tz’utujil Maya community in highland Guatemala, suggest that christening marked a break with pre-colonial indigenous onomastics. Instead of continuing the indigenous tradition of naming children according to their birthdate, Maya adults in the Santiago Atitlán area developed new onomastic strategies that simultaneously located their children in the colonial administrative sphere and reconstituted local social networks in the wake of colonial disruptions. Baptismal naming provided an important tool in (re)constructing indigenous community through an elaborate system of spiritual kinship that remains vibrant into the present.

- Philip Wingeier-Rayo, Wesley Theological Seminary

*Migrant, Model and Minister: Leadership in a Pentecostal Church in Cuernavaca, Mexico*

This paper builds upon both bibliographic research on Latin American Pentecostalism and a one-year ethnographic study of the *Discipulos de Jesus* congregation in Cuernavaca, Mexico to study the leadership model of the pastor. The study includes interviews with the pastor and leaders, as well as a congregational survey. The hypothesis is that the Rev. Montero’s humble beginnings from the same rural state of Guerrero and blue-collar roots allow the congregants to identify with his plight and want to replicate his success as a migrant who has assimilated into a middle-class lifestyle in a modern cosmopolitan city like Cuernavaca. The pastor is a fellow migrant, role model and minister in a community of migrants who can relate to his story. The pastor’s charisma gives the community hope and casts a vision for a better tomorrow.

- Gina Zurlo, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Putting the Pacific Islands on the Map: Gender, Climate, and Christianity

Like most other Pacific Island nations, Kiribati is often left off the map (literally) of World Christianity discussions because of its small population size and remote location. With the country only six feet above sea level, islanders are concerned about rising sea levels and climate change, which impact the most vulnerable in society. Women, who make up the majority of the world’s poor, bear a greater burden of the impacts of environmental challenges. They have less access than men to decision-making processes, which compounds the inequalities and prevents them from full participation in climate-related planning, policy making, and implementation. This paper directly connects climate action, gender, and women’s empowerment by investigating climate change advocacy and the development of eco-theologies from Pacific Island women. In doing so, this paper calls for greater awareness and urgency among World Christianity scholars to heed Pacific Islanders’ contributions pertaining to environmental and gender justice.

Business Meeting

Briana Wong, Wake Forest University, Presiding
Janice McLean-Farrell, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Presiding

A21-240
Tours
Tours
Theme: Sacred Sites Tour
Monday, 1:00 PM-5:00 PM (In Person)
David Bains, Samford University, Presiding
Daniel Sack, Washington, DC, Presiding

A mile high and just east of the Rocky Mountains, Denver grew from a mining town into a hub of the American west. It drew Chinese and European immigrants, African Americans, and the Ku Klux Klan. Our tour will visit sites reflecting this history of cultural change and reinvention. We will aim to go to Denver Community Church, which worships in a former synagogue, the International Church of Cannabis, and the former Bethany Lutheran Church, which was decolonized to become the home of the Four Winds American Indian Council. Transportation will be by bus.
Cost: $40

A21-300
Professional Development
Academic Relations Committee
Theme: Decolonizing the Study of Religion: Debates and Practical Strategies
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Peter Valdina, Albion College, Presiding

In recent years there have been calls to decolonize a number of disciplines whose histories date to Europe’s imperial age and its preoccupation with creating knowledge about its various
colonic Others religion—the study of being among them. But what do we mean by “decolonization” and how might one accomplish this in a classroom? Is it only related to how we today understand the origins of the field or is it also linked to how the field is practiced today? And what resources are there for those wanting to lean more? This workshop session provides an opportunity to learn more about the impact of colonialism on the study of religion, the issues and debates around decolonization, as well as how this initiative can have practical impact in religious studies classes, undergraduate and graduate degree programs, along with departments.

Panelists

Natalie Avalos, University of Colorado
Richard Newton, University of Alabama

A21-302
African Diaspora Religions Unit
Theme: Making a Way Outta No Way: Celebrating Rachel E. Harding’s Scholarship and Activism
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Tracey Hucks, Colgate University, Presiding

It is an essential and necessary time to herald a touchstone and emancipatory reference for today’s threats to Black identity, the sanctity of the Black body, and the essential need for care work, community development, and activism in and outside of the academy for ourselves and our communities. This reflective panel of activists and scholars thus celebrates Dr. Rachel E. Harding’s to encourage us to identify, advocate and champion “alternative spaces” that guide Black and Brown folks today and create new forms of scholarship to support radical change in African Diaspora religious communities at large. The panel will engage with her activism and scholarship through her two books, A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness, Remnants: A Memoir of Spirit, Activism and Mothering, as well as the Veterans of Hope Project, [https://www.veteransofhope.org/](https://www.veteransofhope.org/).

Panelists

Dianne Stewart, Emory University
Emilie M. Townes, Vanderbilt University
Melanie L. Harris, Texas Christian University
James Manigault-Bryant, Williams College
LeRhonda Manigault-Bryant, Williams College
Marcia Minter, Indigo Arts Alliance
Daniel Minter, Indigo Arts Alliance

A21-303
Arts, Literature, and Religion Unit
Theme: Dance and Religious Dynamics
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Cia Sautter, University of Saint Thomas, Minnesota, Presiding
The relationship between dance, religion, and ritual is profound throughout the world, whether specifically religious or tangential spiritual expression of grief, joy, lament and hope. The papers in this panel discuss dance in various religious and ritual contexts emphasizing the agency of embodied expressions of faith. Dirty Dancing: Whirling for Joy in Ancient Israel examines dance in the Hebrew Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud, as a critical ritualized activity and an expression of joy. Reading the Ring Shout: Expanding Embodied Discourse examines the Ring Shout, a West African circle dance and African retention in the Americas, and discusses the work of liberation in the era of chattel slavery in the United States from Black Womanist and Feminist perspectives, and Creating affects while dancing: Insights into the aesthetics of Hawaiian hula dancers demonstrates how dancing in this context is associated to Native Hawaiian Kumu hula religious ritual music and singing.

- Ilona Rashkow, State University of New York, Stony Brook

**Dirty Dancing: Whirling for Joy in Ancient Israel**

In the Hebrew Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud, dance is referred to in various contexts as an important ritualized activity and as an expression of joy. Dancing is mentioned in connection with celebrations of military victories and in rituals such as the golden calf dance and the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem. Archaeological artifacts have been found which provide graphic evidence of the importance of dancing. For example, a number of cylinder seals from the second millennium BCE show lines of dancers standing with their hands on one another’s shoulders and figures on a late Bronze Age cylinder seal from Lachish have been interpreted as participants in a ritual or battle dance.

This paper explores dancing in conjunction with the celebrations of military victories, and the power of music inspiring dancing in ecstasy and their roles as inherent parts as religious ritual in Ancient Israel.

- Deborah Rogers, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School

**Reading the Ring Shout: Expanding Embodied Discourse**

This paper examines the Ring Shout, a West African circle dance and African retention in the Americas, and asks the following: How did dance animate the work of liberation in the era of chattel slavery in the United States? Using Womanist and Black feminist thought, how does the Ring Shout amplify our understanding of bodies, Spirit and agency for the work of liberation today? How might an expanded notion of literacy enable a reading of dance in general and the Ring Shout in particular, contribute to the work of liberation? In order to address these inquiries, this paper will 1) investigate the Ring Shout as an extension of embodied discourse; 2) use the Womanist priority of multi-generational exchange to identify what we might learn from the Ring Shout as embodied discourse; and 3) begin to explore next steps for robust praxis in relation to dance as
embodied discourse today.

- Lina Aschenbrenner, University of Erfurt

*Creating affects while dancing: Insights into the aesthetics of Hawaiian hula dance practiced by non-Hawaiians*

In the 21st century, parallel to hula regaining sociopolitical relevance as a practice of a colonized Hawaii, Hawaiian hula dance has been established as a global phenomenon. The non-Hawaiian hula dancers are affiliated with Native Hawaiian kumu hula, from whom they learn the movements, music, singing, and the accompanying (religious) rituals. Practicing hula places the international dancers in a network of aesthetics, in which different affects arise—affects understood as bodily states connected to emotional experiences. This paper aims to show how, in the context of hula practice, participants become involved in and experience emotions such as joy, excitement, positive feelings, and happiness, but also boredom, tiredness, and sadness. It traces how these affects arise through active participation and the enactment of hula—movement, music, singing, and other rituals, as well as through the cultural and social situatedness and environment of the participants, the practice, and the Hawaiian kumu hula.

A21-304
**Augustine and Augustinianisms Unit and Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit**

Theme: *Origen and Augustine in Conversation*

Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Erin Walsh, University of Chicago, Presiding

This session brings the influential early Christian giants, Origen and Augustine, into conversation in an effort to identify and set aside outmoded, polemically inflected, contrasts between the Greek East and the Latin West. Papers explore a variety of topics including Augustine’s evolving perspective on Origen and Origenism, Augustine and Origen’s respective methods, biblical interpretation, and social contexts, with special attention to their respective theological and philosophical orientations regarding grace and forgiveness.

- Alexander Pierce, University of Notre Dame

*Origen(ism) in the Early Pelagian Controversy (411/2–ca. 415)*

In this essay, I compare the reception of Origen(ism) in the theological perspectives of Pelagius, Jerome, and Augustine, arguing that the writings of these theologians embattled in the early years of the Pelagian Controversy exhibit varying degrees of familiarity with, and appreciation for, Origen(ism). The theodicy of Origen(ism) from which all three authors depart was evocative enough to serve as a crucial source for their competing defenses of divine justice. First, I describe the variance in how Origen(ism) was construed by the likes of Jerome, Rufinus of Aquileia, the young Augustine, and Rufinus the Syrian. The common thread here is the legacy of Origen’s speculative theodicy, the extent of its defensibility, and the void generated by its rejection. Second, I analyze the
alternative formulations of Pelagius, Jerome, and Augustine, attending to precisely how they each respond to the Origen(ism) with which they are familiar.

- Christopher Mooney, University of Notre Dame

*Teaching Forgiveness: Paradigms of Grace and Debt in Origen and Augustine’s Thinking on Human Forgiveness*

Classical historians have recently noted the prevalence of vengeance, the scarcity of apology, and the philosophical resistance to forgiveness in the ancient Greek and Roman world. “Forgive nothing!” was the advice attributed to Cato. Early Christian preachers not only followed the Gospels in making interpersonal forgiveness obligatory for all Christians, but their justification of interpersonal forgiveness served as miniature reflections of their theologies of divine grace, justice, and the Christian economy of salvation. This paper argues that Origen and Augustine both used economic metaphors to present interpersonal forgiveness as part of a distinct economy of remission and grace, as opposed to one of debt and vengeance. Forgiving one another is an invitation into a gratuitous approach to all interpersonal relationships. At the same time, Origen and Augustine’s treatments of interpersonal forgiveness—especially regarding the forgiveness of the impenitent—reflect their distinct understandings of the order of grace and justice.

- Charles Rivera, Yale University

*Two Graces: John 1:16 in Origen and Augustine*

Origen and Augustine's contrasting readings of John 1:16 (“Of [God’s] fulness we have all received, and grace for grace”) reveal differences in their respective theologies of grace. Instead of falling neatly along the classic Augustinian/Pelagian divide, these ancient authors diverge more fundamentally on the meaning of "grace" as a theological term. Augustine takes grace in a broad sense as divine gift or blessing in general, while Origen takes grace as a term for the gifts of the Spirit.

**Responding**

Elizabeth Ann Dively Lauro, Independent Scholar
Elizabeth Klein, Augustine Institute

**A21-305**

**Buddhist Philosophy Unit**

Theme: Collective Karma in Buddhist Philosophy and Lived Religion
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Gareth Fisher, Syracuse University, Presiding

The phrase “instant karma” identifies bad luck as quick retribution for an unsavory deed. However, this implies that karma is an individual affair. Yet in Buddhist communities around the
world we also witness “lived karma”: community-based approaches to karma in which daily interactions create consequences for extended networks of family, bystanders, ancestors, posterity, animals, and nonhumans. Understandings of collective karma have informed concepts of race, gender, sexuality, power, and temporality across cultures. What’s more, we find Buddhist philosophical texts that treat persons, action, worlds of experience and emptiness in ways that conduce to understanding karma as primarily collective. Yet given the colonial legacies of religious studies, these diverse approaches to karma are primarily analyzed through a myopic lens of individual karma. This roundtable invites five scholars to share research that expands both the stories we tell about lived karma and our understanding of the philosophy of collective karma.

**Panelists**

Joy Brennan, Kenyon College  
Jessica Zu, University of Southern California  
Timothy Loftus, Temple University  
Sara Swenson, Syracuse University  
Susanne Kerekes, Skidmore College

**A21-306**  
**Catholic Studies Unit and Religion and Politics Unit**  
**Theme:** Religion and Democracy  
**Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)**

Terrence Johnson, Georgetown University, Presiding

Presenting a broad spectrum of case studies, this session will explore the intersection of religion and democracy from a variety of angles. The first paper examines the work of the Catholic Church in a variety of African states as a window into the Church's position on democracy and peace. The second presents a study of politically diverse "Purple Churches" and the methods they use to unite and engage members across political divides. The third examines the potential for liberalism and democracy in Orthodox Christianity and the fourth presents the January 6 insurrection as a bellweather of the increased appeal of autocracy in the contemporary United States.

- Elizabeth Sperber, University of Denver  
  Paige Wietzel, University of Denver

*Catholicism and (the ongoing) Struggle for Democracy in Africa: Presenting a New Archive of Church Documents and Qualitative Analysis*

This paper makes two main contributions. First, it introduces a new archive of Pastoral Letters issued by Catholic Churches across thirty African states from 1960-present. Pastoral letters are public statements issued jointly by bishops to address issues of societal and moral importance. When, where, and why they are issued is up to national church leaders. The archive also includes original interviews with Catholic Bishops from six African countries to contextualize the role of Pastoral Letters. Second, we
demonstrate one way in which this archive can be harnessed to advance research on global Catholicism. Specifically, we present a historical comparative and textual analysis of all Catholic pastoral letters issued in Zambia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe (all formerly part of British colonial Rhodesia), which sheds new light on (1) the audiences addressed in Pastoral Letters over time and (2) the theological references included to justify Church positions on democracy and peace.

- Elizabeth Gish, Kettering Foundation
  Sarah Taylor Peck, Community Christian Church, North Canton, Ohio

*Purple Churches and Democratic Hope*

This study discusses "purple churches" (i.e. politically diverse churches) in the U.S. and how their use of democratic and deliberative practices shapes their ability to work together within the church, but also shapes how congregants view politics more generally, how they view others that they disagree with, and, significantly, how they deal with people they disagree with in day-to-day life. Drawing from a two year study that draws from interviews, observation of deliberative forums, and survey data, we conclude that the use of deliberative and democratic practices in religious contexts provides one promising path to begin to address the serious democratic crisis that the world is facing. Our study highlights that finding common ground across difference is not as challenging as leaders often predict, and that there appears to be at least a somewhat enduring residual effect of such deliberation on the broader political habits and dispositions of participants.

- Paul Ladouceur, University of Toronto

*Orthodox Critiques and Affirmations of Liberalism and Democracy*

Orthodox Christianity would not appear to offer much to support liberalism and democracy. Putin’s Russia, supported by the Russian Orthodox Church, is the most ferocious opponent of liberalism and democracy, at home and abroad. But the Orthodox tradition contains powerful liberal strains. The Byzantine *symphonia* political theory contained the liberal notion of autonomous spheres in society (church and state). Other liberal strands occur in the democratic regimes of Bulgaria, Greece and Romania in the inter-war period, and after WW II (Greece) and since 1990 (Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine). There is a powerful liberal strand in contemporary Orthodox thought. This paper focuses on the liberal and democratic social, political and legal philosophies and theologies of the Russian religious renaissance (late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries), in Vladimir Soloviev, Boris Chicherin, Sergius Bulgakov and Nicolas Berdyaev. Their thinking, especially the supreme value of the human person, provides a powerful underpinning for Orthodox liberalism.

- Jeffrey Meyers, DePaul University

*Theology Defending Democracy: Lessons From Around the World*
A significant portion of the U.S. electorate appears to prefer autocracy over democracy—as long as they are the ones in power. The January 6, 2021 insurrection at the capital is only the most prominent result so far of this mentality, which continues to pose a significant threat to the United States’ democratic structures. Right-wing Christianity drives much of this impulse to seek power by any means necessary, whether it is driven by Christian Nationalism, anxieties over threats to white supremacy, or the deification of certain social issues so that they overshadow and overrule all other values and principles. Given that Christianity is a significant part of the problem, it stands to reason that Christian theology might be an avenue to challenge these ideologies. Drawing on theologians from other troubled democracies around the world, this paper proposes specific avenues by which Christian theology can support and strengthen democracy.

A21-307
Childhood Studies and Religion Unit
Theme: Horror, Hope, and Holiness: Representing Childhood and Religion in Media
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Sally Stamper, Capital University, Presiding

How are children's religious identities represented in media? How (if at all) can we separate religious from racial and ethnic identities in these depictions? This session brings together diverse approaches to the representation of childhood and religion, drawing on a range of media contexts and theoretical frameworks in order to explore images and implications for childhood religiosity.

- Verena Eberhardt, University of Munich

  *Children as Bearers of Hope for a Future Society. Religious Diversity in Media for Children*

  The presentation focuses on the interface between concepts of childhood, media for children and ideas of knowledge about religion: How are religions and religious diversity represented in children’s media? What does knowledge about religion even mean? And what ideas of childhood do children’s media suggest? The working hypothesis is that media explicitly produced for children express images of society and are characterised by imaginations of ideals of living together. At the same time, children’s media reflect imaginations of children and childhood consciously and unintentionally. The paper contributes to the Study of Childhood in the field of religion by analysing how young people are conceived in German-language media, what is expected from them and how knowledge about religion should be conveyed to children. It states the importance of literature and (audio-)visual productions in the mediation of knowledge, self-concepts, interpersonal perceptions and normative paradigms.

- James Hill, Northwestern University

  *The Pained Blackwitness of Little Michael Jackson*
Building upon Saidiya Hartman’s conceptualization of the “pained [Black] Body,” this paper examines how current conversations concerning Michael Jackson’s cultural productions, public performance, and alleged transgressions against children cannot be analyzed apart from Jackson’s own harrowing account of antiblack adolescent violence. Through a critical rereading of Jackson’s own preternatural rise to fame as the lead singer of the Jackson 5, this paper posits that the hypervisibility of Black boys in the United States of America is ironically coterminous to haunting illegibility of what can be conceptualized as “Black-boy-horror.”

- Kishundra King, Vanderbilt University

*Being Womanish: Revisiting and Reimagining Black Girlhood*

In Alice Walker’s four-part definition of “Womanist,” Walker explains that the term “Womanist” emerged from the Black traditional phrase “Womanish,” often used to describe a Black girl who is “outrageous, audacious, courageous, or [enacting] willful behavior.” As noted in Walker’s definition, “Womanish” can be perceived negatively, as it is synonymous with “you trying to be grown,” which is not always favorable, and, colloquially, it can be understood as a badge of honor. In this paper presentation, I explore the many ways that Black girls navigate (and have navigated) the complicated, and often contradictory, tasks of being Womanish through the lens of media and literature. I ultimately argue that the practice of being Womanish invites a reimagining of embodied theology.

**A21-308**

**Chinese Religions Unit**

Theme: **Feminism and Beyond in Chinese Religions**

Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)

Mayfair Yang, University of California, Santa Barbara, Presiding

Following the #MeToo movement and other feminist and gender activisms, we notice a tendency that attributes gender-based direct or structural violence in Asia to Asian religions and cultural traditions, such as Confucianism or Islam, as the source of traditionalism and patriarchy. Focusing on Sinophone societies, this panel highlights the nuances beyond East versus West, religious versus secular, modern versus traditional binaries by contextualizing the evolving dynamics and transformations of “Chinese religions” in the cultural and sociopolitical developments of the Sinosphere and beyond. Rather than resorting to Chinese religions per se to explain misogyny, conservatism, and violence, we investigate how powers and establishments have appropriated and reinvented Chinese religions to embed their hegemonies at different historical moments over time, and how activisms have emerged, evolved, and reinvented Chinese religions in turn. We are, in short, arguing against two forms of essentialization: the state’s reinvention and the orientalist imagination of Chinese religions.

- Ting Guo, University of Toronto
#MeToo beyond Confucianism: Gender Activism against the Reinvention of Traditions

This paper examines how different regimes and establishments have appropriated Confucianism in modern China and focuses on the politicization of Confucianism in China today in particular. In doing so, this paper argues against a simple reductionist explanation to gender-based violence and patriarchy in contemporary Sinosphere, that is, Confucianism per se, and points out a more complex picture where Confucianism is constantly reinvented by the state and male elites to install a patriarchal version of modernity, establish parental governance, and legitimize familial nationalism and patriarchal-authoritarianism, with implications for East Asia more broadly. It will also show the interactive nature of such politicized evolution of Confucianism as the state is often complicit as well as responsible for structural violence and populist chauvinism. This paper will further provide an example of feminist activism in China today under a queering framework against the official reinvention of Confucian heteropatriarchy.

- Chengpang Lee, University of Chicago

*Building an Alternative Religious Order: Revisiting the Role of Venerable Xiudao in the Creation of Tzu-Chi, 1958-1963*

This paper discusses Taiwan-based Tzu-Chi 慈濟 nunnery, recognized as one of the largest and most influential transnational Buddhist NGOs and the model of Chinese reformed humanistic Buddhism 人間佛教 from a gender perspective that has been surprisingly insubstantial. The current narrative of the career of Cheng Yen 證嚴 (1937–), the founder of Tzu-Chi, emphasizes her encounter with Chinese monk Ying Shun 印順 (1906–2005) who moved to Taiwan after the Chinese civil war, but not her own identity as a woman in the context of a changing Taiwan. This paper offers an alternative interpretation to this taken-for-granted image by looking into the role of Xiudao 修道 (1920-2016), a Japanese-trained nun in the making of Cheng Yen’s new religious order. The paper further contextualizes their search for an ideal Buddhist organization within Taiwan's broader social and political changes in the twentieth century.

- Zhange Ni, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

*Correlative Cosmology, Dividual Subjectivity, and Women’s Fantasy-Romance in Contemporary China*

This paper studies contemporary fantasy novels produced and consumed by Chinese women. These novels are simultaneously romance novels adopting nonrealistic settings. While fantasy is committed to building otherworlds outside the confines of post-Enlightenment rationality, romance is preoccupied with enacting women’s experiences not always conforming to established norms. More specifically, Chinese fantasy reimagines the cosmological and anthropological assumptions shared across the boundaries of Chinese religions. Chinese romance is not limited to stories that help to promote and naturalize gender stereotypes and heteronormative relationships. Analyzing
two exemplary novels—Jiejian 借剑 (Borrow the Sword, 2020-2021) by Yujing pengxiang 御井烹香 and Liuli meiren sha 琉璃美人煞 (Lapis Lazuli, Beauty, and the Monster, 2008) by Shisilang 十四郎 — I demonstrate how women’s fantasy-romance draws on China’s correlative cosmology and models of the self as relational and partible to build queer utopias and enact nonnormative subjectivities.

- Jing Wang, University of Pennsylvania

*Against Han Patriarchy: Sinophone Muslim Women’s Lineage in Modern China*

While China has a long tradition of “Han Chinese patriarchy” defined by the patrilineal Confucian order, scholars have become increasingly aware of the unique heritage defined by women among ethnic and religious minorities in China. Following this alternative historical genealogy, I trace on the lives and works of three Sinophone Muslim women—Ma Ruye 马汝邺 (1890s-1930s), Liu Manqing 刘曼卿 (1906-1941), and Yan Ying 炎樱 or 法蒂玛·摩西甸 (1920-1997). By highlighting their transnational experiences and/or inter-racial/ethnic backgrounds, I argue it is crucial to situate the lineage of Sinophone Muslim women beyond the Chinese state’s contemporary ethnic and religious discourses that tend to rigidly confine the identity of Sinophone Muslims into the officially-defined categories. Second, I highlight the complex relationship between nationalist and feminist movements in modern China through Sinophone Muslim women’s active role in early twentieth century.

A21-332
Full Papers Available
New Program Unit
Foucault and the Study of Religion Seminar
Theme: Heterogeneity, Racialization, Religion in Late Foucault
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Niki Clements, Rice University, Presiding

This panel engages the challenge of the long and complex history of “race,” constructions of “otherness,” Christian constructions of “flesh,” and related themes within and beyond Foucault, as they intersect with and challenge our idea of “religion.” How do the “otherness” and “difference” which strictly define the “hetero-” of Foucault’s notion of “heterotopia” draw and redraw the lines between the “religious” and “secular”? How do the themes of the care of the self, practices of confession, and the themes of the “flesh” challenge racial, gendered, and religious subjectivity as stable categories? How do figures like Sojourner Truth, the paradigmatic parrhesiast of the 19th-century United States, push Foucault’s notions of the “true life” far beyond the borders of Foucault’s late treatments of these themes?

- Daniel Schultz, Whitman College

*Foucault, Religion, and Racialization*
This paper builds on Sylvia Wynter's work in exploring the promise and limitations of Foucault's thought for analyzing the historical entanglements of religious discourse with practices of racialization. If Wynter's work focuses on Foucault's writing from the late 60s, my paper attempts to extend this analysis to Foucault's work from the mid-70s. This paper reconsiders Michel Foucault's conceptualization of race and religion in conversation with three of his lecture courses from the mid 1970s — Abnormal (1974-75), Society Must Be Defended (1975-76), and Security, Territory, Population (1977-78). It examines underexplored linkages between Foucault's analysis of norms, war, race, religion, and governmentality. The connection between war and governance shows how logics of racial differentiation and religious differentiation often overlap; indeed, at certain historical junctures they are isomorphic. The paper concludes by considering these insights in relation the tensions they generate with broader developments in contemporary critical race theory (Afropessimism in particular).

- Jonathan Thumas, Harvard University

*Hermitage and Heterotopia: Foucault and Japanese Buddhist History*

Foucault’s heterotopia has been a major concept for interpreting sacred space in the study of Japanese Buddhism. This paper argues that the popularity of Foucault’s concept derives from its relationship with dominant approaches to Buddhism as a religious tradition. It intersected with and emboldened a new approach to Buddhism in terms of its interaction with local religions as it moved across East Asia. After an giving an overview of Foucault’s heterotopia, I then discuss its legacy in the study of Japanese Buddhism and intersections with dominant paradigms. I then provide an example of my own research which demonstrates how Foucault’s concept can continue to raise questions beyond Buddhism and local traditions. Examining how historians of Japanese Buddhism have engaged with Foucault’s heterotopia demonstrates the impact of Foucault’s thought on approaches to Buddhism as a “religion” and “tradition.” It also raises questions about how religious studies subfields engage with “outside” theory.

- David Maldonado Rivera, Kenyon College

*The Human Race Could Not Be Held Together: Foucault and the Histories of Premodern Race Making*

Engaging Clement & Les Aveux de la Chair, Early Christian ethnic argument as confession, recent trends in Premodern Race Historiographies, engaging Rey Chow’s assertion regarding how Focault “writes about race as an epistemic fault line that erupts alongside major historical transitions.” (A Face Drawn in the Sand, 101)

- Brandy Daniels, University of Portland

*“Foucault, Religion, and the Politics of Identity (or, how not to be a Christian?)”*

Interrogating how the embrace of gender and sexual fluidity has functioned in
contemporary Christian feminist theology (embraced, but in relation to, and in service to, a kind of stability of religious/spiritual identity), this essay draws on the desubjectivizing thrust of formation within Foucault’s ethics of the care of the self as a resource to challenge religious subjectivity as a stable and teleological category, and considers, through a Foucauldian register, a theological notion of sanctification as an (ongoing) project of desubjectivation.

- Biko Mandela Gray, Syracuse University

Sojourner Truth, Parrhesia, and Critical Praxis

Business Meeting

Daniel Wyche, University of Chicago, Presiding

A21-309
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
History of Christianity Unit
Theme: Teaching Angry Christians
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Minji Lee, Reunion Institute, Presiding

This roundtable discusses teaching and pedagogical approaches to teaching Christianity in the current political situation in the United States. We witness how Christianity, or more specifically White Evangelical Christianity, fuels a rise of acrimony among the US political issues of race, gender, public health, and sources of information. In the pandemic era, we see all the discourses and actions from the specter of white Christian nationalism, anti-mask and anti-vaccine stances, and the links between conspiracy theories and religious belief. It is challenging to our society, and the current situation also challenges us in teaching the history of Christianity in our classroom. In this roundtable, each panelist presents their ways of teaching Christianity from different perspectives and contexts: Early Christianity, Pentecostal studies, Martyrdom, Genocide, Holocaust, Nationalism, Afterlife, Alternative Truth, and Apocalypse, which are connected to what is happening to the USA. At the same time, Christianity and the current Christian picture in the USA also raise important questions on how to teach the history of religions in the world of political/emotional/demographic changes.

Panelists

Mark Clatterbuck, Montclair State University
Kate E. Temoney, Montclair State University
John Soboslai, Montclair State University
Samuel Perry, University of Chicago
Mia Bloom, Georgia State University

A21-310
Indian and Chinese Religions Compared Unit
In recent years, scholars have delineated how humans in general and religious communities in particular shape each others' minds and the world they perceive to achieve their desired goals. This panel will feature three domains by which pre-Modern Asian Buddhists constructed a shared world through art, ritual, and meditative practices. Panelists will discuss how Tiantai founder Zhiyi integrated Chinese breathing and healing techniques into Indian meditative practices to create a new schema that will make sense to local practitioners; how the consecration ritual (abhiṣeka) in the *Qizil Yoga Manual* transforms the practitioner's body’s into the joyous embodiment of the state of *dhyāna*; and finally, how Buddhists in the Tang Dynasty used limestone Buddha statues to bring into existence the primordial Buddha Vairocana within the setting of the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*.

- **Pinyan Zhu, Kent State University**


This project examines three unusual freestanding stone statues of bejeweled and crowned Buddha at the Longmen Grottoes, where 2,345 cave-shrines were carved into the limestone cliffs from the fifth to the tenth centuries in central China. While previous research focuses on the transmission of this iconography from India and Central Asia to East Asia, I investigate its perception among the visitors to Longmen. I argue that medieval Buddhists in Tang China (618–907) experienced the jeweled statues as the contemporary icon of Buddha Vairocana; as an integral part of the landscape, these statues brought the spatial-temporal construct of the *Flower Garland Sutra* into the present time and the tangible space of the Longmen Grottoes. This research contributes an original interpretation on the transmission of Indian and Central Asian Buddhist visual culture in medieval China and proposes new evidence for the art of Huayan Buddhism.

- **Dixuan Yujing Chen, Grinnell College**

*Creating a Healing Meditation: Transformation and Acculturation of Buddhism in China*

This paper examines how Chinese indigenous medical and restorative breathing skills were assimilated into Indian Buddhist meditation, which created a new form of healing meditation in sixth-century China. A particular focus will be given to a scholar-monk Zhiyi (538–597), a representative thinker in the Tiantai tradition of Buddhism in China. The paper analyzes how the renowned Buddhist monk redirected meditation to restore health by changing and reshaping Chinese concepts of body and energy, which subsequently consolidated the status of Buddhism in China. This syncretism generated a notable impact on Chinese meditative techniques and healing exercises. Most significantly, this study illustrates the blurring boundaries of breathing skills among different traditions. It argues that the intercultural exchange restructured the framework.
of meditation by transcending the traditional categories of “Chinese” or “Indian” connotations.

- Athanaric Huard, École Pratique des Hautes Études

*The ritual consecration (abhiṣeka) of the yogin in the "Qizil Yoga Manual"

This contribution investigates the motif of the ritual consecration (*abhiṣeka*) of the yogin in the "Qizil Yoga Manual". This treatise is important for the history of Buddhist meditation because it presents a completely new type of meditative process. Here the traditional content of the exercises is replaced by sequences of esoteric images, whose meaning is not immediately clear. The present contribution is an attempt to elucidate one of these images, the consecration of the yogin (*abhiṣeka*) by streams filling his body. It argues that this motif symbolizes the joy filling the yogin’s body when he enters dhyāna, according to the Abhidharmic scheme of the "pure liberation" (*śubha-vimokṣa*). This point is crucial, for it gives us one of the doctrinal foundations of the Qizil Manual and invites us to reconsider the history of this type of meditation.

Business Meeting

Karen O'Brien-Kop, University of Roehampton, Presiding
Eyal Aviv, George Washington University, Presiding

A21-311
International Development and Religion Unit
Theme: Decolonization, Development & Faith: A Dialogue with Local Practitioners
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Marie Stettler Kleine, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Presiding

Faith actors are interwoven into movements for and against decolonization of development - they are perpetrators, allies, and activists. What are the opportunities and challenges of working with faith actors on decolonizing development? What does that mean for our work—as both development practitioners and religious scholars? Do scholars have any recommendations for practitioners and policymakers? Do practitioners have reality checks for religious scholars? This Roundtable facilitates a dialogue between scholars from the AAR International Development & Religion Unit and practitioners from the Posner Center for International Development in Denver, to discuss how scholarship and practice can inform each other at the nexus of decolonization, development, and faith.

Panelists

Jill DeTemple, Southern Methodist University
The Lesbian-Feminisms and Religion Unit and the Interreligious Studies and Interfaith Studies Unit invite papers or panel proposals that explore intersections of gender, sexuality, and interreligious methodologies. Both units consistently engage the confluences of identity and boundaries in a diverse, pluralistic world. The boundaries of religious traditions and the contours of sexual identities shape the ways we construct similarity and difference. These constructions, in turn, shape cultural and religious norms that discipline how we relate to ourselves and others.

- Rachel A. Heath, Vanderbilt University

_Beyond Boundaries? Intimacy, Desire, and the Possibility of Consent in Interfaith Relations_

The call for interfaith dialogue and collaboration remains a consistent ethical value, especially in Western liberal contexts that emphasize pluralism, inclusion, and social unity and cohesion. Contemporary spiritual leaders and scholars of religion are increasingly emphasizing the potential for religious boundaries to soften and open, which is imagined as a positive step in interreligious relations, and perhaps for the future of human-centric religious practices and traditions in general. Often, this blurring of boundaries is imagined as creating moments of intimacy and even desire between traditions and/or practitioners. This paper will argue that a feminist and queer analysis of intimacy, desire, and boundaries might yield different ethical practices that emphasize, rather than understate, the importance of boundaries in interfaith relations. Specifically, I will argue that metaphors of intimacy should be accompanied by parallel discussions of consent to intimacy.

- Russell CD Arnold, Regis University
  Alyse Knorr, Regis University

_QUEERING INTERFAITH_

The boundaries of our identities have historically been maintained through the use of prescriptive labels. Recently, queer linguistics has liberated our gender and sexual identities from these limitations. Scholars in the field of religious studies, and our society more generally, need a more coherent framework for describing the realities of religious, spiritual, and secular (RSS) identities today and a means to offer each of us liberation from the colonizing, restrictive, straightening “world-religions paradigm” that we have inherited.

In this paper, two colleagues, an interfaith studies scholar and a lesbian-feminist poet,
both with complex religious identities, explore the ways queer linguistics and self-labeling practices offer a necessary intervention to interfaith studies. Our conversation engages our personal experiences, deepening our understanding of our whole, complex, integrated selves. We illuminate these principles through the work of lesbian writers, including Staceyann Chin, Natalie Diaz, Leslie Feinberg, Judy Grahn, Mary Oliver, and Adrienne Rich.

- Wendy Mallette, Yale University

*Revisiting a ‘Puritanical Feminist Crusader’: Andrea Dworkin, Supersessionism, and Queer Progress Narratives*

This paper centers on the Jewish lesbian feminist Andrea Dworkin. Drawing on the archives of lesbian feminist public cultures of the 1960s through the 1980s, I show how dismissals of Dworkin as a lesbian feminist killjoy cannot be understood apart from the anti-Jewish, fat-phobic, misogynist, and anti-lesbian discourses that shaped how she was portrayed throughout her life. This paper asks: how is it that feminist and queer collective memory associates Dworkin, a Jewish lesbian feminist, with a wide range of Christian epithets (e.g., puritanical, crusader, and evangelical)? How does this association relate to the affective negativity that Dworkin holds as a lesbian feminist killjoy in the queer progress narratives found in religious studies? In order to challenge the redemptive logics of queer progress narratives, I turn to Dworkin’s pessimistic writings to theorize the complex contours of how sex is structured within gendered, racialized, heterosexual, and capitalist logics.

**A21-313**

**Korean Religions Unit**

**Theme:** *Korean Confucianism at a Crossroads*

Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)

Young-chan Ro, George Mason University, Presiding

This session discusses the unique aspects of Korean Confucianism based on Dao Companion to Korean Confucianism (Young-chan Ro, editor, Springer, 2019). The panel consists of both contributors and a non-contributor to this book to enhance a broad range of critical and creative reflection and discussion on the issues raised in this volume. The panel will address how Korean Confucianism differs from Chinese and Japanese Confucianism. Topics include the emphasis on moral psychology and frailty, the Four-Seven Debate between T’oegye Yi Hwang and Yulgok Yi I, women and Confucianism in Korea, and the different branches of the “practical learning” tradition.

**Panelists**

Donald Baker, University of British Columbia
Edward Chung, University of Prince Edward Island
Hwa Yeong Wang, State University of New York, Binghamton
So-Yi Chung, Sogang University
A21-335
Mormon Studies Unit
Theme: Mormonism and "Under the Banner of Heaven" Discussion
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Taylor Petrey, Kalamazoo College, Presiding

This session explores the recent true crime series “Under the Banner of Heaven” about the murder of Brenda and her baby Erica Lafferty in 1984. This adaptation of Jon Krakauer’s book by the same name treats the extremist religious ideologies that filed the murders and traces them back to Mormon fundamentalism and history. The controversies surrounding the crime and the representation of Mormonism has provoked decades of discussion. Panelists will discuss the religious themes of the murders and their representation in media and popular culture.

Panelists
Robert A. Orsi, Northwestern University
Jana Riess, Religion News Service
Max Mueller, University of Nebraska
Cristina Rosetti, Utah Tech University

A21-314
Books under Discussion
New Religious Movements Unit
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Benjamin Zeller, Lake Forest College, Presiding

This panel brings scholars of religion together to discuss Amanda Montell's book Cultish: The Language of Fanaticism. It explores how Montell’s book reflects and is shaping popular interest in the concept of cults and spiritual-but-not-religious networks more broadly. Panelists, drawing on their research areas and projects, will give papers speaking to the argument, method, and goals of Cultish. The broader aim of the panel is to analyze the latest wave of “cult-talk” in relation to running academic debates. In particular, it considers two approaches to the category of cults. The first entails a discursive critique of the category. The second insists on the sociological distinction of cults built around charismatic authority, agency, and harm. Overall, we explore how the latest wave acknowledges the problems of the category but doesn’t let the critiques inhibit using it.

Panelists
Jeffrey Wheatley, Iowa State University
Susannah Crockford, Ghent University
Cody Musselman, Yale University
Philip Deslippe, University of California, Santa Barbara
North American Religions Unit
Theme: Religion and Nation Beyond Nationalism
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Laura McTighe, Florida State University, Presiding

This session brings together scholarship that critically considers the relation of religion and nation, while moving beyond nationalism as a taken-for-granted (and often exceptionalist) framework for that consideration.

- Adam Waters, Yale University

*Liberation Theology as Christian Left Internationalism: Father Sergio Torres and the "Theology in the Americas" Project*

This paper traces the work of the Chilean Catholic socialist Sergio Torres to bring the insights of Latin American liberation theology into North American theologizing in the second half of the 1970s. Through a series of conferences and working groups called “Theology in the Americas,” Torres facilitated conversations—at times contentious but frequently fruitful—between leading Black, feminist, Chicano, indigenous, and Latin American liberation theologians. In the process, I argue that the “Theology in the Americas” project helped to give rise to a new Christian internationalism, one that inspired North American Christian radicals to work with their counterparts in Latin America and across the Global South to promote an anti-imperial, anti-militarist, anti-capitalist, and antiracist politics. Recovering the history of Torres and “Theology in the Americas” thus usefully illuminates the transnational dimensions of Christian left activism in the late 20th century and the influence of liberation theology in shaping that activism.

- Johanna Mueller, Stanford University

*American Nationalism and the Early Foreign Missions Movement*

The founding of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) in 1810 signaled a shift that would change American evangelicalism and lastingly impact the populations that were chosen to be “evangelized.” The scholarly focus on the catastrophic effects of missions, particularly since the postcolonial turn, has produced invaluable studies, many of which highlight the close link between missions and American expansion. Labels such as imperialism or nationalism are readily applied in mission history, but less frequently sufficiently defined. Religion is often relegated to the background. Engaging closely with the historical context in the ABCFM’s early formative years, this paper considers the relationship among evangelical missions, American nationalism, and Western imperialism in the early nineteenth century. While the ABCFM became more directly involved in American imperialist projects as the century progressed, I argue that the organization was not founded with the goal to expand
the power of the American nation-state.

- Kristina Reinis, Harvard University

**Redefining Bercovitch’s Jeremiad: Maria W. Stewart and the formation of the African and Female Jeremiad**

In his landmark book, Bercovitch argues that while the titular American jeremiad can inspire critique, its rhetorical form inherently neutralizes any revolutionary potential, making complete subversion of this political sermon impossible (Bercovitch, 158). However, a structural analysis of Maria W. Stewart’s 1831 essay, “Religion and The Pure Principles Of Morality, The Sure Foundation On Which We Must Build,” challenges that claim. Stewart creates a female and African jeremiad that fulfills literary conventions of the form, excluding one essential part: the unwavering belief in the divinely chosen identity of the United States. The exclusion of the jeremiad’s normative conclusion paired with a formal analysis of Stewart’s application of these conventions demonstrate how Stewart successfully counters Bercovitch’s claim. Through her African and female jeremiad, Stewart uses the jeremiad to not only recenter the agency of black women but to critique the very American exceptionalism that the jeremiad is meant to uphold.

**Responding**

Heather D. Curtis, Tufts University

**A21-316**

**Philosophy of Religion Unit**

**Theme: Love and the Political Imagination**

Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)

Lori K. Pearson, Carleton College, Presiding

This panel explores different conceptions of love and their relation to religion and politics. One paper compares the idea of love expressed in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* with that in James Baldwin's novel, *Sonny's Blues*. Another gives a decolonial and feminist reading of love in Demetria Martínez's novel *Mother Tongue*, which concerns refugees and the Sanctuary movement. The third finds in the work of G.W.F. Hegel an account of freedom, love, and law that has contemporary relevance for liberal democracy.

- Donnell Williamson, Brown University

**A Love Supreme: Kierkegaard and Baldwin on Neighborly Love's Intermediary**

"A Love Supreme" examines Søren Kierkegaard's conception of neighborly love through James Baldwin's novel, *Sonny's Blues*. The paper expands the conception of neighborly love by suggesting a pragmatic approach that honors the neighbor's stories, narratives, histories, and ontologies. It considers the religious and non-religious possibilities of
Christian love without debasing the 'God-relationship'.

- Anne Castro, Florida International University

*Feminist Readings of Love Towards a Decolonial Political Imagination in Mother Tongue*

In Demetria Martinez's 1994 novel *Mother Tongue*, a story of ill-fated, young romance serves as a jumping-off-point for philosophical meditations on love, politics, and religion. In this paper, I adopt a feminist hermeneutical lens oriented towards decolonial philosophy to study the multi-faceted and tangled representations of “love and political imagination” that take shape in this novel, particularly in light of the book’s romantic plot and its political setting: U.S. military intervention in Central America and the subsequent Sanctuary movement during the 1980s and 90s. Over time, the novel’s main character learns to imagine modes of relating (to herself and to others in the US and El Salvador) that do not recreate the Neoliberal and patriarchal paradigms that have structured her existing experiences as a Catholic Chicana woman living in the capitalist United States.

- Christopher DiBona, Brown University

*Love's Freedom: Rethinking the Roots of Liberal Democracy*

In the context of liberal democracies, freedom is often defined in terms of autonomy, as in being a law unto oneself, or abiding by a law that one gives to oneself. In a democracy, then, the people are free to the extent that they collectively rule themselves, that they authorize the rules to which they are subject. Accordingly, one of the primary challenges of democracy is promoting the autonomy of many different individuals who are immersed in shared networks of meaning, responsibility, and cooperative activity. In other words, the challenge is to foster social unity amid freely determined differences and ongoing disagreements. Drawing on the writings of the German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, this paper explores the idea that certain biblical representations of love provide a model of autonomy that is well-suited to address this increasingly pressing challenge of and to democracy.

**A21-301**
Films
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe

**Public Understanding of Religion Committee**
Theme: *Religion and Don't Look Up*
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Evan Berry, Arizona State University, Presiding

This panel features a conversation with Dave Sirota, the screenwriter for the 2021 Netflix hit "Don't Look Up." This star-studded film tackles the religious dimensions of catastrophe: how should we live in the face of impending doom? What counts as 'belief' in a cynical, post-truth
world?

Panelists

Gabriel Levy, Norwegian University of Science and Technology
David Sirota, Journalist and Screenwriter

A21-317
Quaker Studies Unit
Theme: History, Secularism, and the Quakers
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Jennifer Rycenga, San José State University, Presiding

This session will examine how the secular-religious dichotomy fail to account for liberal-religious refusal of the secular. One paper will examine a Quaker woman's diary as an example of countering the secular/religious divide. Dividing up her life into secular and religious exploits, we reinscribe the schematization received from conservative religion that identifies secularization with the religious liberals, people who devoted their lives to the universally and inalienably holy character of the world and its contents. Another paper will look at how Quaker history has been written, the factors which have affected the stories which are told or forgotten, and how elements of Quaker history are used to create a picture of the past which reflects what the community wants to be like in the present. All the discussion and responses in this session aims at looking for how Quaker history and Quaker secular-religious dichotomies still inform Quakerism today and into the future.

• Rhiannon Grant, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham, UK

The History of Quaker History

What is the history of Quaker history? How have different elements of the movement's history been used to support community identity formation, various theological positions, and changing practices? In this paper I introduce initial findings from the beginning of an ambitious project to explore how Quaker history has been written, the factors which have affected the stories which are told or forgotten, and how elements of Quaker history are used to create a picture of the past which reflects what the community wants to be like in the present. Building on previous studies of more specific areas such as the role of history in the creation of Liberal Quakerism, and extending beyond formal histories to consider the use of historical stories in children's books, fiction, songs, etc., this paper argues that understanding how and why history is retold improves our understanding of the community which does the retelling.

• Izzak Novak, Northwestern University

"Democracy of God": Religious Liberals and Refusal of the Secular

Current understandings of the secular-religious dichotomy fail to account for liberal-
religious refusal of the secular. I use the diary of a young Quaker woman in the 1910s and 1920s to unfold this kind of refusal, revealing her enchantment of the world, even as she would likely be accused of secularization. I show that Eleanor Darlington did not imbue some of her actions with a religious quality, either because of their supposedly inherent religious character or because of their outward appearances: all that she did was part of her effort to effect the Kingdom of God. And, I argue, by dividing up her life into secular and religious exploits, we reinscribe the schematization received from conservative religion that identifies secularization with the religious liberals, people who devoted their lives to the universally and inalienably holy character of the world and its contents.

Responding

David Harrington Watt, Haverford College

A21-318
Books under Discussion
Religion and Human Rights Unit
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Laura Álexander, University of Nebraska, Omaha, Presiding

With the enormous disruption of people’s working lives caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the paradoxical hailing of “essential workers” as heroes and treatment of such workers as expendable, and the “Great Resignation” in which many workers have changed jobs for better pay and treatment, people across the United States and the world have had to confront the questions of what work is for, how it relates to individual and social flourishing, and how workers can live with dignity. This session will address these questions through an author-meets-critics roundtable on Jonathan Malesic’s The End of Burnout: Why Work Drains Us and How to Build Better Lives. Scholars with expertise in immigration, worker justice movements, public discourse, and Catholic Social Teaching will take up the theme of “catastrophe” by focusing on the intersection of religion, human rights, and labor amid the global pandemic.

Panelists

Vincent Lloyd, Villanova University
C. Melissa Snarr, Vanderbilt University
Lauren R. Kerby, Princeton University
Joshua Carpenter, Florida State University

Responding

Jonathan Malesic, Southern Methodist University
The four papers in this session take a look at the intersection of religion and migration and how we can better understand, theorize, and perhaps navigate some of the challenges that migrants and refugees encounter in the world today. These papers present vantage points from scholars employing diverse methods such as ethnography, archival research, cultural analysis, and action research. Using diverse methods, the scholars engage with religious and refugee communities grappling with issues of migration and belonging across regions in Europe and the Americas. The panel collectively brings us perspectives on questions of race/religion, migration/postmigration theory, identity and belonging. In this way, we hope to bring together scholarship from diverse regions, religions, and methodologies to expand discussions at the intersection of religion and migration.

- Ulrich Schmiedel, University of Edinburgh

*Migration beyond Migrancy? Conceptualizations of Migration in European Multi-Faith Refugee Relief*

Migration continues to stir up controversies across Europe, with religion referenced as a motivation to welcome or not to welcome migrants. In this paper, I analyze and assess the conceptualization of migration operative in “A World of Neighbours” (AWoN), the largest multi-faith refugee relief network in Europe. At the core of AWoN is a grassroots network of practitioners from the Abrahamic religions who work with migrants in twenty-two countries across the continent. Drawing on more than one year of fieldwork, I argue that the practitioners of AWoN perform and present a postmigrant concept of migration. Through references to religion, they blur the boundaries between “refugees” and “receivers,” thus transcending the concept of migrancy. Connecting the practice of AWoN to recent scholarship on the race-religion constellation in Europe, I sketch the epistemological and ethical implications of this concept for understanding the intersection of religion and migration in Europe.

- Gabriel Catanus, Fuller Theological Seminary

*Touching the Ground: The Struggle for Home in Filipino American Theology*

Especially among American-born Filipinos, identity and its relationship to Christianity
are problematized by the ongoing effects of U.S. colonialism and racism. In recent years, these struggles have been intensified by the Black Lives Matter movement, the election of Donald Trump, the rise in anti-Asian racism, and the COVID-19 pandemic. These and other developments have revealed many Filipino American Christian beliefs and practices to be complicit with injustice and incompatible with healthy ethnic identity and community. As a result, some U.S. Filipinos have left their parents’ immigrant churches, and others are constructing new spiritualities and communities altogether. In this paper, I examine the works of a few leading Filipino American scholars to show how their presentations of identity and Christianity are rooted in particular conceptualizations of home, and I argue that U.S. Filipino churches, while challenged, remain critical in strengthening Filipino American identity, theology, and collective political action.

- Nanette Spina, University of Georgia

*Asian Transnational Religion Building Transnational Belonging: Global Adhiparasakthi in North American Hindu Communities*

Scholars in the social sciences have long observed that migration has been a central concern of ethnographers across disciplines. For ethnographers today research interests continue to expand focusing analysis on how the global intersects with the local in communities across borders. When theoretical analysis is employed alongside ethnographic fieldwork, the links between the global and the local come into sharper focus and we are able to make further connections across multiple locations in the lives of individual agents. Based on fieldwork in India and North American immigrant communities within the Hindu Adhiparasakthi tradition, this paper investigates the role of religion in diaspora community-building and how religious communities are sustained locally in a transnational context. These components illustrate networks of people working transnationally during the pandemic to achieve a greater expression of community across borders, one that places devotion, service, and a sense of interconnectedness at the heart of everyday life.

- Amy Fallas, University of California, Santa Barbara

*“Extranjeros Indeseables:” Migration, Religion, and Racialization of Palestinians in 20th Century El Salvador*

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Palestinians were caught at the cross-sections of racialized regimes of movement and migration in the western hemisphere. Thousands of Arabic-speaking Orthodox Christians from Bethlehem, within an ‘Islamic’ Ottoman Empire in Asia, were rendered suspect in El Salvador and imbricated in a web of racialized identities at a time when xenophobia against Chinese immigrants and violence against local afro-descendent and indigenous communities was widespread. Based on archival research at the National Archives in El Salvador as well as oral histories with members of the Palestinian-Salvadoran community, this presentation traces the historical memory of this particular migration within communal, national, and international histories of Middle Eastern resettlement to the western hemisphere and El
Salvador in particular. Collectively, I argue that the Palestinian-Salvadoran community illustrates how religious identity became racialized during a period when anxieties around race, nation, and belonging criminalized certain communities in movement.

**Business Meeting**

Nanette Spina, University of Georgia, Presiding

**A21-320**

**Religion and Popular Culture Unit**

Theme: *A Marvelous Creation: The Marvel Cinematic Universe and Religion*

Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)

Kaitlyn Ugoretz, University of California, Santa Barbara, Presiding

Throughout the 2010s and into the 2020s, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU’s) has become the dominant franchise in contemporary films, producing some of the biggest and most discussed films of the last decade including *The Avengers* franchise and *Black Panther*. The papers in this panel consider the MCU’s relevance for the contemporary study of religion; from its comparative utility to early Christianity, to the metaphysics of *The Eternals*, to *Black Panther’s* ongoing significance as a breakthrough piece of Afrofuturism.

- John McCormack, Aurora University

  *Kevin Feige’s Constantinian Moment, or: How the History of Christianity Can Illuminate the Marvel Cinematic Universe*

  Over the last fifteen years, the Marvel Cinematic Universe has risen to a level of dominance that could not have been predicted from the early history of comic books. Unlike primarily exegetical approaches to film as text or structural approaches to cinema as ritual, I will propose that a historical analogy to the emergence of Christianity from the social margins in the age of Constantine can serve an important dual purpose (analytical and pedagogical) in understanding the field of religion and popular culture. Kevin Feige’s role as executive producer of the franchise has moved a once-marginal set of stories to the cultural center, navigating deftly between the concerns of long-time fans and the increasingly broad appeal of the MCU, much as Constantine’s regime created the conditions first for religious toleration for Christians and later for their social and political privilege.

- Joel Hodge, Australian Catholic University

  "The most natural thing in the world": *Understanding the metaphysical vision of the MCU*

  The metaphysical vision of the Marvel Cinematic Universe has unfolded to define and meet the existential needs of a modern audience, challenging “secular” trends. Recently, Marvel has fundamentally advanced this vision with the film, *The Eternals*. It not only
provides a creation mythology, but more fundamentally, it reflects on the role of faith within different cosmological visions that emphasise either a sacrificial utilitarianism or loving personalism. Much professional criticism of the MCU has missed the metaphysical vision that undergirds its appeal. This vision is expressed by the Eternal, Thena: “When you love something, you protect it. It is the most natural thing in the world.” It is statements like this one, and the actions of the Eternals and Avengers to protect people, that demonstrates the philosophical and theological vision of the MCU. Scholars and critics would benefit from being aware of this vision so to understand the MCU’s appeal.

- Chanelle Robinson, Boston College

Afro-Futurism and the Sacred: Revisiting Marvel’s ‘Black Panther’

This paper meditates on the interweaving of the sacred throughout the film ‘Black Panther.’ Drawing on the work of Black and Womanist theologians, I unpack Afro-Futurism and explore how Marvel offers a “canon” for theological reflection.

A21-321
Books under Discussion
Religion and the Social Sciences Unit
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Harlan Stelmach, Dominican University of California, Presiding

The recent publication of Bellah’s biography provides the AAR with a window into the scientific study of religious life from the early 1950’s when Bellah was student of Talcott Parsons at Harvard through the publication of his magnum opus, Religion in Human Evolution.

The book has been highly acclaimed. As stated by one of the nominators of the AAR book award for A Joyfully Serious Man, the book is ultimately “about the study of religion. In all his writing, as well as in his private life, Bellah was searching for an understanding of what religion was, and how it both shapes and is shaped by the social forces around him.

Three scholars will comment the biography of Bellah and engage the author in a conversation based upon their disciplines.

Panelists

Mark Juergensmeyer, University of California, Santa Barbara
Anna Sun, Duke University
Charles Camic, Northwestern University
Philip Gorski, Yale University
Sport and exercise provide many individuals and communities across the globe with rhythms to mark time and myriad ways to engage the body—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. From three distinct perspectives, this session examines these dimensions in terms of transcendent and ethical values; the promotion of the integrity of health by attending to limitations; and an exploration of the benefits and risks associated with conceptualizing sport and/or exercise as alternative cures or comfort in addressing mental, emotional and spiritual challenges. Drawing on a diverse range of sources from Asian martial arts, through endurance sports, to negotiations of pain and suffering, at times with detrimental effects, these presentations complicate understandings of sport, embodiment and health.

- Joseph Cheah, University of Saint Joseph

*Cultural Pursuits and Religion: The Dao of Karate-do*

In this presentation, I examine the notion of "dao" in the art of karate-do and its connection to the mental state of *mushin* and the principle of *wu-wei*. The *dao* is the character that transcends mere physical techniques in Asian martial arts. I will do this by attempting to describe the *mushin* or wuxin in Chinese, the highest possible mental state attainable by a martial art practitioner, its connection with Daoism and Buddhism, and its relationship to public life; namely, the ethical values embodied within the spiritual component of karate—i.e., the *kata* or formal exercises.

- Kathleen Mroz, Emmanuel College, Boston

*The Church of the Sunday Long Run: Endurance Sport as Alternative to Institutional Religion?*

The experience of endurance athletes, who gather in groups with names like “tri-church” and “Church of the Sunday Long Run” reveal that sports function for some people as an alternative to institutional religion. Sports have been known to contribute to people’s physical and mental well-being, as evidenced by popular phrases like “running is my therapy.” However, circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the risk of injury that goes along with participation in sport, demonstrate the danger of labeling sport as an alternative to religion or a cure for mental and spiritual problems. Nevertheless, the experience of endurance athletes should be informative for religious communities in
striving to understand why people turn to sport for a sense of comfort and community, and to respond to declining participation in institutional religion.

- Erica Ridderman, Duke University

“Jesus Tough”: Evangelical Sports Ministry and Theological Justifications for Athletic Suffering

This paper has two aims: first, to investigate how Fellowship of Christian Athletes conceptualizes and teaches about suffering, and second, to map this talk of suffering onto broader Christian theologies of suffering, in the hope of imagining healthier ways to support athletes in their bodily and mental negotiations with pain. I look at FCA devotionals, Bible studies, and coaching resources and find that these materials often figure suffering as productive. I then place this notion in conversation with Karen Kilby’s work on suffering, as well as insights from liberation theologies, both of which argue that some forms of suffering are devoid of productive meaning. I conclude by asking how these insights might better equip sports ministries, encouraging athletes to develop “somatic knowledge” that avoids harm.

Reviewers

Randall Balmer, Dartmouth College

Business Meeting

Carmen Marie Nanko-Fernandez, Catholic Theological Union, Presiding

A21-323
Religions in the Latina/o Americas Unit
Theme: Negotiating Religious Identities and Alternative Archives in the Latina/o/x Americas
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Matthew Casey-Pariseault, Arizona State University, Presiding

Interiority is a notoriously difficult subject to discuss in academic terms, yet it is central for many studies of religiosity and religious identification. This panel brings together three distinct approaches to two intersecting questions: 1) What constitutes spiritual and religious subjectivity for people of faith themselves? And 2) What are the range of possible "archives" scholars can use to illuminate the meaning religious actors assign their own religious identities and narratives? Together, the presentations in this panel consider themes of self-actualization and transformation, self-perception of Latin American and Latinx religious communities. This interdisciplinary panel puts ethnographic, archival, and quantitative analysis in conversation to consider how narratives of religious conversion, experience, and negotiation work with and against institutional and hegemonic frameworks of identity to carve out new definitions of religion.
Loving Nature is Fundamental: American Environmentalism and Latinx Catholic Imaginations

Drawing from ethnographic research among Catholic churchgoers in Los Angeles, this paper demonstrates the distinct set of environmental values that Spanish-speaking immigrants often embrace through the framework of their Latinx Catholic imaginations. Throughout my conversations with churchgoing immigrants from Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Peru, my interlocutors conveyed that they were profoundly aware of the climate crisis and the deadly problems it presents for marginalized communities. Yet rather than relating to nature through grand crisis narratives of modern environmentalism, their stories overflowed with expressions of love for nature grounded in Catholic sacramentality and nostalgic memories of an idyllic, agricultural past. While dominant constructions of environmentalism often rely on conservationist tropes that have historically excluded communities of color, this paper offers a framework that can be more relevant for engaging with environmental issues among Latinx communities.

The Magazine Noel and The Formation of the Catholic Woman in the 1920s Argentina

The magazine *Noel* (1920-1939) is one of the few testimonies available that reproduces the voices of laywomen at the beginning of 20th century Argentina. As such, it is an invaluable resource for understanding the self-configuration of Catholic women at a moment when previous conceptions of womanhood were being challenged by first-wave feminists reclaiming civil and political rights. However, the magazine has been almost completely forgotten, and thus the experience of laywomen has been ignored by recent revisions on Argentinean Catholicism.

In this paper, I claim that reading and collaborating in the magazine became a “spiritual exercise” (Hadot) for the women of *Noel*, this is, as a practice that allowed for the (self)formation and transformation of the (female Catholic) self. As such, it became a space of actualization and appropriation of the Church’s teachings on womanhood and on gender relations, and of negotiation with the new gender roles and ideas.

Transition to Buddhism in Bogota, Colombia: fifty self-perception stories of converted practitioners

In the context of a larger quantitative and qualitative study, as a complement to the in-depth interviews on conversion, we asked Buddhist practitioners to briefly share their religious conversion/transition story. We analyzed 50 short (5–15 minutes) conversion or transition accounts of regular Buddhist practitioners belonging to 18 different centers and groups in Bogota, Colombia. Our goal was to capture the self-perceived reasons for
conversion and the relevant turning points that led to the adoption of a different worldview and spiritual practice. The work of Lewis Rambo (1993) guides our understanding of conversion with his seven stages. Analyzing the accounts, we found various patterns of conversion that fit his model. For example, many respondents began as Catholics in their childhood and youth, experienced a moderate “crisis” that drew them away from Catholicism, which in turn created an opening for them to explore the possibility of conversion to Buddhism.

Responding

Jessica Delgado, Ohio State University

A21-333
Full Papers Available
Religious Reflections on Friendship Seminar
Theme: Spiritual Friendship: Sacramental, Transformational, and Pedagogical Perspectives
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Hussam S. Timani, Christopher Newport University, Presiding

This panel explores themes of friendship within various writings and traditions, with a focus most explicitly on spiritual friendship. Margaret Gower considers the sacramental nature of friendship, in conversation with French philosopher, mystic, and political activist Simone Weil. Sarah Bixler explores the role of friendship support networks during crisis and persecution. In so doing, she locates early Anabaptist leaders within a Catholic friendship tradition. John Thompson identifies the potential for spiritual friendship to play a role in transforming and redeeming society, drawing on Thich Nhat Hanh’s engaged Buddhism. Laura Duhan-Kaplan, recipient of the 2022 AAR Excellence in Teaching Award, outlines learning practices that can promote potential for the emergence of spiritual friendship.

- Margaret Gower, Saint Mary's College

"What are you going through?" Friendship as Sacrament

In this paper, I place friendship in the context of Christian theological notions of attention, aesthetics, and sacramentality. Drawing on the ideas of Simone Weil in particular, I describe friendship as both a site for strengthening the capacity for attention and benefit of attention. Like some aspects of Christian theological aesthetics, friendship can offer opportunities for encounter, expansion, and transcendence. So the practice of friendship can be both a kind of spiritual formation and a kind of sacrament. In the end, I consider whether, if attention requires some degree of difference and distance, boundaries are constitutive of friendship.

- Sarah Bixler, Princeton Theological Seminary

Friends in Crisis: Rediscovering Early Anabaptist Leaders within a Catholic Friendship
Tradition

This paper examines friendship in the historical narratives of two sixteenth-century Anabaptist leaders in the Netherlands and listens for echoes of spiritual friendship in the Roman Catholic monastic tradition in which they were formed. Elisabeth Dirks, a young female leader who fled the convent where she was raised and was martyred in 1549, was questioned by the authorities: “We want to know who your friends are.” Meanwhile, the former priest Menno Simons relied on networks of friends for his own safety in the crisis of intense persecution. By uncovering explicit and implicit references to friendship in Elisabeth and Menno’s narratives, this paper appreciatively argues that the tradition that they left behind formed them to develop friendships that buoyed their faith in the midst of crisis.

• John M. Thompson, Christopher Newport University

Dharma as Friendship: Thich Nhat Hanh’s Engaged Buddhism

Treating the kalyāṇa-mitra as a guiding metaphor, this paper examines the late Thich Nhat Hanh’s various Dharma talks (books, speeches, anecdotes, meditations, etc.) as presenting Buddhist practices as diverse means of befriending the world. While to the best of my knowledge, neither Nhat Hanh nor any of his immediate followers explicitly discuss this Buddhist notion of the “good friend,” my claim is that implicitly this is what they enjoin. That is, those who enact the meditations and practices recommended by these teachers (and who develop the proper “inner” attitudes informing such actions), actually re-make themselves as a kalyāṇa-mitra dedicated to improving the lives of all sentient beings. Indeed, Thich Nhat Hanh’s teachings present “spiritual friendship” as a way to redeem society itself.

• Laura Duhan-Kaplan, Vancouver School of Theology

Spiritual Friendship in the Inter-Religious Studies Classroom: Lessons from Hevruta Study

The Talmudic practice of “hevruta,” study with a friend, can be a gateway to both intellectual and spiritual friendship. Used appropriately, it can facilitate multi-dimensional learning in inter-religious studies classes. According to educational theorist Elie Holzer, “hevruta” is best understood as a spiritual, rather than an instrumental, relationship. Kabbalah scholar Eitan Fishbane uses the work of Emmanuel Levinas to describe spiritual friendship as a mystical encounter with God through the face of the other. Working with these ideas from Jewish educational theory, Kabbalah, and philosophy, I propose a two-part paper. In part one, I will present a theoretical account of learning together as a spiritual friendship. In part two, I will present nuanced examples of co-learning activities that can offer a container for the emergence of spiritual friendship.
A21-324
Scriptural Reasoning Unit
Theme: Women's Voices in the Study of Religion: An Interreligious Engagement
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Jennifer Banks, Yale University Press, Presiding

Panelists

Susannah Heschel, Dartmouth College
Linn Tonstad, Yale University
Zahra Ayubi, Dartmouth College

A21-325
Sociology of Religion Unit
Theme: Religion and Social Justice: Navigating Race, Sexuality, and Politics in Faith Communities
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Amidu Elabo, Princeton Theological Seminary, Presiding

This panel explores how diverse faith communities navigate issues of race, sexuality, and politics in the United States, Canada, and Uganda. The first paper relies on personal interviews with racialized and LGBTQIA+ seminary students to show how institutional anti-Blackness and heteronormativity create negative experiences for these students. Drawing on a large survey and personal interviews, the second paper examines how members of the Alliance of Baptists perceive the denomination’s efforts to confront whiteness and improve inclusivity. The third paper relies on personal interviews and digital media analysis to examine how Native American activists and allies have utilized spiritual and scientific frames to oppose the construction of an oil pipeline on indigenous territory. Based on interviews and analysis of recent political events in Uganda, the fourth paper explores the tensions between accommodationist Christian and Muslim leaders and younger generations who are pushing them to support political change.

- Angel Clark, Boston University

*The Burdens of Organizational Change: Spiritual Formation among Racialized and LGBTQIA+ Seminary Students*

Many North American seminaries and theological schools are focused on expanding their student base to include more diverse populations, in part as a response to declines in White Protestant membership and training institutions. As a result, many schools now have large numbers of racialized and LGBTQIA+ students. As part of their organizational aims, these schools also include curricula designed to form students spiritually to prepare them for diverse ministry- or service-oriented vocations. Yet it is unclear whether existing spiritual formation programs are adequately serving the needs of new student populations; or whether they could retain elements of anti-Blackness and heteronormativity that cause additional harm to racialized and LGBTQIA+ students. This
study uses in-depth interviews with 30 students at seminaries and theological schools of different traditions to identify how institutional religious education affects diverse students’ spiritual wellbeing, specifically in a moment of rapid organizational change.

- Gerardo Marti, Davidson College
  Mark Mulder, Calvin University
  Kevin Dougherty, Baylor University

*When White Progressive Christians Commit to Confronting Whiteness in their Churches: Race, Religion, and the Challenge of Antiracism in American Christianity*

Since 2019, the Alliance of Baptists committed to aggressive work targeting long-term structures of racial exclusion stemming from whiteness. Using extensive data collected in 2021 from a survey of 1,629 denominational participants and 125 semi-structured interviews with pastors, lay leaders, and attendees, we report several provocative and generative key findings that: 1) illustrate how Black and white participants significantly differ in their assessment of the health of their congregation’s racial climate, 2) explain how Black clergy and Black congregants view themselves as a distinct minority in their churches and wonder if the new project of addressing whiteness is “their” project, and 3) demonstrate how both leaders and members of these progressive churches experience profound, unanticipated, and largely unacknowledged tensions between their actions in relation to LGBTQ+ issues and newer initiatives focused on racial justice issues. Empirical evidence and their implications will be discussed, and feedback will be welcomed.

- Wes Markofski, Carleton College

*Protecting Sacred Waters: Mobilizing Indigenous and Western Meanings of Science and Spirituality in the Battle over Line 3*

Since 2013, a collective of indigenous women and two-spirit persons have led a resistance movement of American Indian activists and allies against the construction of an oil pipeline through Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) territory in northern Minnesota. Their resistance is fueled by a mixture of indigenous and Western perspectives on science and spirituality, providing an ideal empirical context in which to explore how actors of varying social and spiritual identities combine scientific and religious perspectives to form meaningful individual and collective action. Drawing on over a dozen in-depth interviews and digital content analysis of social media, mainstream and alternative media, and seven leading activist organizations involved in the Stop Line 3 movement, this paper investigates how scientific and spiritual beliefs and identities are mobilized to guide action across different types of social actors and settings, particularly in marginalized religious and ethnic minority group contexts.

- Nicolette Manglos-Weber, Boston University
Calling for Peace, Crying for Change: Crisis Moments and Religious Politics in Uganda

This paper, which is based on interviews with 43 community-based religious and para-religious leaders in Uganda, as well as analysis of political events throughout 2020 and 2021, explores the complexities of religious politics in the current moment in Uganda, and the sources of political ambiguity within the Christian and Muslim communities. It argues that Christian and Muslim leadership are being increasingly pressed by their constituents—especially those of younger generations, who do not recall the civil war period of the 1970s and 1980s—to throw their weight behind the collective push for political change. It also argues, however, that the immediate threats posed by the regime to their sovereignty as providers of spiritual and material care, motivate them to take an accommodationist approach and prioritize nonpartisan calls for peace.

A21-326
South Asian Religions Unit
Theme: Ethics of Conviction: Negotiating Gender, Caste, and Religion in India
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Sarah Pierce Taylor, University of Chicago, Presiding

This panel analyzes how members of various communities in India negotiate different forms of authority and conflict in ways that resist, reject, reframe and/or reclaim their own voices and power. From Muslim women in South India bypassing traditional male religious authority to the role of the maternal figure in shaping notions of the Dalit citizen to how online mourning practices enable Muslims to lament in ways actively denied to them by the state, these papers reveal the ways in which gender, religion, and/or caste identities intersect both in the production of socio-religious and political authority and conflict—within and between communities—and the efforts to transcend or transform it.

- Harini Kumar, University of Chicago

Cultivating Authority: Muslim Women, Islamic Pedagogy, and Ethical Life in South India

This paper explores how a Muslim women’s group in Tamil Nadu, India, approach pedagogy and ethical conduct in their religious and charitable work. The Ibadah Women’s Welfare Trust was established in 2012 for the purpose of carrying out charitable activities for the poor, educating women to be self-sufficient, and promoting religious activities among Muslim women such as janaza (Islamic funeral rituals) demonstrations, religious sermons, and counseling workshops. I argue that Ibadah women bypass traditional male religious authority not by confronting it directly or antagonizing their male counterparts, but by creating a different model of authority that does not depend solely on formal religious training. I further suggest that Ibadah women’s sociality, religiosity, and charitable labor point to spaces and instances of political efficacy that are not readily apparent or directly stated, but discernible through their everyday practices.
• Drishadwati Bargi, University of Minnesota

Becoming maternal, becoming conscientious? Inner conviction and the image of the Dalit dissenter in times of Hindu Majoritarianism.

I undertake a theoretical account of the hitherto unusual but increasingly visible figure of the maternal Dalit dissenter in contemporary Indian mediascape. By bringing in Black feminist (Hartman Lose Your Mother 2006) and Dalit feminist critique (Pawar The Weave of My Life 2009) of the maternal figure in the making of minoritized subjectivities, I explore what the mother, with her claim of inner desire, conscience and selflessness does to the notion of the militant and insurrectionary Dalit citizen. Incorporating Hartman’s adage of losing one’s mother for the sake of a redemptive future beyond the logic of reparation, I explore the idioms, claims and conflicts through which the mother in these images brings up a politics of inner conviction, with ambiguous consequences for collective democratic politics.

• Zehra Mehdi, Columbia University

Remembering to Mourn, Mourning to Remember: Majilis as a site of political resistance.

Focusing on the lives of Muslims accused of spreading CoronaJihad, under a Hindu nationalist regime, I draw on my fieldwork (2019-2021) in old Lucknow (North India), to explore the ways in which Muslims remember their dead rendered dispensable by the Indian state during the pandemic. The paper examines how Muslims, irrespective of sectarian differences, find in majilis, the Shīa ritual of commemorative mourning Hussain’s martyrdom at the Battle of Karbala during Muharram, the language of remembering and mourning, to articulate the loss and death of their loved ones. In absence of physical gatherings, majilis on Zoom allows Muslims the space to lament their pathos and agony actively denied to them by the state. Using ethnographic interviews, the paper posits how majilis, with its embodiment of remembering and mourning no longer remains a solely Shia commemorating ritual but becomes a site of political resistance against state’s persecution of Muslims.

Responding

Anand Taneja, Vanderbilt University

A21-327
Study of Judaism Unit
Theme: American Jewish Thought at Midcentury: Not as Dull as You Thought.
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Elias Sacks, University of Colorado, Presiding

Attending to the less conventional elements of American Jewish thought, whether by considering genres such as autobiography, middlebrow literature, and letters, or by treating thinkers who endorse philosophical positions like naturalism that are often regarded as beyond the pale of
acceptable Jewish thought, this panel seeks to rigorously examine works of mid-century Jewish thought and, in the process, expand the category of what counts as Jewish thought by incorporating new kinds of genres and 'Jewish thinkers' (women, Jews with secular upbringings, and popular novelists, among them) into the field.

- Rachel Gordan, University of Florida

*Accounts of Returns to Judaism: Jewish Thought for the Postwar American Reader*

This paper examines the work of two postwar Jewish writers who penned important introduction to Judaism texts intended for a mixed readership of Jews and non-Jews. Herman Wouk and Arthur Cohen's 1959 Introductions to Judaism are not generally included in the category of "Jewish Thought," but this paper argues for their inclusion on the basis of their work in "figuring out Judaism." These two texts also highlight the prominence of a "return to Judaism" trope that has remained central to American introduction to Judaism texts since the postwar era.

- Robert Erlewine, Indiana Wesleyan University

*Varieties of Religious Naturalism: God and Salvation in Richard Rubenstein and Mordecai Kaplan*

In this presentation, I begin to elaborate the contours of an American Jewish tradition of religious naturalism and work to situate it regarding the better studied body of German Jewish thought. I do this by examining an essay by Richard Rubenstein where he both takes pains to defend Mordecai Kaplan’s legacy from those who criticize it from the vantage point of supernaturalist understandings of Judaism and offers his own critique of it from the perspective of a putatively more sober and thorough-going naturalism. I then triangulate the respective naturalisms of Rubenstein and Kaplan with the ethical monotheism of Hermann Cohen in order to better distinguish them from one another and to lay the groundwork to better integrate these thinkers—and thus the tradition of American Jewish naturalism more broadly—into the larger body of scholarly discussions taking place in the field of modern Jewish thought.

- Sarah Imhoff, Indiana University

*Gender, Genre, and American Jewish Thought: The Case of Irma Levy Lindheim*

This paper argues for the consideration of Irma Levy Lindheim as a midcentury American Jewish thinker. She had well articulated thoughts on Zionism, US politics, and international conflict. She also had decidedly feminist ideas and gendered critiques, which were at least partially based in her interpretation of Judaism. Her distinctive life connected her to other thinkers and leaders, as well as providing her with education and leadership platforms of her own. Yet she never wrote anything that looks like the genre "Jewish thought." I use Lindheim as (1) a way to demonstrate that if we want to know about women’s contributions to Jewish thought in the US, then we ought to be prepared
to look beyond the traditional forms and genres and (2) a thought experiment about what we could learn by looking to other genres, like her autobiography and particularly letters, to see American Jewish thought.

Responding

Martin Kavka, Florida State University

A21-334
Teaching against Islamophobia Seminar
Theme: Colonialism, Othering, and Anti-Muslim Racism: Histories and Legacies of Islamophobia
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Sajida Jalalzai, Trinity University, Presiding

These papers consider both the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim racism. Panelists examine:
1.) The othering of Muslims as rooted in European colonialism in various parts of the so-called Muslim World.
2.) Contemporary North American and European portrayals of Muslims as "dog-haters," and hence at odds with Euro-American Culture, and, 3.) Models for teaching about and against Islamophobia in the United States.

- Iskander Abbasi, University of Johannesburg

Coloniality and the Muslim World: Before and Beyond the Atlantic and Americas

Coloniality is fundamentally tied to Europe’s encounter with the Americas and Atlantic Ocean through systems of colonialism, slavery and capitalism. However, the story of coloniality is not only fundamentally tied to those geographies. Rather, there is a larger picture of coloniality yet to be unsurfaced. There are three ways the coloniality of power must be expanded upon in order to more fully grasp its origins and rise, especially in relation to the Muslim world, 1) firstly, as an extension of the West’s medieval crusading civilizing mission which saw as it primary political enemy Muslims, 2) secondly, accounting for coloniality that travelled East and South via the Vasco Da Gama route in Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia and through the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, and Pacific Oceans, 3) thirdly, the rise of coloniality North and East of the Muslim world, especially in relation to imperial Russia, and later China and India.

- Matthew Hotham, Ball State University

“Please Be Courteous to Your Muslim Neighbors”: Concern Trolling, Ritual Purity, and the Construction of Muslim Otherness in Islamophobic Rhetoric on Dogs

The paper examines the portrayal of Muslims as dog-haters at odds with Euro-American culture in online Islamophobic memes and pamphleting of dog parks in North America
and Europe. The goal of these memes, posters, and pamphlets seems to be to generate media attention, force Muslims and Muslim groups to respond to the absurd claims in ways that will highlight their difference with non-Muslims, and thereby force liberals into a false choice between pluralism and pet ownership. I will argue that when teaching a non-Muslim audience about controversies regarding Islam and animals—not just Muslims and dogs, but Muslims and pigs/pork or halal butchering—it is insufficient to simply address the controversy and refute it. This does the work of the Islamophobes for them. Rather, one must reveal the underlying strategy in order to better diffuse it.

- Maha Elgenaidi, Islamic Networks Group
- Zachary Markwith, Islamic Networks Group

"Islamophobia and Its Impact in the US and World: A Strategy for Teaching about Anti-Muslim Racism"

The rise of Islamophobia is part of a global outbreak of racism, of which Islamophobia is a specific form, first appearing in the context of the Crusades and then the Western colonial takeover of Muslim-majority countries and regions. Teaching about and against Islamophobia, therefore, requires attention to historical and global contexts and its connection to racism generally. Racism is rooted in colonialism, whose main powers developed racist ideologies to justify the subjugation and exploitation of colonized peoples; racism then became integral to dominant social ideologies, down to its present manifestations as institutional racism and implicit bias. Islamophobia is, therefore, both historically and in the present, a global phenomenon that impacts Muslims in the US and around the world. Islamic Networks Group (ING) has developed a model for teaching about and against Islamophobia through an interactive presentation that traces the roots, history, and contemporary manifestations of Islamophobia globally and in the US and concludes with a discussion of ways to counter Islamophobia and a call to concrete action against it. The presentation will include time for questions, discussion, and reflection.
Stefanie Knauss, Villanova University

*Teaching Religion and Ethics with Short Films*

In this presentation, we reflect on the use of short film as a pedagogical tool. We argue that short films offer specific possibilities for teaching religion and ethics precisely through their form, characterized by compact storytelling with focus on a specific situation in a condensed time, through the intentional and often innovative use of formal means. However, in order for students to benefit from these, instructors need to be intentional about their choice of film, how they employ them in the context of their course, and how they equip students with the skills of critical film analysis. After a brief critical discussion of previous scholarship on teaching religion and ethics with film, each of the co-presenters offers reflections on their pedagogical approaches and experiences with a specific short film (*The Cohen’s Wife* and *4.1 Miles*). We conclude with a discussion of the advantages and challenges of teaching with short films.

- Rebecca Moody, Worcester Polytechnic Institute

*Brick by Brick: Using Intentional Citational Practices to Disrupt Canonical Norms*

Are teachers and scholars of religion obligated to help our students see beyond their often narrow, focused, perhaps black and white worldviews? Should we introduce an intellectual and/or ethical obligation to differently see the world around them? In this paper, I use my citation practices in my Introduction to Philosophy & Religion syllabus and my focused attention to gender and sexuality, ethnicity and geographic origin to demonstrate how I nurture my students’ awareness of that obligation. I draw on Sara Ahmed’s and Victor Ray’s attention to the politics of citational practices, alongside Ragini Tharoor Srinivasan insistence that we ask students to think hard thoughts, to argue that, through citation practices in our syllabi and classrooms, we can help students understand how “[i]nequality is reflected through a veneration of the classics” and how an unconscious acceptance of that veneration reproduces and perhaps instantiates bias (Victor Ray, 2018).

- Laura Taylor, College of Saint Benedict, Saint John's University

*We Don’t Talk About Barth, No, No, No!: Implementing Conscientious Citational Methods as Critical Feminist Pedagogical Practice in the Theology Classroom*

My paper will discuss a project I developed and conducted as part of my participant researcher work on a grant awarded to my department by the Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning on white privilege and theological pedagogy. My project seeks to explore how incorporating conscientious citational practices and visual culture into the required theology courses at the small liberal arts Catholic college where I teach might help to cultivate and create supportive feminist, decolonial, and anti-racist learning environments for theological education.
Traditions of Eastern Late Antiquity Unit
Theme: Texts and Identities in Late Antiquity
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Laura Locke Estes, Pepperdine University, Presiding

The papers in this session broadly examine the ways that late ancient communities interacted with texts as they negotiated communal identities for themselves and others.

- Abdulla Galadari, Khalifa University

**Greco-Arabian Gnosticism**

Some recent scholars argue that the pre-Islamic Arab audience of the Qur’an were not idol-worshippers, but perhaps espoused some forms of pseudo-monotheistic beliefs. This paper explores the hypothesis that a form of syncretized beliefs might have existed between local indigenous cultures with other adopted concepts. A good model for this kind of syncretized belief system is Gnosticism, which syncretized different indigenous traditions with Judaeo-Christian elements.

Understanding the historical context of the Gnostics and their presence in pre-Islamic Arabia might provide us with some clues of, at least, some of the communities with whom the Qur’an might have been in conversation. Not that they were necessarily Gnostic, but perhaps the Gnostic model allows us to understand the syncretized belief systems that existed allowing us to contextualize certain Qur’anic passages. Thus, as there were Greco-Roman and Greco-Egyptian forms of Gnosticism, there might have existed a Greco-Arabian form with a distinctively Arabian influence.

- James McGrath, Butler University

**Late Antique Texts and Earlier History: The Case of John the Baptist and Mandaean Sources**

There is a noticeable inconsistency when it comes to the use of sources from Late Antiquity as evidence for people and events in earlier times. The Talmudim, works of hagiography from Syriac Christians, and Mandaean sources may be evaluated in significantly different ways even by the same scholar. Our comparative study of how historical scholars treat Jewish, Christian, and Mandaean texts and traditions leads to common methodological principles that are equally applicable regardless of tradition. Applying them to Mandaean sources leads to the conclusion that Mandaean literature, when studied in an appropriately critical fashion, can be useful to historians interested in the figure of John the Baptist.

- Emanuel Fiano, Fordham University
The Idea of the Law in Isho'bokht of Rev Ardarshir

This paper will focus on the theoretical reflection about the law included at the outset of the Legal Code produced by the eighth-century East-Syriac Metropolitan Bishop of Fars (in modern-day Iran), Isho'bokht of Rev Ardashir. In the attempt to distill a legal theory from Isho'bokht’s reflections, the analysis will pay particular attention to comparison with the first three chapters of the Law Code of Isho'bokht’s near-contemporary, Shem’on of Rev Ardashir, and with sections of the much earlier Syriac Book of the Laws of the Countries attributed to Bardaisan of Edessa.

- James Wolfe, Ohio State University

What does Armenia Have to do with Athens?: Plutarch, Paideia, and Aesop in the Buzandaran Patmut ‘iwnk’

This paper reveals what may be a direct reference to Plutarch’s Life of Demosthenes in the Armenian Buzandaran Patmut ‘iwnk’, or the Epic Histories, a fifth-century Armenian history once attributed to P‘awstos Buzand. I suggest that, by referencing the city of the Athenians, the author of the Epic Histories purposefully creates an intertext between his text and that of Plutarch. This is significant because previous scholarship has argued that not only did the author of the Epic Histories draw almost exclusively from Iranian epic, but also that the author was so thoroughly steeped in Iranian culture that he was in no way conversant with Greco-Roman literature. As a result, this article challenges such readings of the text and argues for a reconsideration of the intersection of biblical literature, paideia, philosophy, and Iranian epic that shaped the composition of the Epic Histories as a hybrid text in late antique Christian Armenia.

Business Meeting

Sara Ronis, Saint Mary's University, Texas, Presiding
James Walters, Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Presiding

A21-330
Vatican II Studies Unit
Theme: Vatican II: The Ecclesial and Pastoral Ecosystem of Pope Francis
Monday, 3:00 PM - 4:30 PM (In Person)
Jaisy Joseph, Villanova University, Presiding

Pope Francis affirms that the teachings and orientations of Vatican II (1962-1965) are integral to his “ecclesial and pastoral ecosystem.” Still, from the outset of his pontificate, he has observed that humanity is at a “turning point in history”, undergoing an “epochal change” (EG 52), or more pointedly, a “change of epoch” requiring a substantial conversion of church in the twenty-first century. A vastly different global Catholic Church faces challenges – both internally and from without – that could not have been anticipated sixty years ago. These include the crisis of church governance – of power and sexual abuse, the failures of globalization, the ecological crisis, the growing consciousness of the need for decolonization and indigenization of local faith
communities. These papers will explore both parallels and contrasts between Francis’ vision of ecclesial renewal today and the reforming vision of the Second Vatican Council.

- Henry Shea, Boston College

*Soteriological Expansion: Vatican II and the Universality of the Divine Will to Save*

Among the most significant theological developments to be found in the documents of the Second Vatican Council is the affirmation that the salvific will of God extends to the whole world and every human being within it, universally and without exception. In this paper I trace the theological developments whose trajectory led to the ecclesial embrace of this universal soteriological principle in the twentieth century, focusing especially on the work of Henri de Lubac and Karl Rahner. In contrast with those who would revive an alternate and even once predominant understanding of the postlapsarian divine will to save as restricted in scope, I illustrate why the expansive soteriological vision embraced by the Council continues, however quietly, to form a foundation for theological reflection and ecclesial praxis that is both constitutive and indispensable.

- Jos Moons, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven

*The Holy Spirit, the Sensus Fidelium, and the Synod 2021-2023. The Remarkably Diverse Reception of Lumen gentium 12 by Pope Francis and Academic Theologians*

Pope Francis speaks with remarkable boldness about the *sensus fidelium* and the Holy Spirit’s active involvement, calling the Holy Spirit “the main protagonist” of the Synod (2021 opening address). The Synod 2021-2023’s General Secretariat speaks in similar terms. Arguably, this is a creative reception of the Second Vatican Council, which radically deepens Vatican II’s ‘halfway rediscovery of the Holy Spirit’ (Congar). In this paper I’ll do three things. First, I’ll explore the creative reception of *Lumen gentium*’s pneumatology, especially its view of the Spirit in relation to the *sensus fidelium* (LG 12) in recent magisterial teaching on synodality. Secondly, with the help of the method used in the Mapping Synodality Project (KU Leuven), I’ll show that, while actual academic reflection on synodality also highlights *sensus fidelium*, it manifests considerably less interest in the Spirit as an active power. Finally, I’ll put these pieces together.

- Massimo Faggioli, Villanova University

*The Contested Authority of Vatican II in the USA in the Last Fifty Years: the Anti-Vatican II Narrative, from the Fringes to the Center of the Institutional Church*

We still do not have an established periodization of the anti-Vatican II movement beginning with the pontificate of John Paul II. In this history, American Catholicism plays a key role. This paper will try to identify different periods and changes in the motifs and dynamics of the anti-Vatican II movement in American Catholicism, in the build-up of the opposition against Vatican II which in the first quarter of the 21st century finds its global center of gravity in the USA.
In consideration of the 2022 AAR Presidential Theme, “Religion and Catastrophe,” this panel considers the ways that esoteric religions have responded to catastrophe and crisis, whether real or imagined, whether natural, human-made, socio-political, and/or supernatural. The papers in this session explore distilled alcoholic spirits as healing—and even salvific—substances; Protestant receptions of alchemy and Hermeticism during the Little Ice Age; and the apocalyptically-informed esoteric eugenics of Jorjani. In so doing, this session interrogates both how esotericisms may seek to avert catastrophe as well as considerations of how esotericisms may contribute to, worsen, or even create crises.

- David Grumett, University of Edinburgh

*Distillation at the end of time*

In medieval society, distilled alcoholic spirits were a rare and highly prized commodity. Christian thinkers and distillers viewed them as preserving and enhancing human health, perception, knowledge and morals, whether by means of natural or supernatural properties. These functions were especially sought at times of war, famine and disease. Texts sometimes present the distillation process liturgically, prescribing Christians prayers and gestures such as might occur in a Eucharist. Indeed the distillate could be viewed as a substance analogous to the body of Christ. Its consumption would aid Christians in combatting the antichrist and would sustain the Church during the apocalypse, imparting bodily incorruptibility in preparation for the millennial reign of the faithful as saints on earth.

- Timothy Grieve-Carlson, Rice University

*No Wisdom in Nature: Protestant Hermeticism During the Little Ice Age*

This paper considers the Protestant interest in esotericism during a uniquely catastrophic period in European history, the Little Ice Age of the seventeenth century. I argue that the Protestant reception of alchemy and Hermetic philosophy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led to the development of religious practices of intuition and contemplation of the environment, practices that I call Protestant Hermetic environmental knowledge. With particular emphasis on Johann Arndt, I argue that seventeenth-century Protestants sought out Hermetic and alchemical literature because it offered an environmental knowledge applicable to the changing climate of the period.

- John Allison, Rice University
Black Sun Rising: Jason Reza Jorjani’s Esoteric Eugenics

The esoteric dimensions of the contemporary American Alt-Right and New Right have received inadequate scholarly attention. Here I examine the esoteric rightwing politics of co-founder of the Alt-Right, philosopher Jason Reza Jorjani, in terms of his “archeofuturist” idea of esoteric eugenics: the idea that an Indo-Aryan elite will use techno-science to amplify innate human parapsychological capacities of body and mind so as to engineer posthuman “gods.” I then examine his celebration of Nazism as the first “postmodern” political regime, his radicalized idea of worldview incommensurability and “worldview warfare,” and his evolutionary model of time. I suggest that what makes Jorjani’s work unique and in need of further study is that his rightwing esoteric politics constitutes a break from traditional 20th century European forms thereof (e.g., Julius Evola’s Traditionalism) insofar as it is technophilic (not technophobic), futurist (not perennialist), and postmodernist (not anti-modernist), and so represents something culturally unprecedented and dangerous.

Business Meeting

Egil Asprem, Stockholm University, Presiding
Christa Shusko, Linnaeus University, Presiding

A21-403
Anthropology of Religion Unit
Theme: New Forays in Theory in Method in the Anthropology of Religion
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Jennifer A. Selby, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Presiding

• Shreya Maini, Duke University

Beyond the Binary of Fate Versus Probability: Theorizing Religious Coincidence through Ethnography

In this paper, I argue that coincidence has been under-theorized in the study of “lived" religion. This is due in part to the statistical rationality underlying the social sciences that reads “coincidences" through the grammar of probability and statistics, and ultimately relegates synchronicity to the domain of culture or affect. Through ethnographic vignettes of past-life regression therapy in North Carolina, I suggest that this spiritual practice does not model coincidences on laws of probability, nor does it interpret them through deterministic fate. Rather, coincidences are an expression of the very principle of many lives, in which time is a property of experience and every life coexists. In doing so, I present a model for scholars of lived religion to theorize coincidences — those moments that form a critical aspect of religious and spiritual life — ethnographically.

• Ken Chitwood, Free University of Berlin
Ethnographic journalism and the public understanding of religion

Coined by Anne Kirstine Hermann in 2014, “ethnographic journalism” is defined “as the employment of immersion strategies adopted from social science for distinct storytelling purposes.” The question that this paper will consider is how “ethnographic journalism” might help both social scientists and journalists tell better stories and thus contribute to the public understanding of religion. Featuring researchers and newswriters involved in a project to study people deeply engaged in humanitarian work for whom religion and spirituality were an important element of their lives, this paper will compare the norms, ethics, and aesthetics of each profession. Participants will deliberate on how learning from one another, and working together, can help each cover the complex topic of “religion” with more nuance and texture in the public sphere.

Amanda J. G. Napier, Boston University

From the Inside: Spiritual Anthropologies of Personal Transformation in a Massachusetts Prison

This paper will examine “spirituality” in relation to secular rehabilitation programming at the Berkshire County House of Correction, a medium security prison for men in Western Massachusetts. Based on six and a half months of immersive ethnographic fieldwork and research in North American religious and penal history, my research shows how rehabilitation programming comes to inhabit the normative heart of U.S. Corrections. Its normative status comes into being through a discursive process that combines assertions and normative practices around efficacy, or “what works,” with theorizations of “spirituality.” I argue that this “spiritual” carceral context helps to produce spiritual anthropoligies of personal transformation that are accomplice to the U.S. prison’s naturalization. In addition to ethnographic methods of participant observation and analysis, this conference paper draws from religious anthropological scholarship on efficacy, biomedicine, and theorizations of the person to theorize religious formations in a heterogenous and putatively nonreligious community.

Jacob Tischer, Boston University

Experience and Experiment: Making Taiwan through Pilgrimage

Everybody who sets foot outside Taipei will sooner or later encounter large numbers of people walking behind a deity in a sedan chair carried by teams of men. Dressed in the same, bright colors, these pilgrims pace after the deity—usually the goddess Mazu—for several days and nights and hundreds of kilometers, resting only for brief moments. Despite demanding considerable physical sacrifice, such pilgrimages have become incredibly popular in recent years: The largest among them unite tens of thousands of participants in a week-long journey. Much of the more recent scholarship has focused on pilgrimages to China, especially Fujian, and the complex encounters enabled through them. Here, I contend that a focus on the politically and economically charged pilgrimages to China, while important, overshadows the radically different motivations
and types of relations fostered in and through domestic pilgrimages.

Responding

Jon Bialecki, University of Edinburgh

A21-400
Professional Development - Employment
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Applied Religious Studies Committee, Death, Dying, and Beyond Unit, and Teaching Religion Unit
Theme: Working and Teaching Outside the Academy: A Roundtable on Death, Dying, and Beyond Landscapes
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Amy Defibaugh, Temple University, Presiding

The Death, Dying, and Beyond Unit, Applied Religious Studies Committee, and Teaching Religion Unit bring together individuals educationally trained in religion, comparative religious studies, theology, etc. who are working, teaching or consulting in fields outside the academy in the death, dying, and beyond landscapes. These fields could include death technology, funeral services, grief and bereavement counseling, media (e.g. podcasts), hospice and hospital work, policy and nonprofits. This moderated, roundtable discussion will generally explore and value careers beyond the academy but more particularly the ways in which education, skills and pedagogical training in religion have uniquely prepared folks for careers in fields associated with death, dying, and bereavement outside the academy.

- Elana Jefferson-Tatum, Tufts University

   Birth Work is Grief Work, too!

   One of the lessons that has most struck me in my retraining as a birth worker is that birth work is grief work, too. However, this is not only true because of the literal confrontation with death but because birth is also always a rebirth, a death of one’s old self and the birth of a new self, a new person. So many of my clients, most of whom have been Black women, are scared of literally dying, terrified of the pain often associated with birth, and frightened of what it means to become a parent, especially when their own family histories were not wholly loving or supportive. Thus, as a hypnobirthing coach and doula, I must hold space for their fears of dying both literally and ontologically. Specifically, I work to help them navigate through the fear of death to reach their inner power to birth with confidence.

- Aaron Klink, Duke University

   From Doctrine to Practice: Teaching Clinicians About Engaging Religious Faith in End of Life Care
This paper explores my work in teaching medical clinicians about the role of religion in end-of-life care and the ways that clinicians require different skill sets when engaging these teachings than theology students do. I explore the assessment skills necessary for clinicians to engage religious patients and ways that they can respectfully acknowledge a patient’s faith while remaining rooted in evidence-based medicine. I discuss ways the medical team can partner with chaplains in helping families reconcile religious hope and medical decision making.

- Bhakti Mamtora, College of Wooster

*Preparation Students for Careers Outside of the Academy through Applied Religious Studies*

In this roundtable discussion, I offer a case study of an experiential learning course on Death and Afterlives taught in Spring 2022 to illustrate how a religious studies education and training prepares undergraduate students for careers in hospice and hospital work. I argue that introducing undergraduate students to hospice care in a course on death and afterlives enhances self-awareness, broadens their understanding of career paths, and mutual respect among students and volunteers, chaplains, and social workers committed to supporting patients in hospice.

- Jeremy F. Cohen, McMaster University
  Mandy Benoualid, Independent Scholar

*Talk Death Daily*

TalkDeath’s mission is to encourage positive and constructive conversations around death and dying. Although our awareness of the issues and needs surrounding death is growing, it is still not considered appropriate “dinner table talk.” Well, we think it is.

From green burials and home funerals, to history, memento mori art, funeral law, and grief resources, TalkDeath.com is the hub for a changing death-conscious public. TalkDeath also aims to bridge the gap between death professionals and the general public, helping you make informed end-of-life decisions.

**A21-404**

Books under Discussion

**Body and Religion Unit and Human Enhancement and Transhumanism Unit**

Theme: *Author Meets Critics: Roundtable on Philip Butler’s Black Transhuman Liberation Theology: Technology and Spirituality (Bloomsbury, 2021)*

Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Leonard McKinnis, University of Illinois, Presiding

This roundtable brings together scholars from a variety of fields to discuss Philip Butler’s Black Transhuman Liberation Theology: Technology and Spirituality (Bloomsbury, 2021). Placing Butler's text in conversation with their own research, the panelists will consider questions of the
body, religion, race, and the "human" from historical, literary, political, and ethical perspectives. Dr. Butler joins the discussion to respond to these critical engagements.

Panelists

Megan Leverage, Central Michigan University
Nicole Symmonds, Emory University
Sylvester Johnson, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Responding

Philip Butler, Iliff School of Theology

A21-405
Buddhism in the West Unit
Theme: Transnational Buddhism, Health and Covid-19
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Kim Lam, Deakin University, Presiding

The papers in this panel consider the relationship between contemporary Buddhism in a transnational context, and ideas of health and healing. The first paper uses the tools of digital ethnography to examine how Chinese diasporic Buddhist communities based in Montreal but globally networked, used digital media to function as a full and complete Buddhist community providing critical social infrastructure, political engagement, and spiritual comfort, since the outbreak of the pandemic in March 2020. The second paper focuses on Fo Guang Shan's temple in Austin, TX, considering the pandemic's effects on local Buddhist practice, arguing that the social crisis of the pandemic allowed for the development of both new rituals seeking to bind together global Chinese Buddhists and innovative doctrine pertaining to the karmic interactions between humans and viruses. The final paper analyses data drawn from a wide-ranging, innovative survey about Buddhism and Health undertaken in the US context between 2015-2020.

• Xiao Han, University of Quebec, Montreal

Chinese’ digital Sangha’s Buddhist response to Covid-19 in French Canada (Montreal)

By conducting a digital ethnographic study of Montreal Chinese digital Buddhists, this paper argues Chinese Buddhists have been using the Internet to make their voices heard, particularly since the outset of Covid-19. This Chinese digital sangha has been delivering a series of Buddhists online rituals and activities, offering profound dharma-powered discourses, enabling the bringing together of communities, soothing hearts, providing meaning in the lives of isolated individuals and mobilizing the communities against Covid-19. Unlike the critical lack of attention paid to the Asian Buddhist community in North America in the past, this study provides an insider’s perspective on the extraordinary social vitality and healing potential of the Chinese diasporic Buddhist
communities in French Canada. It also highlights the critical role Buddhism may play in disaster relief, facilitated by the Internet.

- Natasha Mikles, Texas State University

*The Buddhist Cultural Tool-kit and COVID-19: A Case Study of the Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun Community*

This paper uses interviews and participant observation conducted by the author at the Fo Guang Shan Xiang Yun temple in Austin, TX as a case study to examine how a Buddhist community has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic. Sociologist Ann Swidler famously theorized that culture functions as a “tool-kit” in which solutions can be found to novel problems. In seeking a “Buddhist” response to COVID-19, the community made dramatic changes to its practice, including changing meditation formats and organizing virtual funerals and services, as well as promoting innovative new theologies concerning the living nature of the coronavirus and the efficacy of distance chanting. This paper argues that these changes served to simultaneously strengthen the temple’s ties to its global Buddhist community, while also limiting the temple’s involvement with casual spiritual seekers outside of its ethnically-Chinese community.

- C. Pierce Salguero, Pennsylvania State University

*Surveying Buddhism & Health in the U.S.*

The most prominent connection between Buddhism and health in the U.S. over the last few decades has been the effort to scientifically prove the medical benefits of meditation. However, American Buddhist attitudes toward health are influenced by a much wider range of ideas and practices. This presentation describes a recent survey of a wide swathe of American Buddhists of diverse racial, cultural, socioeconomic, and sectarian backgrounds about their attitudes toward health and healing. It also describes a follow-up study investigating how a segment of the survey respondents benefited from their practice of Buddhism during the Covid-19 pandemic. Respondents across demographic categories and sectarian affiliations expressed the feeling that Buddhist practice has a positive influence on their wellbeing. They described a multifaceted relationship between Buddhism and health that goes far beyond meditation practice and encompasses a wide range of engagements with health and healing.

**Business Meeting**

Scott Mitchell, Institute of Buddhist Studies, Presiding
Caroline Starkey, University of Leeds, Presiding
This panel seeks to explore the idea of the possibility of Buddhist political thought by proposing different approaches to the question, combining both historical and critical methods.

- Arya Moallem, Harvard University

*Heavenly Bodies and Fiscal Policy: on being Buddhist and Bureaucrat in Early Modern Tibet*

Reconciling the relationship between rule and renunciation, and the varying degrees of involvement in mundane affairs that each permit, is an enduring philosophical puzzle that informs Buddhist political thought. This presentation will consider how this balance between sacred and secular manifested in the fiscal policy of the penultimate Tibetan lay king, Polhané Sōnām Topgyé (Pho lha nas Bsod nams stobs rgyas, 1689–1747). In this presentation I will summarize several of the king’s tweaks to tax policy and corvée labor obligations undertaken during the minority and exile of the 7th Dalai Lama, and how they echoed the compassionate character of Avalokiteśvara’s *nirmāṇakāya*, but supplemented his sacred soma with technocratic know-how. From reduced military duties to levies of a ‘mantra tax,’ Polhané’s kingship presents a subject- or “people”-centric Buddhist politics capable of reconciling provisional and ultimate, compulsion and compassion, in decidedly Early Modern terms.

- Anthony White, Binghamton University

*Buddhism, Nonduality, and the Politics of Nonviolence*

This paper demonstrates that Madhyamaka Buddhism has the conceptual resources to support a politics of nonviolence. Unlike rights-based political thought, but like Gandhian and other philosophies of nonviolence, the Mahāyāna worldview is grounded in nonduality. Part 1 suggests that the Madhyamaka theory of emptiness is the most defensible version of nondual metaphysics. Part 2, utilizing insights from Śāntideva and Korsgaard, derives a duty to support each person’s basic needs. Given emptiness, the ideal fitting attitude is pure equanimity, which precludes action. Yet we do act, based on conventionally constructed selves. Since one’s own self arises interdependently with others, it is arbitrary not to act equally on behalf of others’ needs. Part 3 rules out justifications of violence based on rights or collective identity, as reifications of duality. This results in a contingent pacifism and recommendation of nonviolent resistance, even on behalf of what are conventionally considered universal human rights.
• Pierre-Julien Harter, University of New Mexico

*Are kleśas political? Toward the possibility of a Buddhist political thought*

This paper explores the possibility of a Buddhist political thought by arguing that the understanding of kleśas as not being merely internal mental states and thus private affairs can give politics a role within the Buddhist path and doctrine. The paper argues that kleśas are partially socially and historically constructed, which is why the opposition between external conditions and internal mental states is problematic. The paper proposes to borrow from contemporary political thought the concept of transindividuality, which is an attempt to escape the pitfalls of individual atomism and the holistic conception of the social. Transindividuality will be reinterpreted in terms of “political non-dualism” to displace the neo-Stoic interpretation of kleśas as being purely private mental states that can only be controlled by an individual practitioner and to reevaluate the importance of political action on external conditions and social structures, an action that could contribute to the Buddhist path.

• Charles Goodman, State University of New York, Binghamton

*Why No Political Philosophy in Buddhism? A Hypothesis*

As scholars have noted, South Asian Buddhism, unlike intellectual and spiritual traditions elsewhere in the world, had little concern for political philosophy. In this paper I offer some preliminary attempts at a descriptive explanation of why Buddhists would have chosen not to devote their theoretical efforts to political philosophy in general and just war theory in particular. More specifically, I will try to explain why exponents of the Mahāyāna tradition would have been less inclined to work on just war theory or political philosophy than medieval Catholic intellectuals. I will suggest that part of the explanation is likely found in the details of Buddhist karmic theory. One of the decisive moves could have been the Mahāyāna insistence that all suffering was caused by karma. Also relevant is the belief that anyone who approves of a karmically bad action, such as killing, receives the same adverse consequences as the actor himself.

A21-407
Catholic Studies Unit
Theme: *Catholics’ Horror: Sources and Consequences of Catholic Fear*
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Jack Downey, University of Rochester, Presiding

This session contributes to a recent surge in interest in the category of “Catholic horror.” While many are asking about the relationship of real life Catholic horrors and those conjured for film and fiction, this session lifts up diverse sources and shifting meanings of horror for Catholics. Are embodiment and sexuality themselves a horror within certain Catholic settings? What about heavy metal music or the mysterious disappearance of a cherished relic? The papers in this session explore the things that have horrified Catholics in particular contexts, and, as a result, generated vehement cultural, ecclesial, liturgical, and literary responses. Thinking about the
targets and sources of Catholics’ fear enables a new kind of perspective on the range and consequences of Catholic imaginings.

- Joshua Canzona, University of North Carolina

  *Blood and Beauty: Anne Rice and the Vampire in Catholic Horror*

  With the passing of Anne Rice late last year, we lost one of the most beloved authors of Catholic horror. This paper will examine her literary contributions as an expression of the Catholic imagination with an emphasis on sensuality and the enchanted world in *Interview with the Vampire* (1976).

- Mathew Schmalz, College of the Holy Cross

  *Catholic Body Horror: Asceticism and Eroticism in Fred Schepisi's The Devil's Playground (1976)*

  Winner of the 1976 Australian Film Institute Award for Best Film, *The Devil's Playground* is director Fred Schepisi's cinematic interpretation of his time at spent at a Catholic Juniorate in Melbourne in the 1950s. As a coming of age story, the film speaks about the tension between asceticism and eroticism in the Catholic tradition: a tension--and inextricable connection--that draws its strength from horror in ways that include but also go beyond the film's artful polemic against what it understands to be Catholicism's rejection of the body in favor of the mind.

- William Chavez, University of California, Santa Barbara

  Mariangela Carpinteri, University of California, Santa Barbara

  *Immaginario Satanista: The "Catholic Horror" of Global Satanic Conspiracy*

  The Catholic Church began revitalizing its office of exorcist in 1998 – with multiple training programs, papal mandates, revised ritual manuals, and increased appointments of Catholic priest-exorcists. Such mobilization is an institutional response to discursive fears surrounding Satanic cults and larger narratives of religious declension. Periods of Satanic Panic shape not only recent “Catholic horror” cinema but sensationalist news media. Following discourse analysis of turn-of-the-century Italian materials like journalism, scholarship, and documentaries, we analyze the popular mediatization/exploitation of “Catholic horror” doxa according to issues of vice, violence, sacrilege, and heresy. The Italian Satanism scare, overlooked in favor of the American context, reveals the psychogeography of Catholic persecution amidst global conspiracy; the transregional connectedness of Catholic social bodies and the Church’s discursive engagement with imagined rival communities. Satanism, we argue, functions as a globally-constructed distortion of religious competition, broadly defined and produced by separate cultural anxieties which are then discursively cohered.
Emma J. Anderson, University of Ottawa

*The Telltale Heart: A True-Crime Canadian Catholic “Cold Case”*

On January 6, 1937, Frère André, the diminutive wonder-worker of Montreal, died at the age of 91. His heart was preserved and displayed for public veneration in the French tradition. But on March 15, 1973, the relic was stolen from its locked vault. Ransom requests were received and refused by the Holy Cross Fathers, the heart's guardians. For 21 months, the heart that many regarded as the heart of Montreal itself remained missing. But on December 21, 1974 - just in time for Christmas – it returned as mysteriously as it had vanished. Even to this day, the case remains unsolved. No one knows who took the heart or why it was ultimately returned. This presentation will recount the story of this religious “cold case” – a true-life example of Canadian noir - present a rogue’s gallery of possible perpetrators, and contextualize the incident within the spiritual, cultural, and political milieu of 1970s Quebec.

Responding

Christina Pasqua, University of Toronto

**A21-408**  
**Chinese Christianities Unit**  
**Theme:** Sinophone as Method: Pushing the Boundaries of the Field of Chinese Christianities  
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)  
Chloe Starr, Yale University, Presiding

This roundtable suggests using Sinophone as a heuristic lens to extend the boundaries of the field of Chinese Christianities. Similar to other interdisciplinary studies such as Anglophone and Francophone studies, Sinophone studies depart from the chauvinistic discourse of Chineseness and emphasize Sinitic-language cultures and communities characterized by their differences and heterogeneity across the world. Sinophone studies first emerged from literature and cultural studies a decade ago during an interrogation of Chinese essentialism and opened up the fluidity of Chineseness. What is the potential of religious studies in Sinophone studies? Has the field of Chinese Christianities addressed the heterogeneity of Chineseness in her own language? In light of China’s rise as a world superpower, what kind of role can Sinophone Christianities play in response? Based on the diverse social locations of our panelists, this roundtable explores how Sinophone studies can help us understand the complex relationship between Chineseness and Christianity.

**Panelists**

Justin Tse, Singapore Management University  
Easten Law, Georgetown University  
Ting Guo, University of Toronto  
Tsz Him Lai, Drew University
Business Meeting

Christie Chui-Shan Chow, Princeton Theological Seminary, Presiding

A21-409
Christian Systematic Theology Unit
Theme: A Theology for the 21st Century?
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
David True, Wilson College, Presiding
Franklin Tanner Capps, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, Presiding

This panel examines Douglas F. Ottati’s *A Theology for the 21st Century*, a fresh systematic theology that advances a radically theocentric vision of participation in the life of God as the ethical basis for communion with the world. As a work of theocentric humanism, this panel will consider two key areas. First is Ottati’s concept of cosmic passage as it relates to our final ends, or the question of universal salvation. Here, Ottati notes the idolatrous nature of humanity attempting to determine its own ends, contending that we participate in a wider cosmos whose end is God, the ultimate reality that/who, in the end, remains incomprehensible. Second, extending from this is an original account of piety and religious affect (a sense of dependence and sense of gratitude) as arising from “an encompassing mystery” mediated through the diverse realities with which we interact.

Panelists

Edwin Chr. Van Driel, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary
Ruben Rosario Rodriguez, Saint Louis University
Michelle Sanchez, Harvard University
Katherine Sonderegger, Virginia Theological Seminary

Responding

Douglas F. Ottati, Davidson College

A21-410
Comparative Approaches to Religion and Violence Unit and Religion and the Social Sciences Unit and Religions, Social Conflict, and Peace Unit
Theme: Religious Resistance to Political Injustice, Brutality, and Despair
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Robert Smith, University of North Texas, Presiding

- Seth Gaiters, University of North Carolina, Wilmington

*Ferguson Foundations and Black (Religio)Digital Networks of Uprising*

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) Uprisings of 2020 demonstrated the continued relevance
of a protest movement for racial justice that began nearly a decade ago. And as its digital activism has entered into what many have called a “second act,” in which digital tools have been integrated into the movement’s foundations, still the significance of religious theorizing of Black life—internal to BLM—has evaded serious attention. I want to return to the Ferguson-era BLM Uprising with particular attention to the ways the struggle in the virtual public square unfolded alongside the takeover of the physical public square. In “Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest,” from 2017, the sociologist Zeynep Tufekci investigates how a “digitally networked public sphere” had come to shape social movements, but I will offer a deeper analysis still of this mobilization of social media through examining the rhetorical use of religious ideas and languages.

• Valeria Vergani, Stanford University

Sharing Prophecies of Harmony: Online Movement Building, Indigenous-Settler Futurities, and the Weaving of Interfaith Universalism

This paper takes the online interfaith activism of Four Worlds International Institute, an Indigenous-led network founded by Dakota Hereditary Chief Phil Lane Jr., as a case study for understanding the peacebuilding work of interfaith-minded Indigenous activists on social media. Four Worlds translates Dakota prophetic traditions into a universalized spirituality that resonates with the global sensibilities of emerging translational interfaith networks online. The work of reframing, mediatizing, and circulating Dakota teachings as universal wisdom elevates Indigenous leaders to the status of spiritual authorities in the interfaith movement and simultaneously configures the movement itself as an Indigenous-led fight against climate catastrophe, violent conflict, and ecological devastation. Four Worlds works to Indigenize faith-based efforts for environmental and social justice, thus challenging the settler-centered religio-political registers of interfaith activism. At the same time, these universalizing translations can inadvertently re-center settler imaginaries and neglect specific Indigenous challenges and approaches to pursuing political and territorial self-determination.

• Shalahudin Kafrawi, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Strengthening Social Cohesion Through Humanitarian Islam

This paper will deal with the efforts of Indonesia’s Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in promoting Humanitarian Islam as a foundation for social cohesion in building social resilience and world peace. The Declaration on Humanitarian Islam emerged in the contexts of threats of radical ideologies and practices and the renewed commitment from within. Such a commitment to building social cohesion and global peace merits special consideration. It shows how religion remains an important force that unites and divides its followers. For this reason, an in-depth study of what counts as humanitarian Islam and its contribution to social cohesion needs further elaboration. In this paper, I will start with NU’s identification of religious extremism as a threat to social cohesion. Secondly, I will explore the epistemological foundation of the Humanitarian Islam that gives a theological
basis for recontextualizing Islam. I will end the paper by examining NU’s roadmap to promote the Humanitarian Islam.

- Donald Miller, University of Southern California, Dornsife

*Engaged Spirituality: A Novel Methodology for Studying Exemplary Humanitarians*

Various scholars such as Colby and Damon (1992, 2015) have noted that many exemplary humanitarians are inspired by their religious faith and sustained in their work by a daily spiritual practice. This paper is not a comparative study of religious versus non-religious humanitarians; rather, it draws on 100 research based profiles of humanitarians from 40 different countries and a dozen different faith traditions to describe the role of religion in motivating humanitarian work. The unique methodology of the project is that most of the profiles were written by journalists who shared their interview transcripts with an academic team for analysis. The paper describes the initial findings regarding characteristics of spiritual exemplars and offers some preliminary observations regarding the possibility of social scientists working with journalists on a joint project.

**Business Meeting**

Chase L. Way, Other, Presiding
Kelly Denton-Borhaug, Moravian University, Presiding

A21-411
Books under Discussion

**Comparative Religious Ethics Unit and Confucian Traditions Unit**

Theme: *Roundtable on Tao Jiang’s book Origins of Moral-Political Philosophy in Early China (Oxford University Press, 2021)*

Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Jingjing Li, Leiden University, Presiding

Tao Jiang’s new book, Origins of Moral-Political Philosophy in Early China (OUP 2021) offers a new narrative of classical Chinese philosophy with an emphasis on normative dimensions of the early texts. It makes three key points. First, the central intellectual challenge during the Warring States period was how to negotiate the relationships between the personal, the familial, and the political domains when philosophers were reimagining a new sociopolitical order. Second, the competing visions can be characterized as a contestation between impartialist justice and partialist humaneness, with the Confucians, the Mohists, the Laoists, and the fajia thinkers being the major participants, constituting the mainstream intellectual project during this period. Third, Zhuangzi and the Zhuangists were the outliers of the mainstream moral-political debate during this period who rejected the very parameter of humaneness versus justice in the mainstream debate. Zhuangzi and the Zhuangists were a lone voice advocating personal freedom.

**Panelists**
Jin Y Park, American University
On-cho Ng, Pennsylvania State University
Michael Puett, Harvard University

Responding

Tao Jiang, Rutgers University

Reviewers

Gil Raz, Dartmouth College

A21-412
Contemporary Islam Unit and Religion and Ecology Unit
Theme: Islam and Ecology: Muslim Perspectives on Climate Justice and Environmental Ethics
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Kimberly Wortmann, Wake Forest University, Presiding

The papers presented on this panel will explore how Muslim scholars, activists, and organizations around the world have grappled with the ideas of environmental ethics and responsibility from an Islamic perspective. The authors are particularly concerned with how popular and political anxieties about the apocalypse, and liberatory readings of Quranic verses concerning dominion and stewardship of the earth (Khilāfah fi al-'ardh), have brought greater awareness to the consequences of climate change, natural disaster, and other ecological catastrophes around the world. Together these works make space for an Islamic ethics of environmental care and an approach to climate justice that views humans as integrated into “the creaturely order” and thus implicated in its destruction and preservation.

• Etin Anwar, Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Facing the environmental apocalypse and the pursuit of climate justice in Indonesia

My paper addresses Islamic apocalypse beyond politics and expands its meaning into environmental discourses. I define environmental apocalypse as revelations or prophesies that provide foundations for ethical motives and conducts to mitigate climate change and to disseminate awareness about climate justice. I will situate the discursive process of debating the environmental apocalypse within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Since its founding in 1926, this socio-religious organization has addressed social, political, and religious problems and has contributed to Indonesia’s social cohesion and resilience in the face of disasters. In the paper, I will first discuss how the knowledge of climate change is produced. I will secondly show how religious symbols are used to mitigate climate change. I will thirdly evaluate whether or not Islamic apocalypse as ethics motivates individuals to disseminate awareness about the danger of climate change. Finally, I will discuss how Islamic virtue of pursuing climate justice fosters
environmental activism.

- Iskander Abbasi, University of Johannesburg

*On Being a Steward of the Earth: An Islamic Liberation Theology Approach*

There has been noted development in the field of Islam and Ecology on the concept of being a *khalīfah fi al-‘ardh* (steward of the earth). Some authors, assuming a social ecology approach, have assumed the translation of *khalīfah* as ‘vicegerent’ or ‘steward’ to be valid in the effort to confront contemporary ecological catastrophe. However, a number of authors engaging a deep ecology approach have argued against defining *khalīfah* as vice-gerent or steward in an attempt to move beyond crass anthropocentric conceptualizations of stewardship which they believe further the ecological crisis. The discourse of Islamic Liberation Theology has provided a critical human ethics which seeks to address the problems of the world through the lens of the margins. This paper argues for a commitment to a liberatory form of human stewardship of the earth which brings together the best of deep and social ecology approaches.

- Sarra Tlili, University of Florida

*Dominion, Stewardship, or Integration? Insights into the Qur'an's Environmental Ethic*

The two environmental ethics associated with the Qur’an are the ethic of dominion and the ethic of stewardship, but a close reading shows the implausibility of these associations. Contrary to these positions, in this presentation I will argue that rather than giving humans any ascendent role, the Qur’an seeks to integrate them in the creaturely order. Due to time limitations, in this presentation I will analyze only a few of the numerous qur’anic themes that are often invoked in support of the dominion and stewardship interpretations to show the implausibility of adducing from them a hierarchical paradigm. I will also cite and analyze qur’anic passages denoting its integrative approach.

**Responding**

Robert Tappan, Towson University

**A21-413**

Eastern Orthodox Studies Unit

Theme: *Science and Orthodox Christian Thought and Practice*

Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)

Philip Dorroll, Wofford College, Presiding

Some of the most urgent contemporary global debates take place at the intersection of religion and science, where deeply rooted conceptions of theological anthropology and religious identity interact with newly emergent data and knowledge about the physical world. From considering the environment, philosophy, and trauma, as well as empirical-scientific perspectives, this
session features four papers featuring different examples of and approaches to Orthodox engagements with science. Papers will include historical, constructive theological, and scientific perspectives to bring interdisciplinary ways of Orthodox scientific thinking into dialogue.

- Christopher Howell, Duke University

*A Sacred Evolutionary Cosmos - Philip Sherrard, Theodosius Dobzhansky, and the Theological Challenge of Climate Change*

Philip Sherrard and Theodosius Dobzhansky would have agreed on little. While Sherrard rejected modern science, especially evolution, Dobzhansky was one of evolution’s leading figures. But Sherrard saw climate change coming and warned of it, whereas Dobzhansky was perhaps too easy in his liberal progressivism. In framing a dialogue between these two Orthodox thinkers, the benefits of their insights will become more evident. Sherrard believed the cosmos a sacred creation, one imbedded with the sparks of the Logos. He felt that repentance from technological and scientific idolatry was humanity’s last resort for averting climate catastrophe. Dobzhansky too cherished nature, especially the Sierra Nevada mountains, but he believed that evolution provided a theodicy that could save religion and uphold the religious ethics of freedom and equality. In separating the wheat from the chaff, and bringing their views together, novel paths for Orthodoxy and climate change can be explored.

- Eugenia Torrance, University of Notre Dame

*Gregory Palamas, Natural Philosophy, and the Tradition of Learned Skepticism*

In Byzantine studies and theology, hesychasm has often been dismissed as an anti-intellectual movement that compounded the “closing of the Byzantine mind” (Cameron 2013, 356-357). Any Orthodox engagement with science, therefore, must face this twin reproach: both from historians who consider Orthodox theology as obscurantist, and from neo-Palamites who appropriate this critique as a badge of orthodoxy. Robert Sinkewicz (1986) has shown that both these readings fail to account for Palamas’ subtle approach to natural philosophy, which consisted of both adoption and critique. Moreover, I will argue, even Palamas’ skepticism about natural philosophy is in continuity with Byzantine humanism, specifically through the influence of Palamas’ likely teacher, Theodore Metochites. Palamas’ arguments were a part of a tradition of learned skepticism that was cultivated particularly by Metochites in his later works. Contextualizing and analyzing these aspects of Palamas’ thought is crucial for modeling and justifying contemporary Orthodox engagement with science.

- Sarah Livick-Moses, Boston College

*Healing the 'Burden of Worthlessness': Trauma Studies and Christian Contemplative Theology*

Working with the dogmatic assumptions of Maximus the Confessor, this paper imagines
a theological anthropology which can adequately account for the psychosomatic insight of trauma studies and therapeutic treatments such as IFS. The study of trauma highlights the complexities of a sinful world while focusing its energy on the necessity of healing the ‘burden of worthlessness’ so that a person may better relate to the world around it. This emphasis on healing is one which challenges theological norms about sin, nature, and grace. It presupposes transfiguration rather than purgation as the end of a person’s life, or, to put it theologically, it is prosopologically oriented towards deification rather than annihilation. What this requires is for one to orient energy and attention, not towards the elimination of sin (which does not exist in the proper ontological sense), but towards resurrection hope and the unity of one to an Other.

- Hermina Nedelescu, Scripps Research Institute

*The Neurobiological Basis of Motivated Behavior and Orthodox Christians during the COVID Pandemic*

Though a science-theology dialogue has flourished in the last three decades of the twentieth century with a number of institutions and scholarly disciplines devoted to the relationships between science and theology, a serious consideration of the relationship between theology and modern neuroscience in particular remains elusive. The presentation will put the disciplines of Orthodox Christian theology and modern neuroscience in conversation with one another through an analysis of Orthodox Christian behavioral responses to the COVID pandemic. The presentation will first provide an overall view of neuroscience, neurotheology, and artificial manipulation to influence behavior. The presentation will then present work from laboratory studies and discuss the questions this work raises for Christian theology, especially from an Orthodox perspective, with a focus on specific behavioral responses observed during the COVID pandemic.

**A21-414**  
Ecclesial Practices Unit  
Theme: Young People and Ecclesial Imagination in Times of Crisis  
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)  
Sarah Kathleen Johnson, Vancouver School of Theology, Presiding

This panel of papers addresses a variety of ecclesial practices related to youth and young adults experiencing catastrophes, crises, and/or traumatic events. By paying theological attention to the stories and experiences of young people as they contend with catastrophic times, these papers disclose imaginative possibilities for revisioning ecclesial embodiments of hope beyond existing theological categories and paradigms of practice.

- Eunil David Cho, Boston University  
  Wonchul Shin, Villanova University

*Practicing Radical Hope in the Face of Violent Uncertainty: How Undocumented Young*
**Adults Tell Religious Stories to Reimagine Their Future in the US**

By examining the stories of undocumented Asian American young adults with DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), this paper examines how undocumented young adults turn to religion to cope with their experience of uncertainty and imagine a new path toward flourishing in the US. Their stories indicate that from adolescence to young adulthood, they struggle with the aversive state of personal and structural uncertainty, which leads them to experience narrative identity foreclosure. The foreclosure of identity suggests that these undocumented young adults gain a premature conviction that their life story has effectively ended. Their capability to imagine their future and pursuit of flourishing are violently foreclosed: “My story is over.” The paper concludes by analyzing how these young adults engage in faith-based social action to embody and practice "radical hope, which enables them to develop “imaginative excellence” in the face of structural uncertainty to create new stories toward flourishing.

- Mary Scine, Flagler College

**Catastrophe In The Lives Of Young People On The Margins, And The Church’s Response**

Catastrophe reaches to the lives of young people. This three-year research study focused on churches that centered their attention on youth typically marginalized by society and the church (youth in the foster care system, teen parents, youth with varied abilities, LGBTQIA+ youth, under-resourced youth, and youth focused on racial equity). In addition, these churches encountered unforeseen additional catastrophic challenges of racial division, political uprising, the COVID19 pandemic, and legislative initiatives to further alienate youth the churches were seeking to engage. This paper serves to summarize the lived experience of the focus groups from the research project, highlight the various catastrophic experiences in context, speak to the intersectionality of these marginalized groups, share the culminating findings from the research focus groups, and highlight newer practices pointing to hope as found by the cohort participants.

- Wai-Yin Christina Wong, Chinese University of Hong Kong

**“Ecclesial imagination” in a Moment of Kairos: A Study of Christian Youth Protest Against the Church in Hong Kong**

This paper will study this case to see the internal politics and external political environment to trigger the group of Christian youth protest against the Church. Through a specific empirical church conflict in Hong Kong just after the 2019 protests, the study can inspire our new understanding of “ecclesial imagination” by Hong Kong Christian youth. This small-scale empirical research significantly stimulate us to look for future reconciliation of opposing political stances in the Church in Hong Kong.
This panel reconsiders guilt, blame, and moral justification in circumstances of genocide, compromised moral agency, and oppression. Each presentation employs concrete case studies to extend enduring questions concerning moral culpability to pervasively unjust states of affairs: (1) How does Bonhoeffer’s Christological warrant for violating what he regarded an "intrinsic law" of state inform his teachings about guilt? (2) How might blame be justly assigned to individuals for racial biases that are communally inculcated, particularly in Christian churches? (3) In light of the ongoing killings of unarmed Black people by law enforcement officers and vigilantes, under what conditions is violent protest justified? Collectively, these papers refine prevailing norms for ethical accountability and action to guide morally appropriate resistance against injustice.

- Joseph Lim, University of Notre Dame

*Blame for Circumstance-Induced Racist Traits*

Many anti-racists affirm two principles: (1) that certain circumstances are powerful enough to shape our character traits, and (2) that individuals cannot be blamed for traits unless their origins causally "trace" to acts over which the trait-bearing agent bore sufficient control. Two circumstances thought by many to be especially powerful are racist biases and stereotypes. Given the power of these circumstances to implant racist traits apart from an individual's deliberation and will, one might doubt whether individuals can be blamed for possessing these traits. This is an especially troubling loss for Christians, given (A) statistical correlations in many communities between Christian belief and racist traits, and (B) the church's historical (and continuing) complicities in racial harms. I argue in my paper that blame for untraceable, circumstance-induced traits remains justified and essential to moral performance. This is because trait-blame attains its functions even when it is directed toward untraceable traits.

- Dallas Gingles, Southern Methodist University

*Christ, Intrinsic Laws, and Guilt in Bonhoeffer's "History and the Good 2"

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's "History and the Good II" describes a willingness to "take on guilt." I argue that in this manuscript Bonhoeffer is not deploying a generic category of guilt, but rather the guilt that comes from breaking what Bonhoeffer calls the “intrinsic law” of state. Bonhoeffer’s account of this intrinsic law is deeply tied to a long Christological argument that precedes it. Understood this way, Bonhoeffer’s argument is much more cautious and careful than traditionally understood by either his supporters or
critics.

- Olaoluwatoni Alimi, Princeton University

*When* Is Violent Resistance Permissible? The Analogy of Just War

Those who judge war as sometimes permissible have good reasons to believe that violent protest is sometimes permissible. I show this by examining the criteria for just war and arguing that each of 7 standard criteria are or can be reformulated to be analogous to the case of violent protest. Since violent protest almost always has less devastating direct effects than war, if violent protest can meet the criteria, it is difficult to see how war could be permissible and violent protest not. This paper thus also provides normative constraints on when and how violent protest is permissible.

A21-432
Full Papers Available
New Program Unit
**Foucault and the Study of Religion Seminar**
Theme: *Sex, Ethics, & the Flesh in Foucault*
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Daniel Wyche, University of Chicago, Presiding

The question of sex has always been central to both the work of Michel Foucault, and significant portions of the literature on and inspired by Foucault’s research. This theme has taken on new and exciting dimensions with the recent publication and translation of *Confessions of the Flesh*, the fourth volume of the *History of Sexuality*. This seminar works beyond our conversations on sex and the flesh in the early Christian context last year, ranging into a number of questions around sex, bodies, religion, and resistance both intimately tied to Foucault’s project, and through sources and questions which are often striking in their absence from Foucault's research. This seminar engages these and related questions through readings that place Foucault in dialogue with Jewish thought, Freud, Stoic forms of thought and life, and questions around the nature of resistance, secularity, and “religion” itself. Papers will be pre-circulated.

- Louis Ruprecht, Georgia State University

*Foucault, Ethics and Religion: Beyond Freidian Stoicism*

That Foucault had ethical and political commitments is not seriously in dispute (who does not?). Yet Foucault decried traditionally progressive and radical politics in large part because of what he saw as their superficial conception of power. It has been unclear how to derive an ethics from Foucault’s work; it has been equally unclear whether Foucault would have welcomed the attempt. A fruitful approach might be to ask how Foucault positioned himself against and alongside Freud, who may be read as a modern exponent of Stoicism. Foucault’s relationship to ancient Stoicism is complex. While “the use of pleasure” seems a singularly non-Stoic idea, “the care of the self” certainly is, and “confessions of the flesh” represent a compelling Christian translation of Stoic ideas into
a new idiom and a new set of practices. What, then, was Foucault’s emerging relationship to ancient, and modern, Stoicism? I offer six possibilities here.

- Maureen Kelly, University of Chicago

*Truth-Telling: on Foucault, Christianity, and Comparison*

In the late work, Foucault rehearses the generative critical questions of the comparison between the sexual ethics of Greco-Roman antiquity and early Christianity. From his turn to antiquity after the publication of *the History of Sexuality volume 1* in 1978, and in the Collège de France lectures from *On the Government of the Living* in 1979 – 1980, Foucault stages his readings of ancient thought and practice against the critical questions he poses to modern subjectivity. From the confessions of HSV1 to the spiritual exercises of the late work, the practice of truth-telling is a thread Foucault compares across contexts in order to examine different modes of subject formation. In this paper, I raise truth-telling as a site to understand the function of comparison, the larger critical project, the place of early Christianity in Foucault’s work, and its stakes for the study of Religion.

- Kirsten Collins, University of Chicago

*That Other Fornication: Judaism, Race and Flesh in Foucault's Concept of Critique*

This paper examines Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France in 1975-6, in connection with his discussions of Kant’s *Was ist Aufklärung* in 1978 through 1982, with reference to J. Kameron Carter’s account of the Christian theological origins of race in his 2008 *Race: A Theological Account*. It seeks to show how the concept of race in Foucault's lectures of 1977-6 is inextricable from a Christian concept of religion that subordinates Judaism and its "fleshy" hermeneutics through a process of transformation that gives rise to the modern critical subject in the account of *Les Aveux de la chair*. Through this project, it asks: what is the concept of religion in Foucault? How is religion related to race? And how can the suppressed figure of Judaism in Foucault's thought on critique be read to show how race and religion are related as grounds for the production of truth that resists authority?

- Donovan Schaefer, University of Pennsylvania

*Power-Knowledge-Pleasure: Rethinking the Religious/Secular Binary with Foucault*

Michel Foucault’s *History of Sexuality, Vol. I* is organized around a reworking of his previously articulated formula of “power-knowledge.” As suggested by the French title of the book—*La Volonté de Savoir*, “The Will to Knowledge”—Foucault’s interest in HSVI is closely connected with a project that redefines the nature of scientific knowledge itself, not as the neutral advance of reason, but as intimately intercalated with formations of feeling. He argues for a reorientation to what he calls “power-knowledge-pleasure.” This paper will proceed in two sections. First, I reassess HSVI in light of Foucault’s motif of power-knowledge-pleasure. Second, I connect this motif to Saba Mahmood’s essay.
“Religious Reason and Secular Affect,” suggesting that she and Foucault converge in their assessment of secular rationality as organized by pleasure, rather than an internal logic of truth-making. I conclude by suggesting that this provides a new method for destabilizing the religious/secular binary.

- Ellen T. Armour, Vanderbilt University

Resourcing Resistance to Bio-disciplinary Power: A Case Study

“Where there is power, there is resistance,” Foucault wrote (The History of Sexuality, Vol. I, p. 95). However, it seems as though most of the research in Foucault studies (including in religious studies) has focused on naming and tracking the structures and dynamics of modern (bio-disciplinary) power. And for very good reason. We can only talk about resistance once we know what needs to be resisted. That research has provided critical insights into bio-disciplinary power’s hold over us – which can seem overwhelming, at times. Effective resistance needs resources. In this paper, I will explore this issue with a particular eye for religion as a resource for resistance with reference to my forthcoming book, Seeing and Believing: Religion, Digital Visual Culture, and the Struggle for Social Justice (forthcoming from Columbia University Press).

A21-416
Books under Discussion
Hindu Philosophy Unit and Sikh Studies Unit
Theme: Roundtable on Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair's Sikh Philosophy: Exploring Gurmat Concepts in a Decolonizing World (Bloomsbury, 2022)
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Puninder Singh, University of Michigan, Presiding

Sikh philosophy has typically, when it has been discussed at all, been subsumed within the ambit of area studies or religious studies. More particularly it has usually only been discussed in the context of other religions/philosophies of South Asia, especially the Vedic/Hindu or the Sufi. This roundtable aims to bring together a group of scholars to discuss a new book on Sikh Philosophy that addresses this lacuna by going beyond its usual confines of area studies or solely religious studies paradigms. Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair’s Sikh Philosophy: Exploring gurmat Concepts in a Decolonizing World (Bloomsbury, 2022) aims to bring Sikh philosophy into engagement with a wider sphere, that of global philosophies. Sensitive to both the historical formation of Sikh thought, and to the decolonial context, the book examines some of the key concepts of Sikh philosophy and how they inform its vision of life.

Panelists

Jeffery D. Long, Elizabethtown College
Ananda Abeysekara, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam
Rita Dhamoon, University of Victoria
Responding

Arvind Mandair, University of Michigan

A21-417
Islamic Mysticism Unit and Religious Conversions Unit
Theme: Initiation: Conversion By Another Name?
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Linda Mercadante, Methodist Theological School in Ohio, Presiding

“Initiation” has been a longstanding paradigm for understanding personal religious transformation in a variety of religious communities and contexts, in both the orient and occident, in ancient religions through New Religious Movements. How does “initiation” as a paradigm for religious transformation compare to that of “conversion” in an initiatory context, especially in the context of Islamic Mysticism? How are they similar and how are they different? Or does “initiation” amount to “conversion” by another name? How does the study of initiation challenge the assumptions of the conversion paradigm and contemporary conversions studies? This panel aims to answer these questions by examining Western Sufism, Sufism in Kurdistan, and Ahamdiyya in America.

• Rebecca Faulkner, Princeton University

American Ahmadiyya in the 1920s

My paper highlights an early twentieth century Islamic newspaper called Muslim Sunrise published by Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957), the leader of an Ahmadiyya community in the midwest United States. The Muslim Sunrise newspaper, first published in 1921, provides insight into religious conversion to Muslim groups in the U.S. The rhetoric emphasizes racial and gender equality. It also argues for a syncretic approach to a wide range of historical figures, including Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, and Confucius. The Muslim Sunrise introduces Islam in general and the Ahmadiyya movement in particular to its American audience. Each of these aspects of the newspaper speak to the wider context of religious revival of the time, dominant tropes in the public understanding of Islam and Muslims, and the navigation and creation of new identities.

• Mark Sedgwick, Aarhus University

Initiation and Conversion in Western Sufism

Initiation and conversion have been closely related in the history of Western Sufism. This paper goes back to 1910 and takes three different cases of this relationship, the Guénonian and Inayati Sufi traditions, and the more recent instance of the Naqshbandiyya-Haqqaniyya. All three emphasized initiation over conversion in principle, but in practice initiation into Sufism generally proved to be conversion to Islam by another name in two of the three cases—but not in the third. The most obvious
explanation of this, the paper argues, is proximity to Islam in practice. The closer leading Sufis were to Islam, the greater the likelihood of initiation becoming conversion.

- Edith Szanto, University of Alabama

*Joining the Kasnazani Order: The Politics of Initiation and Conversion in Iraqi Kurdistan*

According to Richard Eaton, there are four historical reasons for conversion to Islam: force, political patronage, business opportunities, and Sufi healing. Iraqi Kurds are generally Sunni and many in recent years have either become Salafi or have left Islam altogether. Others have sought more traditional forms of piety, especially Sufism. But for what reasons and does that constitute initiation, conversion, or both? Two Sufi orders dominate Iraqi Kurdistan: Qadiri and Naqshbandis. A significant subset of the Qadiriyya is the Kasnazani order. All of these are led by hereditary shaykhs whose families control local political parties. In other words, Sufi initiation requires political allegiance, but also holds promises such as healing, patronage, and opportunities. Tracing notions of conversion and initiation in Iraqi Kurdistan throughout the last century, this paper argues that physical and spiritual healing are closely tied to political allegiance and thus complicate straightforward definitions of “initiation” and “conversion.”

A21-418
**Japanese Religions Unit and Hagiography Society**
**Theme:** Holy Death, People and Places: Reincarnation, Resurrection, Martyrdom, and the Ambiguity of Death
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Anna Harrison, Loyola Marymount University, Presiding

Our panel concerns hagiographic representations of holy death and afterlife. It treats cross-cultural material and takes up four religious traditions: Shinto, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. Papers focus on ancient, late antique, and medieval preoccupations with holiness through close readings of texts that center on dying, death, and the afterlife, including resurrection and reincarnation. Among the larger considerations of our panel is attention to holy death as a means of exploring similarities and differences between and among religious traditions’ conceptions of holiness associated with specific people and divinities, a topic the respondent will address explicitly. Panelists bring a variety of methodologies and theoretical approaches and have diverse disciplinary commitments: anthropology, historical theology, and history.

- Eric Swanson, Loyola Marymount University

*Animating the Compassion of the Dharma King: An Assessment of Jien’s Vision of Prince Shōtoku in Exaltations of the Imperial Prince in Five Sections*

This presentation is an analysis of *Exaltations of the Imperial Prince in Five Sections* (Jp.
Kōtaishi godan tandoku), a liturgical text composed by Buddhist monk Jien (1155-1225). This text features Prince Shōtoku (574-622), a regent known for his contributions to constitutional governance and patronage of Buddhism. Composed hundreds of years after the death of this legendary prince, the text reveals a careful negotiation of existing hagiographic accounts and Jien’s innovations that provided a method of venerating the prince as a historical figure of the distant past, but also animated in the present, his salvific compassion as the manifestation of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. By placing this text within the social historical context of Jien’s activities and analyzing how it effectively embedded hagiographic accounts into its liturgical structure, I argue that the text reflects a hagiographic process that sought to legitimize Jien’s soteriological and political vision at the turn of the 13th century.

- Jesse Drian, University of Southern California

Dead Connections: The Affective and Devotional Reception of Death and Deification in Itsukushima no honji

This presentation argues that the genre of “original form narratives” (honji monogatari), which recount the past life of individual Japanese deities, employed a hagiographical structure designed to close the distance—both geographic and personal—between deities and devotees. Taking The Original Form of Itsukushima (Itsukushima no honji, earliest manuscript dated 1346) as a case study, I show how the text employs literary tropes of separation and reunion to encourage an affective response from the audience. Consequentially, the movement from death in India to deification in Japan transforms the audience’s emotional sympathy to reverent worship. In this manner, I show how the mixed agency between hagiographical producers and consumers influenced the structure and function of original form narratives as devotional sacred texts.

- Roy Fisher, Loyola Marymount University

Holy Martyrs in 2 Maccabees and Matthew’s Jesus

In this paper I explore the holy martyrs narratives of 2 Maccabees 6:9b-7:42 as potential intertexts for understanding the figuration of Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew. In this reading, the afterlives (what art historian Aby Warburg called Nachleben) of these Jewish martyrs become part of the material by which Matthew can make sense of Jesus’ own righteous death. Reading 2 Maccabees as a key intertext for Matthew, I argue, not only provides a framework for understanding Jesus’s death as that of a holy martyr within the Gospel according to Matthew, but it also reinforces the claim that Matthew is best located amidst the larger milieu of Second Temple Jewish literature. The martyrs of 2 Maccabees are thus taken up into the textual fabric of Matthew an early example Christian-Jewish hagiographic intertextuality.

- Charlotte Radler, Loyola Marymount University

“Marvelous in Life and Death: Christina the Astonishing as Co-Redemptrix and
In his hagiography on Christina the Astonishing (1150-1224) from 1232, Thomas of Cantimpré (1200-1270) sketches an audacious apostolate in which Christina as a living dead helps to bring salvation to her community. However, Christina’s excessive and self-inflicted physical anguish has been met with great unease and skepticism. In this paper, I challenge modern readings of Christina’s *vita* that sever her incomprehensible and “unreal” bodily agony from her comprehensible and “real” mendicancy. I argue that Christina’s extravagant bodily affliction *as well as* her mendicancy constitute for Thomas a comprehensive apostolate. In the hagiography, Thomas intrepidly conveys the message that Christina, as a living dead serves as a co-redemptrix and mendicant preacher, teacher, and prophet. It is this multivalent composite that renders her *vita* a potentially subversive counterscript, which dissents from the cultural roles prescribed for medieval women both in the Middle Ages and today.

**Responding**

Nikolas Hoel, Northeastern Illinois University

**A21-419**  
**Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions Unit**  
Theme: *Reading Luther’s Influences: Political, Mystical, and Scriptural Theologies*  
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)  
Kristen E. Kvam, Saint Paul School of Theology, Presiding

This papers session examines Martin Luther’s life and thought with fresh historical perspective. Each paper interrogates historical currents that influenced Luther, the transformation of those currents in Luther’s imagination and writing, and Luther’s own influence on traditions that followed. The first paper in this session explores Luther’s political theology, inquiring into Luther’s theory of government and reflecting upon its reception in the 20th century. The second paper turns to Luther’s engagement with apophatic and mystical theologies, such as those by Pseudo-Dionysius and Jean Gerson. Taking Luther’s sense that mystical theology was primarily experiential rather than doctrinal, this paper explores the value of the mature Luther’s understanding of the darkness of faith. The final paper concludes the session with Luther’s scriptural theology. Examining modes of biblical interpretation through Luther’s reading of Deuteronomy, one finds that Luther’s understanding of the text is deeply influenced by his understanding of Moses’ humanity.

- Annette G. Aubert, Westminster Theological Seminary

*The Political Theology of Martin Luther*

Martin Luther’s newly discovered theology was foundational for his political ideas. The paper addresses important themes associated with his political theology by examining his political treatises and other writings in which he expresses his ideas on government. Luther differed from others in that his political thought was essentially theological—
similar to Augustine, his political views were closely tied to aspects of theological anthropology. In light of negative modern assessments of his political views, it is important to understand how Luther injected political ideas into the context of the Reformation, as well as how he relied on theological sources in formulating those ideas. The paper also examines Luther’s thoughts on government and their reception in twentieth-century Germany.

- Samuel Dubbelman, Boston University

*Martin Luther and Mystical Theology*

Scholarship on Luther's relationship to Dionysius the Areopagite has yet to consider which version of Dionysius Luther may have read and how he may have read it. Rather than reading Dionysius's *De mystica theologia* in a humanistic fashion, Luther gathered his understanding of the treatise in a more scholastic manner and largely from the writings of Jean Gerson. But by the end of the summer of 1519, Luther read Johann Eck's edition of the treatise and the change in books led to a change in perspective. Luther's early writings were cautious about the relationship of mystical to proper theology, but after 1519 Luther warned his students to avoid any immediate cognition of the Divine whatsoever. The paper ends by reconstructing Luther’s understanding of *mystica theologia* as a concept and questioning its utility in describing Luther’s mature teachings on the darkness of faith.

- Tapio Leinonen, University of Helsinki

*God’s Word with a Human Touch: Luther on the Human Experience of Moses the Narrator*

This paper examines Luther’s ideas about biblical interpretation and how he understood the human experience of the biblical narrators behind the Scripture. The paper looks closely at how Luther elaborates the life experience of Moses as the narrator of the Deuteronomy through Luther’s Lectures on Deuteronomy (1525). The paper presents and analyzes passages of Luther’s teaching in the Lectures and argues that Luther saw Moses’ human attributes affecting the biblical text. Luther points out in many passages that the human experience of Moses has influenced the text. Through such examples, the paper shows that in Luther’s understanding the Scripture contains God’s Word with traces of the experience and personal attributes of the human narrator of the text, Moses. The paper argues, that Luther’s principle of sola scriptura includes the presence of the human mediator of God’s Word within the Scripture itself.

**Business Meeting**

Kristen E. Kvam, Saint Paul School of Theology, Presiding
Jacob Erickson, Trinity College, Dublin, Presiding
A21–420
Moral Injury and Recovery in Religion, Society, and Culture Unit
Theme: Moral Injury, Agency, and Experience
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Michael Yandell, Emory University, Presiding
Joseph Wiinikka-Lydon, Guilford College, Presiding

- Connie Bahng, Boston University

*A Thurmanite-Han Account of Receptive Moral Injury*

This paper builds upon Larry Graham’s receptive moral injury by engaging Howard Thurman’s *Jesus and the Disinherited* and the Korean category of Han and Jeong in Wonhee Ann Joh’s *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*. In doing so, my paper seeks to contribute insight from the embodied, felt experience of receptive moral injury of marginalized and the impact receptive moral injury has on moral agency and self-conception. Lastly, I turn to Thurman’s genuine fellowship and Joh’s Jeong to construct how possible healing in receptive moral injury is incorporates both social, systemic, and embodied transformation.

- Brian Powers, Durham University

*Moral Injury in a Polarised world: A typology based on Agency*

Moral injury (MI), as experienced from different perspectives, is a violation, either at a fixed moment or in a systemic fashion, of our basic understanding of justice and humanity. As MI is identified outside of military contexts, there is an increasing danger that existing typologies are insufficient to describe and authentically locate the different experiences of MI in the complex landscape of agency and responsibility. One of the positive aspects of MI is its conceptual capacity to suspend a simplistic sense of blame for individuals in order to hold together those caught up in unjust systems. This paper will propose that in order to safeguard this capacity against the temptation to assign greater and lesser merit to differing forms of MI that comes with its identification in diverse contexts, we might consider a spectrum within the broader category of MI between what it will term “active-agential MI” and “situational-agential MI.”

- Lily An Kim, McMaster University

*Black Nursing and Moral Distress in the History of Disabilities Primary Care*

In W.E.B. DuBois’ work (*The Souls of Black Folk*), a Black man’s life was defined as one of “double consciousness.” This thematic connection to emancipation struggles can be further explored through the history of Black nursing and disabilities primary care, following the rise of eugenics or racial theories that undergirded the *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882*. In subsequent conversations on grief, trauma and caring for the “feeble,” a
greater appreciation of female resistance can be gained from understanding social disablism within an intersectional framework of debilitating exclusion, inequities in healthcare, and prevailing moral injury that resulted. In a shift towards intercultural reconciliation, the notion of “double consciousness” from Souls has more to say about women and the voices that needed to be amplified for inclusion in a (post)pandemic world.

**A21-421**

**Music and Religion Unit**  
Theme: *Ethics, Affect, and Political Theology through Song*  
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)  
Alisha L. Jones, Indiana University, Presiding

Musical performance is a powerful site for the working out of collectivity, cooperation, and contestation through political struggle. Though each of these three papers addresses a fundamentally different moment in a completely distinct subaltern confrontation with power, they share a conviction that musical affect can and does form the tip of the political spear.

- **Melanie Hill**, Rutgers University  
  *Sermonic Proclamation and Sacred Song: Reimagining the Prophetic Grace of Aretha Franklin*

  *Sermonic Proclamation and Sacred Song: Reimagining the Prophetic Grace of Aretha Franklin* returns to the impact of the sermon in contemporary times, reimagining the sound of the sermon through the performances of the late Queen of Soul, Ms. Aretha Franklin. By analyzing Franklin’s performances, this paper examines how the sermonic spaces Franklin creates within and outside of the church are reminiscent of the five characteristics of the Black sacred preaching tradition: functional, festive, communal, radical, and climactic. Putting in conversation Franklin’s lyrics in conjunction with song through a homiletical lens and a sermonic aesthetic, this paper uses the art of the sermon and the intersection of music to examine the impact of Aretha Franklin’s profound sacred music legacy.

- **Nathan Myrick**, Mercer University  
  *Crowd Surfing in a Wheelchair: Trauma, Diversity, and Radical Hospitality at Furnace Fest XX[i]*

  This paper suggests that such a conversation was enabled by a shared assumption of trauma and a posture of holding space for each other to work through their trauma. Drawing from over 300 survey responses, and over 40 in person and zoom interviews, I further argue that trauma is the meta context of hardcore scenes’ values such as unity, equality, freedom, and authenticity (Mullaney 2007; Mall 2015, 2020; Bolt 2016; Frese 2017; Abraham et al 2020; etc), and that the peculiar constellation of trauma associated with evangelicalism (Gushee 2008; Ingalls 2018; Teitelbaum 2019; etc) for the post-
Christian hardcore scene configures such openness to what is often termed “dysfunction” by punk communities. Such radical hospitality seems to find voice in the violence of the music, where individuals can work out their wounds in safety and acceptance.

- Andrew Ronnevik, Baylor University

*Dissonant/Dissident Drumbeats: Dalits, Music, and Affective Political Theology*

This paper examines the role of music in the political theology of Dalit people, the so-called untouchables of India. Drawing from ethnomusicology, affect theory, and Christian theology, I argue that music is a central and powerful force—symbolically, liturgically, practically—in Dalit resistance to caste. My paper is structured around three claims: 1) existing accounts of the politics of music can be deepened through greater attention to affects; 2) Dalit theology productively exemplifies these musical-affective politics; and 3) such musical dynamics merit attention in political theology more broadly. As seen in selected Dalit theological work, Dalit music attunes to and evokes a range of politically salient emotions, from anger and distress to joy. In a context where conventional political operations have failed to establish justice for Dalits, Dalit drumming and song become an expression of subaltern identity, community, and agency. Here, the musical-affective is political, and the political is musical-affective.

**Business Meeting**

Joshua Busman, University of North Carolina, Pembroke, Presiding
Alisha L. Jones, Indiana University, Presiding

A21-422
**North American Religions Unit**
Theme: *Earth, Water, Wind, and Fire: A Roundtable on Religion and the Anthropocene in North America*
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Sarah McFarland Taylor, Northwestern University, Presiding

Debates among geologists and climate scientists about the Anthropocene abound – Is the Holocene really over? Has the human-nature scale tilted to such a degree that changes to the climate can be ascribed to human forces more so than natural processes? Meanwhile, scholars of the humanities and social sciences have entered the discussion, with theologians, philosophers, and ethicists leading the way in testing the reality and relevancy of the Anthropocene to our understanding of relations between society-culture-nature-subjectivity. This is where our proposed roundtable joins the conversation. Using the classical elements of earth, water, wind, and fire, we speculate upon the role, and perhaps the responsibility of religious studies scholars to consider the evolution of religious beliefs and practices in North America alongside the stories we tell and the stories we are told about so-called “natural disasters” and other catastrophes that sharpen our understanding of the temporality of the Anthropocene.
Panelists

Judith Ellen Brunton, University of Toronto
Michael Pasquier, Louisiana State University
Peter Thuesen, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis
Sarah M. Pike, California State University, Chico

Responding

Richard Callahan, Gonzaga University

A21-423
Political Theology Unit and Secularism and Secularity Unit
Theme: Decolonial Critiques of the Secular/Religious Divide
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Santiago H. Slabodsky, Hofstra University, Presiding

This roundtable joins senior and junior scholars from different disciplines to challenge one aspect of the theory/practice divide in the academy: the coloniality of the secular/religious divide. Rooted in Latin American liberation philosophies and theologies, Caribbean anticolonial thought, women of color feminisms, Indigenous religions traditions, among other areas of inquiry and practice, the scholars in this roundtable contest epistemically hegemonic conceptions of “the secular” and “the religious” by specifically locating how processes of colonization have constituted these categories as objects of study. A decolonial critique of the secular/religious divide is at stake in this dialogue.

Panelists

Laura Perez, University of California, Berkeley
Eduardo Mendieta, State University of New York, Stony Brook
Natalie Avalos, University of Colorado
Rafael Vizcaino, DePaul University

Responding

An Yountae, California State University, Northridge

A21-424
Pragmatism and Empiricism in American Religious Thought Unit
Theme: Social Practice, Embodiment, and the Formation of Habit
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Joseph Winters, Duke University, Presiding

Our mission is to foster the advancement and understanding of the pragmatic and empiricist traditions in American religious thought, as well as the intersections of those traditions with other methodologies, intellectual figures, artistic movements, communities, and issues. This Unit
is concerned with critically interrogating, evaluating, and developing the insights and relevance of the pragmatic and empiricist traditions of American thought, broadly construed, for the study of religion and theology, with attention both to the historical interpretation of ideas and contemporary developments within this critical sphere of philosophical and theological reflection. Recent areas of interest include pragmatism and democracy, the continued relevance of empiricism to the revival of pragmatism, multidisciplinary aspects of the tradition (intersections with other fields of inquiry), overlaps with cultural criticism and analyses of gender and race, and the application of pragmatic and empiricist analyses to contemporary problems.

- Patrick Haley, Princeton Theological Seminary

*Appealing to the Imago Dei: A Neopragmatist Approach to Speech-Acts and Normative Status*

Debates over the *imago Dei* are so intractable that we are left to question what use this concept could have for ethics and politics. Yet the *imago* continues to play an important role in social criticism. To justify its continued use, I argue for a new, pragmatic understanding of speech-acts that reference the *imago Dei*. I draw on Melvin Rogers’s important study of appeals in relation to David Walker’s famous *Appeal*. Rogers shows how speech-acts like appeals can call a normative status like citizenship into existence. Then I develop a theory of *imago Dei* references that parallels Rogers’s, though diverging with respect to the responsibilities and expectations placed on citizens versus image-bearers. Finally, I acknowledge that there will still be disagreements about what constitutes right applications of the *imago Dei*; and so I examine how different traditions of *imago Dei* use might converse with and contest one another.

- Michael Raposa, Lehigh University

*Martial Arts as Embodied Cognition: A Pragmatist Analysis*

This paper explores how martial artists can train themselves to think not just *in* but *with* their bodies, to “read” an encounter and then reread it creatively, throughout the process employing a distinctive language for which the human body itself provides the basic vocabulary. I draw not only on the resources furnished by semiotics and philosophical pragmatism, but also on recent theories of “embodied cognition” developed in modern psychology. I propose that skill developed in “thinking with the body” is essential for the resolution of certain conflicts, both those that are experienced internally as some form of psychic pain and those that arise between or among persons and groups. This proposal is linked to a further account—one that can be articulated in religious and ethical terms—about what it means to talk about the “love of enemies” within the ideological context supplied by certain martial arts (especially aikido).

- Luke Zerra, Princeton Theological Seminary
Liturgical Formation and the Pragmatics of Language

Philosophers of religion, theologians, and ethicists have rightly turned to questions of liturgy, ritual, and social practice in recent decades. This paper addresses the potential contribution of Lance's pragmatic account of language to moral reflection on religious social practice. This paper does so by placing James K.A. Smith's Cultural Liturgies series in conversation with Quill Kukla and Mark Lance's Yo! And Lo! The Pragmatic Topography of the Space of Reasons. Where Smith offers a passive account of liturgy's formative power, Kukla and Lance provide tools for considering how agents take up the claims made in the liturgy. This is key for giving an account of how liturgy's use in social critique and protest, which will be explored in the final section in conversation with religious ethicists such as William Cavanaugh, Amy Levad, and Jeffrey Stout.

- Keith Menhinick, Emory University

Confronting Racist Habits: Practical Theological Implications of William James's View of Habit Change

Racism and privilege are habitual orientations located at the bodily level, not merely at the level of intention and consciousness. Engaging contemporary critical race thinkers, I explore how William James’s psychological-pragmatic perspective on habit opens up fresh insight into the nature and function of racist habits. Specifically, James’s metaphors of “habits as scars” and “habits as grooved pathways” help deepen conceptualizations of racism as bodily habit and how we might appropriately intervene. Given the difficulty, even implausibility, of completely erasing racist habits, I consider how James’s view of habit change through habit replacement translates into practical theological approaches for confronting whiteness and developing more racially just pedagogies and practices that gradually orient the body in new habitual ways of being.

Business Meeting

Joseph Winters, Duke University, Presiding
Karen-Louise Rucks-Walker, Quinsigamond Community College, Presiding

A21-401
Professional Development - Publishing
Publications Committee
Theme: Women in Publishing
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Andrea Jain, Indiana University - Purdue University, Indianapolis, Presiding

This panel brings together women successful as editors and book authors to discuss some of the unique challenges women face in the publishing process, issues ranging from gender bias in book reviews to juggling teaching, service, or child-rearing while writing books. In addition to sharing about their experiences and how they felt gender shaped or influenced them, panelists...
will offer advice and support to women with regard to their publishing goals.

Panelists

Alda Balthrop-Lewis, Australian Catholic University
Amanda Lucia, University of California, Riverside
Irene Oh, George Washington University
Aline Kalbian, Florida State University

A21-425
Queer Studies in Religion Unit
Theme: The Trans Sounds of Black Freedom: Identifying Embedded Socio-emotional Assets in House Ball Families: Implications for HIV prevention, Grass Roots Organizing and a new understanding of a Theology of Liberation
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Michael Roberson, Center for Race, Religion, and Economic Democracy, Presiding

This workshop convenes an array of scholars, via a roundtable format, from different disciplines outside of the realm of theology (Public Health, Community Organizing, Cultural and Performance Studies) and place them in conversation with those who work in theology, both as a dialectic to each other and in concert with one another, as an attempt to create the ethical imperative for the need for this new emerging liberation theology emerging from the ethos of the black/Latinx LGBT House/ball Ballroom community situated through a federal NIH research project. The aim is to place the HBC in conversation with both other global and historical struggles, and other liberation theologies, while moving beyond the limitations and the confines of the pathological gaze of a particular public health lens, particularly repositioning the impact of HIV/AIDS on the HBC, less as a public health crisis and more of a theological problem.

Panelists

Charlene Sinclair, Union Theological Seminary

A21-426
Religion and Science Fiction Unit
Theme: Cyborgs and Subjectivity: Impacts of Apocalypse on The Self
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Emanuelle Burton, University of Illinois, Chicago, Presiding

These papers discuss the role of subjectivity, alterity, and religious conflict on the boundaries of the construction of a self. Each of these papers wrestles with the reconceptualization of who/what gets to be a subject in three distinct speculative worlds.

- Jordan Conley, Boston University
  John Balch, Boston University
So Say We All: Battlestar Galactica and Environmental Humanities

The 2004 science fiction television series, *Battlestar Galactica*, has long attracted the interests of religious studies scholars. This paper considers the enduring appeal of the series, and its ability to speak to the future as well as the past as it presents its audience with a vision of life after the apocalypse. In accordance with the 2022 AAR theme of “catastrophe,” this paper first outlines some of the central themes of the series, including the notion that it is through perpetual cycles of catastrophe that humanity is defined and rejuvenated. Secondly, this paper focuses specifically on the role of the robotic cylons in *Battlestar Galactica* and how they are motivated by religion. Ultimately, the series invites the viewer to gain a different perspective on the historical spread of world religions, and this paper re-examines the religious themes of *Battlestar Galactica* through the theoretical lens of the environmental humanities.

- Stephen Garner, Laidlaw College

*Nurturing the Ghost in the Shell: Human Flourishing in Post-Apocalyptic Science Fiction*

Science fiction plays an important role in exploring the impact of science and technology on human beings, as well as serving as a mirror reflecting contemporary societies and cultures. In doing this many popular science fiction narratives provide a safe space to ask critical questions about our current world, and, to what extent technology and human technological agency compromise our essential humanness. This paper will argue that while the portrayal of most post-catastrophic popular science fiction seeks to align technology with the dehumanizing of persons, narratives such as *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) provide the space to reflect on the ambiguity of technological development, including issues of social justice and technology in the everyday world, and whether technology might itself be a vehicle for human flourishing both physically and spirituality, even to developing its own ‘soul’.

- Girim Jung, Wesleyan College

*Techno-Orientalism and the Commodification of Asian Religious Cultures in the Wachowski's Matrix Series*

This paper examines the commodification of Asian religious cultures and subjectivities in US science fiction through the analytic of techno-orientalism and virtual orientalism. Specifically, I unpack the process separating Asian spiritualities and philosophies from Asian bodies to Romanize them as spiritual technologies adopted by white liberal subjects resisting the latter figured as “Yellow Peril” or dystopian repressive corporate regimes. This symbolizes the zeitgeist of late 20th-early 20th Century United States: anxiety over the economic success of East Asian nation-states that threatens Western hegemony over the ‘rest.’

I analyze the Wachowskis’ *Matrix* series as extractive to further their aesthetic vision,
ideology, and cultural critique. The *Matrix* series exemplifies techno-orientalism by 1) uncritically appropriating Asian religious cultures and aesthetics, 2) reproducing harmful racializations, and 3) instrumentalizing Asian religious cultures to further cultural and political critiques for the white liberal subjects.

A21-427
Books under Discussion
Religion in Europe Unit
Theme: Religion Around Walter Benjamin (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2022) by Brian Britt
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Samuel Kessler, Gustavas Adolphus College, Presiding

As part of a series on religious contexts of major modern figures, this book is the first of its kind to investigate how religious institutions and religious life in Germany, France, and elsewhere relate to the work and life of Walter Benjamin. Our three panelists bring diverse perspectives on Benjamin himself and the broader question of discussing the religious milieu in which thinkers, writers, and historical figures are enmeshed. This panel will address both these topics, ranging from the specifics of 20th century philosophy to the way we write religious history in the present age.

Panelists

Winnifred Sullivan, Indiana University
Stephanie Paulsell, Harvard University
Benjamin Sax, Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies

Responding

Brian M. Britt, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Business Meeting

Carol Ferrara, Boston University, Presiding
John McCormack, Aurora University, Presiding

A21-428
Religion in Premodern Europe and the Mediterranean Unit
Theme: Premodern Ecologies and Cosmologies
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Lora Walsh, University of Arkansas, Presiding

This panel explores the ways premodern Christians and Muslims approached their environments and local ecosystems, and how these approaches intersected with religious cosmologies. Underlying these papers is the assumption that ecologies interact with cosmologies, providing specific cultural narratives that answer ontological questions about the place and role of humans
in their environments. By examining healing rituals, divinitation, and both utilitarian and penitential reactions to disasters the three papers in this panel offer variations in these cultural narratives and suggest important forms of intellectual interchange.

- Kathryn M. Kueny, Fordham University

*Earthquakes, Winds, Droughts, and Floods: Disaster response in premodern Muslim societies*

This paper compares accounts of calamities such as earthquakes, winds, floods, and droughts to assess how premodern Muslim scholars managed the uncertainties that people faced in times of adversity. While scholars often prescribed prayer, repentance, or acceptance in response to terrifying events that ruptured everyday life, they also articulated more practical strategies to affect disaster preparedness, mitigation, and recovery. Both religious and utilitarian directives worked to minimize hazard, manage vulnerabilities, and enhance adaptive capacities as humans confronted unfathomable threat, loss and suffering (Hilhorst and Heijmans). Rather than underscoring human weakness or failing in the face of divine power and judgment, Muslim scholars promoted more active plans for populations to manage pre-emptively and intelligently the relationship among individual bodies, their environments, and the cosmic realities that permeated all. Works include *hadith* collections, annals (Tabari, Suyuti, Ibn Khaldun), juridical writings (Nawawi, Tusi), and medical treatises (Ibn Sina, Ibn Ridwan).

- Mai Lootah, Rice University

*Visionary Practices in Courts: Astrology as a Cosmology in the Fālnāma*

The Fālnāmā, an illustrated book of omens, was one of the divinatory tools that seemed to be quite common in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in three Muslim empires of Turkic origins; the Mughals in the Indian sub-continent, the Safavids in Persia, and the Ottomans in the rest of the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and North Africa. This paper studies a selection of astrological illustrations in two Fālnāma manuscripts; a Persian (H. 1702) and a Turkish (H. 1703), archived in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library in Istanbul, Turkey. The main purpose of this paper is to highlight the cosmologies that underly the astrological illustrations in the two Fālnāmas in order to comprehend the intellectual contexts that have simultaneously shaped and driven the competing Ottoman and Safavid ideologies and actions, while considering the crosspollination of ideas and ideals that occurred between the two empires despite their apparent hostility.

- Timothy Grieve-Carlson, Rice University

*“To Remove a Wen During the Crescent Moon: ” Ecological Healing in Premodern and Modern Ritual Practice*

This paper examines some of the common ecological resonances in premodern and modern ritual practices, namely the European ritual culture of the Anglo-Saxon charms
and the ritual culture of the Pennsylvania Dutch, called braucherei. The ecological dimensions of magical healing and other religious ritual practices have been pointed out by philosophers like David Abram. This essay shows how these ecological dimensions persisted through the threshold of modernity in ritual practices. Without going so far as to suggest a linear relationship between the Anglo-Saxon charms and braucherei practitioners, this paper show how the particular narrative formula and the ritual mechanisms that are present in both charms, which suggest a general and long-lasting practice of narrative charms in the ritual cultures of Europe. Both practices shared an embodied, memorized, and recited oral tradition of ritually enlisting the cosmos to intervene in the lives and needs of ordinary people.

**Business Meeting**

Wendy Love Anderson, Washington University, Saint Louis, Presiding  
Claire Fanger, Rice University, Presiding  
Martha Newman, University of Texas, Presiding

**A21-429**  
**Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Unit and Study of Judaism Unit**  
**Theme:** *Seeing Judaism: Centering Visuality in Jewish Culture*  
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)  
Jennifer Caplan, Towson University, Presiding

Scholars of Jewish studies have long since disproven the myth of Jewish aniconism, revealing a long and rich tradition of Jewish art and visual culture. The papers on this panel take this scholarship in new directions, exploring novel intersections of visuality, sight, and Jewish thought. The first paper analyzes the first illustrated text printed in Hebrew in order to show how woodcut illustrations facilitated the cross-cultural transfer of knowledge about vision and the eye in early modern Europe. While this paper focuses on the novelty of the printed book, the second paper considers one of the most important new technologies of modernity, namely film. It too explores how Jewish knowledge - in this case mystical thought - is transferred through visual means, focusing on the 2004 Israeli film Ushpizin. The final paper considers how visuality might inform the field of Jewish ethics, focusing on the concepts of hiddur mitzvah – beautifying the commandments; and pirsumei nisa – broadcasting the miracle. Taken together, these papers affirm the centrality of visuality and sight to Jewish religious thought from the fifteenth century to the present.

- Ishai Mishory, Columbia University

*Jewish Period Eye: The Sense of Sight in ibn Sahula’s Mashal ha-kadmoni (1491)*

Gershom Soncino’s 1491 Brescia edition of *Mashal ha-kadmoni* (“Fable of the ancient”), a medieval compendium of animal fables and scientific materials, is the first illustrated Hebrew book in print. This presentation follows one of the book’s illustrations – that of the sense of sight – as it ‘travels’ from a medieval, Arabic-Hebrew-Islamic context into a northern Italian-Christian and early modern one. It asks how the image’s ‘migration’ to
the Christian context reflects its different readers’ understanding of the sense of sight itself – then and today. The (non-Jewish) illustrator picks up the idiom of Renaissance linear perspective, usually treated as ‘secular’ – but is it? Using Michael Baxandall’s idea of the ‘period eye,’ the presentation bridges Jewish Studies, book history, translation studies and art history to problematize both ideas of ‘Jewish aniconism’ and certain blind spots within Jewish Studies, suggesting a multi-directionality of reading for Jewish visual and material culture.

- Brian Ogren, Rice University

*Sacred Stories on the Profane Screen: On Cinematic Representations of Jewish Esoteric Lore*

This paper addresses the use of film in portraying supra-rational experiences, which are often impossible to express through normal language. I will focus on focus on the critically acclaimed, award winning 2004 Israeli film “Ushpizin.” This was made by Hasidic Orthodox Jews in conjunction with a secular Israeli director and film crew. My paper will analyze the meeting point between the secular media and the religious message. It will also look at questions regarding the universal vs. the particular. This paper will analyze the film’s uses of fiction and reality, and it will examine the textual traditions that stand behind its cinematic representations. Particularly, it will look at some of the mystical notions of faith coming out of the writings of an 18th century Hasidic master Nachman of Bratslav. It will consider how the medium of film both stands in continuity with Hasidic mystical traditions and transforms them.

- Ranana Dine, University of Chicago

*Hath not a Jew Eyes?: Broadening Jewish Ethics to Include Visual Culture*

In 2016 *The Journal of Religious Ethics* devoted an edition to making a “visual turn,” raising the intriguing possibility of constructing a Jewish visual ethics. Yet for those who wish to attempt this project the historiography of Jewish art-history, as well as the discourse of Jewish ethics, presents significant challenges. The myth of Jewish aniconism has led to the diminishment of visuality in Jewish thought. The emphasis on halakhic texts in much of contemporary Jewish ethics also excludes many forms of cultural analysis, including visual analysis, from Jewish moral discourse. This disregard for visual culture in Jewish ethics, however, means that the field ignores the visual and sensory world surrounding moral agents thus excluding much of the ethics of everyday Jewish lives. We can, however, mine several resources in Jewish studies – from art history, theology, and rabbinics – to begin to incorporate visual material into Jewish normative analysis.
This panel explores the interrelatedness of themes of friendship and justice within various writings and traditions. Friends from varying cultural and religious traditions draw on diverse resources in the pursuit of justice. Allen Jorgenson explores friendship as a resource for a political theology that sees the church and state in relationship as loci of divine revelation and justice, drawing on ethical and Indigenous insights. Anne-Marie Ellithorpe explores implications of the prophetic tradition for contemporary friends seeking to promote justice, reconciliation, and civic friendship. Justin Barringer identifies friendship as a foundation for acting together for justice. Hussam Timani engages in a comparative exploration of friendship with God in two religious traditions.

- Allen G. Jorgenson, Wilfrid Laurier University

  Friendship, Ethics, and Indigenous Insights

  Comparative theology is used to explore the phenomenon of friendship by comparing the philosophical ethics of Friedrich Schleiermacher with the Friendship Belt/Silver Covenant Chain of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), which is used to illustrate the nation-to-nation relationship between the Haudenosaunee and settlers. Schleiermacher’s philosophical ethics imagines friendship within “free sociability,” which is located in a liminal space between religion and politics. Friendship, for the Haudenosaunee is a partnered with trust and respect and good minds and peace in the Friendship Belt, a covenant illustrated in a wampum with beads. The Haudenosaunee understanding of friendship underscores the need to hold, without subsuming the other in a manner informative for understanding the relationship between the political and religious at both social and personal levels. Informed by both, I explore friendship as a resource for a political theology that sees the church and state in relationship as loci of divine revelation and justice.

- Justin Barringer, Southern Methodist University

  A Quaker and an Atheist Walk into a Revolution: Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph's Civic Friendship and Economic Justice

  Civil rights leaders Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph had a decades-long friendship that set the foundation for the Civil Rights Movement and led to perhaps its most noted event, the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Contra many theorists on friendship, this essay argues that although Rustin was a Christian, in particular a Quaker, and Randolph was an atheist, their friendship was indeed a spiritual friendship - the truest
form of friendship. The basic claim of the paper is that this friendship between a Christian and an atheist offers an example of how those from different religious or non-religious persuasions can be true friends in their shared pursuit of virtue, which in this case is the quest for economic justice. It, likewise, demonstrates how this particular friendship offers a religiously informed paradigm of civic friendship in pursuit of a just response to wealth inequity.

- Anne-Marie Ellithorpe, Vancouver School of Theology

*Friendship and the Prophetic Tradition: Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Susannah Heschel describes the friendship between her father, Abraham Joshua Heschel and Martin Luther King, Jr. as being a friendship in the prophetic tradition. She speaks of Heschel, a Jewish theologian and Hasidic Rabbi, and King, a Baptist minister and civil rights leader, as being brought together by the prophets, and by a prophetic understanding of God. I propose a two-part paper reflecting on this friendship, given the legacy these friends provide for subsequent generations. In part one, I reflect on understandings of the prophetic that undergirded the friendship between Heschel and King. The need for friendships informed by the prophetic tradition and by prophetic understandings of the divine is ongoing. Thus, in part two, I seek to identify implications of this tradition for contemporary friends seeking to promote justice, reconciliation, and civic friendship.

- Hussam S. Timani, Christopher Newport University

*A Comparative Exploration of “the Friendship of God” in the Catholic and Sufi Traditions*

This paper will engage in a theological comparison of “the Friendship of God” in the Catholic and Sufi traditions. In Catholic theology and Sufi tradition, the Friendship of, or nearness to, God is a status reserved only for the saints. Therefore, a comparative exploration of Sainthood in both traditions is necessary to our understanding of the doctrine of “the Friendship of God” in both Catholicism and Sufism. Sainthood, which translates to *walayah* in Sufism, is a term that describes a special status in relation to the divine. Scholars of religion and theologians have understood sainthood and *walayah* to mean “closeness to God,” and therefore a “friendship of God.” This paper will argue that sainthood in the Catholic Church and *walayah* in Sufism were statuses originally bestowed on all the believers, not on special individuals who attained a special status in the community or who served God better than others.

**Business Meeting**

Hussam S. Timani, Christopher Newport University, Presiding
Anne-Marie Ellithorpe, Vancouver School of Theology, Presiding
P21-435
Books under Discussion
Society for Comparative Research on Iconic and Performative Texts
Theme: Book Review Panel on Drawn to the Word: The Bible and Graphic Design (SBL Press, 2021) by Amanda Dillon
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Jonathan Homrighausen, Duke University, Presiding

In 2021, SBL Press published Drawn to the Word: the Bible and Graphic Design by Amanda Dillon. In this book Amanda Dillon engages multimodal analysis, a method of semiotic discourse, to explore how visual composition, texture, color, directionality, framing, angle, representations, and interactions produce potential meanings for biblical graphic designs. Dillon focuses on the artworks of two American graphic designers—the woodcuts designed by Meinrad Craighead for the Roman Catholic Sunday Missal and Nicholas Markell’s illustrations for the worship books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America—to present the merits of multimodal analysis for biblical reception history.

On this panel, three members of SCRIPT engage the author in a discussion of her work.

Responding
S. Brent Plate, Hamilton College
Sonia Hazard, Florida State University
Jonathan Homrighausen, Duke University
Amanda Dillon, Dublin City University

A21-402
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee
Theme: Eurocentric Christianity as Catastrophic to Native and Indigenous Populations
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Swasti Bhattacharyya, Harvard University, Presiding

Recognizing that a Eurocentric Christian worldview has been catastrophic to Native and Indigenous peoples, this panel recognizes that religion has been catastrophic to these populations. This interview/conversation style panel highlights the work of Four Winds American Indian Council and their political resistance to a Eurocentric Christian worldview. A representative from CREM will interview a representative from Four Winds American Indian Council about their work to secure an official city safe outdoor space for un-housed Native relatives. This work represents months of hard and persistent work dealing with the mayor’s office and the city council. Participants will ponder what such work looks like in their own areas and for their own lives as religious scholars of worldviews that have been catastrophic to many populations.
Panelists

C. Vanessa White, Catholic Theological Union

A21-434
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Teaching against Islamophobia Seminar
Theme: Teaching Against Islamophobia: Pedagogical Approaches and Strategies
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Sajida Jalalzai, Trinity University, Presiding

This roundtable discussion will highlight different pedagogical approaches and strategies employed by educators to teach against Islamophobia in institutions of higher education. Panelists range in their disciplinary locations, emphasizing the different ways in which Islamophobia manifests in the classroom. Additionally, the diversity of the panelists featured in this discussion underlines a core belief promoted by this seminar that it is not the unique responsibility of Muslims and/or those in Islamic Studies to combat anti-Muslim racism in educational institutions.

Panelists

Krista Riley, Vanier College
Roshanarah Jahangeer, York University
Alison Melnick Dyer, Bates College
Megan Goodwin, Northeastern University

Business Meeting

Sajida Jalalzai, Trinity University, Presiding

A21-430
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Traditions of Eastern Late Antiquity Unit
Theme: Teaching the Traditions of the Late Antique East: A Strategy Swap
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Abby Kulisz, Indiana University, Presiding

Participants in this roundtable discussion will share pedagogical strategies that they have employed in teaching various religious traditions of eastern late antiquity. The goal is to foster a conversation about pedagogy and share actionable items that anyone teaching these traditions could employ in the classroom. Cosponsored by the online blog Ancient Jew Review.

Panelists

Krista Dalton, Kenyon College
Jae Han, Brown University
A21-431
Women and Religion Unit
Theme: Commemorating the Life and Work of Rosemary Radford Ruether
Monday, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (In Person)
Emilie M. Townes, Vanderbilt University, Presiding

A panel of scholars will share their remembrances of Rosemary Radford Ruether who passed away this year at age 85. Ruether cultivated a ground-breaking constructive and collaborative approach to the praxis of global women’s liberation. Her impact in the field of feminist theology has been vast and empowering for generations of scholars. Her *Sexism and God-Talk* was the first feminist monograph to critically analyze the patriarchal foundations of dogmatic theology, and her *Gaia and God* advanced the voice of ecofeminism in the academy. She spoke out boldly against racial injustice and Christian anti-Semitism and championed liberation theologies and women’s reproductive rights globally. Please join us as we reflect on her legacy as a teacher, scholar, and social critic and on how she paved the way for addressing new challenges facing today’s world.

Panelists

Rosemary P. Carbine, Whittier College
Boyung Lee, Iliff School of Theology
Mary E. Hunt, Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual
Stephanie Y. Mitchem, University of South Carolina
Judith Plaskow, Manhattan College

A21-500
Films
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Films
Theme: Religion and Catastrophe in a 40th anniversary screening of Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance (Reggio, 1982)
Monday, 8:00 PM-10:00 PM (In Person)
Elijah Siegler, College of Charleston, Presiding

2022 is the 40th anniversary of *Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance*, (dir: Godfrey Reggio), the first (and most praised) film in the Qatsi trilogy. (*Powaqqatsi* (1988) and *Naqoyqatsi* (2002) are its “sequels.”) *Koyaanisqatsi* is an experimental non-narrative film, famous for its time-lapse depictions of human-created environmental catastrophe. The film begins and ends with visual and musical depictions of the art and prophecies of Indigenous peoples of the Four Corners Region. (The film’s title is a Hopi term). After a very brief introduction, the film will be screened followed by a guided discussion, which we hope will focus on the film’s affective, predictive,
timely, and religious qualities.

Panelists

John Modern, Franklin and Marshall College

A21-501
Receptions/Breakfasts/Luncheons
Program Committee
Theme: Program Unit Chairs’ and Steering Committee Members’ Reception
Monday, 8:00 PM-10:00 PM (In Person)

Program Unit Chairs and steering committee members are invited to a reception celebrating their contributions to the AAR Annual Meeting.

A22-100
Arts, Literature and Religion Unit and Hinduism Unit and South Asian Religion Unit
Theme: A Splendid Land: Udaipur at the Smithsonian
Tuesday, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM (In Person)
Shana Sippy, Centre College, Presiding

On November 19, 2022—just as the AAR annual meetings begin in Denver—the National Museum of Asian Art will unveil a splendid exhibit entitled, appropriately, “A Splendid Land: Paintings from Royal Udaipur.” In this AAR roundtable, religionists respond from a number of angles. In 7-minute presentations experts address: (1) the literary genre of nāgaravarnana, description of a city, in Hindu epics; (2) the city descriptions (vijnaptipatra) by means of which lay Jains sought to attract monastic Jains to their cities for their monsoon retreats; (3) Udaipur as a mythic city in the modern day—from local, non-elite perspectives; (4) an illustrated manuscript that draws a poem by Tulsidas into Udaipur’s lakeside landscape; (5) other pages that do the same for poems attributed to Surdas; (6) what it means, religiously speaking, to “perform place”; and (7) anticipated reactions from Hindus, Jains, and South Asian “Nones” here in North America.

Panelists

Nell Hawley, Harvard University
John E. Cort, Denison University
Jennifer Ortegren, Middlebury College
Philip Lutgendorf, University of Iowa
Jack Hawley, Barnard College, Columbia University
Manpreet Kaur, Columbia University
Vasudha Narayanan, University of Florida
This panel highlights exciting new work in Buddhist Studies by graduate students. The first paper looks at the categories Mahāyāna and Theravāda in modern China and situates this distinction in the historical deployment of a contested differential for nationalistic projects. The second considers Atiśa Dīpaṃkara’s role in the later spread of Tibetan Buddhism and shows that Atiśa believed that monastics could engage in ostensibly sexual tantric practices by replacing them with internal yogic methods. The third assesses vegetarian discourse in Mahāyāna texts and argues that a body that smelled like meat signified bodily impurity, which reflected negatively on the character and spiritual attainments of a practitioner. The fourth analyzes *The Lamp Which Clarifies the Origin of the Treasures* (gter 'byung gsal ba’i sgron me) by the 15th-century treasure revealer, Ratna Lingpa and challenges existing scholarship that identifies *gter ma* as an entirely Tibetan phenomena.

- Caiyang Xu, Columbia University

  *How “Chinese” is Mahāyāna? The Formation of the Mahāyāna Distinction in 20th century China*

In Buddhist studies, scholars generally divide Buddhism into two camps – Mahāyāna and Theravāda. Rather than viewing them as a transcendental philosophical system, this paper situates this distinction in the historical deployment of a contested differential for nationalistic projects. It argues that the Mahāyāna distinction was strategically linked to the making of the Chinese nation. In Republican China, the Mahāyāna distinction was mapped onto geographical and national differences between China and the rest of Buddhist Asia, distinguishing the Chinese nation as the unique bearer of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Later in the early Cold War, the Mahāyāna distinction manifested in the ideological clash between capitalism and communism—with the former correlated with Southeast Asian Theravāda forest monks, and the latter linked to Chinese Mahāyāna political monks. By excavating this hitherto unknown genealogy of “Mahāyāna” and “Theravāda,” this paper highlights the historical contingency and fluidity in the making of a politicized differential.

- Patrick Lambelet, University of California, Santa Barbara

  *The Great Lord Reconsidered: Atiśa Dīpaṃkara and the Taming of the Tantras*

This paper argues for the need for a critical reevaluation of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara’s role in the later spread of Tibetan Buddhism, specifically regarding his views on antinomian Vajrayāna systems. Modern scholarship has often uncritically accepted traditional depictions of Atiśa as an orthodox “reformer” of Tibetan Buddhism who mainly taught
exoteric Sūtrayāna doctrines, restricted monastics from receiving Yoganiruttaratantra consecrations, and avoided discussion of antinomian tantric doctrines. Atiśa, however, wrote prolifically on the Vajrayāna, and texts such as his Vajrāsana Vajragīti and Caryāgīti reveal the influence of Indian on his thought. These works suggest Atiśa believed that monastics could engage in ostensibly sexual tantric practices by replacing them with internal yogic methods aimed at cultivating gnostic awareness of reality (sahaja). The marginalization of these texts in Tibet raises historical questions of why, and how, Atiśa may have been restricted from teaching these works more openly in Tibet.

- Marielle Harrison, University of Chicago

*The Stench of Meat: The Olfactory Repercussions of Meat Consumption in Mahāyāna Buddhist Texts*

What does meat smell like? The terrible smell of meat, and the implications of that smell, was central to a set of arguments put forth across many of the early Mahāyāna sūtras that argued for vegetarianism. This paper proposes that there was a shared collective understanding of what meat and meat consumption signified within these Mahāyāna texts, and that this shared understanding naturalized the idea that smelling like meat entailed serious repercussions for Buddhist practitioners. Within these sūtras, a body that smelled like meat signified bodily impurity, had negative repercussions on the efficacy of life-saving spells, was evidence of a low caste, would jeopardize one’s spiritual attainments, and could even endanger one’s life. In Mahāyāna texts in which the body was an integral part of Buddhist practice—and one’s scent was a fundamental reflection on one’s character—the olfactory repercussions of eating meat were a matter of life and death.

- Heather Moody, University of Virginia

*The Tibetan Treasure Tradition in the Light of Ratna Linpa's Lamp*

I will describe and analyze The Lamp Which Clarifies the Origin of the Treasures (gter 'byung gsal ba’i sgron me) by the 15th century treasure revealer, Ratna Lingpa. In this work, the term gter ma is expanded to encompass the entirety of the sūtras, as well as both Indian and Tibetan tantric works. This challenges existing scholarship which identifies gter ma as an entirely Tibetan phenomena, and significantly expands its chronological scope. Furthermore, I will explicate several fascinating features of this work including firsthand accounts of gter ma revealing practices, and advice for the treasure revealers of the future.
A22-102
Comparative Studies in Religion Unit
Theme: King Ashoka’s Dilemma: Using Historical Role Immersion Games to Teach Comparative Religion
Tuesday, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM (In Person)
J. Noel Hubler, Lebanon Valley College, Presiding

This session demonstrates Reacting to the Past pedagogy (http://reacting.barnard.edu), which we have used to teach comparative religion. We invite participants to take roles as members of King Ashoka’s council in 260 BCE, the year following the King’s bloody conquest of Kalinga, his self-professed remorse and increased seriousness in following Buddhism. The issue at hand is whether to ban or restrict animal sacrifice throughout the kingdom. To reflect Ashoka’s expressed desire to learn from other traditions, participants play representatives from different competing traditions—including Brahmins, Buddhists, and Jains—using primary text excerpts from these traditions to formulate arguments and vote on proposals. No preparation or previous expertise is required and all are welcome to join. The session will close with a debrief of lessons learned by participants, other games we have used, and resources teachers can use to try out the approach in their own classrooms.

Panelists
Joel Dubois, California State University, Sacramento

A22-103
Ethics Unit
Theme: Gentrification and Religious Ethics
Tuesday, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM (In Person)
Rebecca Epstein-Levi, Vanderbilt University, Presiding

The annual meeting’s location in Denver, Colorado calls our attention to the economic, social, and political challenges facing the host community and especially those on its margins. Denver's breathless population boom over recent decades has rapidly raised the cost of living in historically Black, Latinx, Asian/Asian-American, and immigrant neighborhoods across the city. Moreover, these patterns of displacement impact working class, service class, and poor communities in cities both large and small across the United States and beyond. The Ethics Unit seeks proposals that address ethical questions generated at the nexus of gentrification, ethics, and religion. How are religious communities, people, and practices fueling rampant gentrification? How are religious communities responding to rampant gentrification's various consequences? How can religious ethics facilitate understandings and evaluations of rampant gentrification?

- Laura Stivers, Dominican University of California

*Freedom to Flourish: Housing as a Right Not a Commodity*

One cause of gentrification and displacement of multi-generational communities of color
has been the increase of private equity firms buying affordable homes, upgrading them, raising rents, and evicting tenants. This paper focuses on housing financialization and the shift from housing as a right for people to be capable of flourishing to housing as a commodity and an investment opportunity for profit. After identifying the problem in the San Francisco Bay Area, the paper identifies several strategies Christian and interfaith organizations have employed to address gentrification and displacement of low-income communities of color, then drawing on womanist and feminist sources, offers a theological foundation in support of housing as a right for the freedom of individuals and communities to flourish.

• Sara Williams, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
  Michael Woolf, Harvard University

*Racial Accountability and Responsibility as Public Care: Examining Housing Reparations and Gentrification in Evanston*

Evanston, IL has received national attention as the first U.S. city to implement a municipal reparations program for Black residents. In its first stage Evanston’s reparations plan seeks redress for historical anti-Black housing discrimination, awarding by lottery $25,000 for mortgage, down payment, or home improvement assistance to Black residents who lived in Evanston between 1919 and 1969 and their direct descendents. Simultaneously, the forces of gentrification are beginning to erode Evanston’s Black community. Given this gap between efforts for repair and ongoing harm, this paper asks whether Evanston's symbolic value can create conditions for accountability, and whether reparations in Evanston more broadly place its white residents in a relationship of responsibility to Black residents, particularly given white residents’ passive complicity in gentrification as a source of ongoing harm.

• Ross Kane, Virginia Theological Seminary

*Is Christ’s Body Gentrified?: An Analysis of Congregations and Gentrification*

Some voices in Christian ethics and practical theology have argued that congregations can serve as avenues for challenging moral ills that often accompany gentrification. This paper does not necessarily disagree with this conclusion, but does challenge rhetoric which might imply that it is a self-evident conclusion that congregations challenge gentrification. I argue that congregations are neutral entities when it comes to gentrification; they can either promote the ills of gentrification or challenge them. The hyperlocal focus of congregational identities can often promote ills of gentrification by ignoring the injustices of gentrification or actively promoting such injustices. Nevertheless, the rootedness of congregations in communities can also provide possibilities for justice-oriented ministry that challenges the ills of gentrification and builds beloved community. In particular, the paper addresses the racial segregation of congregations in the United States and the historical role that has played in ongoing issues of gentrification today.
Panelists will examine the power and politics at play in the process of saint making across various European contexts.

- Elyse Raby, Santa Clara University

*Mystical Bodies in the Mystical Body: Starvation, Sanctity, and Saint-making of Medieval Women Mystics*

In her book *Power, Gender, and Christian Mysticism*, Grace Jantzen argues that for centuries the question of ‘who counts as a mystic’ has been inflected with gendered struggles for power and authority. Reviewing medieval women’s practices of extreme asceticism, Jantzen argues that the story of medieval mysticism and the saint-making that followed is a story of patriarchy. In contrast, historian Carolyn Walker Bynum argues that these practices constituted women’s subjectivity in a religiously and theologically positive way, enabling them to claim spiritual authority and even critique ecclesiastical powers. This paper intervenes in this debate by offering a Foucauldian analysis of power as productive, rather than simply repressive, in order to offer a new evaluation of the lives, bodies, and sanctity of medieval holy women as constituted, and eventually broken, by ecclesiastical power but as effectively contesting the practices of ecclesiastical authority and power as well. Catherine of Siena serves as a test case.

- Dwight Newman, University of Saskatchewan

*Conversos, Jewish Continuities, and Legal Procedures of Inquisition: Covert Complexities of Teresa as Saint within the Catholic Reformation Context*

This paper develops a more complex narrative about Teresa of Avila and her mystical theology in the context of her path to sainthood, drawing on the author's interdisciplinary law and religion background. First, the paper shows evidence of more significant Jewish continuities within Teresa's mystical theology than have been fully addressed, thus showing reasons that would have raised larger obstacles in her path to Christian sainthood in the Catholic Reformation context than have been fully considered. Second, the paper examines the Inquisition in different ways, arguing that its legal procedures on heresy had more nuances in their application than often fully realized, permitting a process that seemed focused on excluding and punishing to also effectively offer endorsement and inclusion in the context of a figure like Teresa, permitting the absorption of her complex influences into expanding doctrine and setting a path ultimately for sainthood.
Marc Loustau, College of the Holy Cross

Confirming Benevolence: Canonization, Communist History, and the Hungarian State’s Project to Build a Christian National Culture

In 2016, right-wing Hungarian President János Áder traveled to Romania for the sixtieth anniversary of Bishop Áron Márton’s “confirmation tour.” Part of the Catholic Church’s ongoing campaign to canonize Márton for his pastoral leadership under Communism, Áder unveiled a statue of Márton standing before a young confirmand and urged Hungarian politicians to be like Márton: “Loyal to your homeland and the calling that has been given to you.” This paper draws on Michel Foucault’s writings about pastoral subjectivity to illuminate that the sacrament of confirmation plays in projects to build Christian national cultures in contemporary Europe. Today, the Hungarian state uses memories of Márton’s pastoral heroism and suffering to fashion a culture that transcends the Transylvanian Hungarian minority’s divergent Communist-era history, and simultaneously constructs the Hungarian state as the benevolent protector of the 1.5 million ethnic Hungarians at risk of assimilation by the Romanian nation-state.

Religion and Ecology Unit
Theme: Assessing Environmental Strategies for Change: Conversion, Aesthetics, and Revelation
Tuesday, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM (In Person)
Christiana Zenner, Fordham University, Presiding

This panel explores topics in the environmental movement, including worldview conversion discourse, the trivialization of beauty, and occlusions of meaning amidst climate catastrophe. It identifies weaknesses in current political, theological, and theoretical approaches to environmental problems, offering alternative strategies for more effective responses. In particular, political polarization in the environment is widespread in the U.S. and a serious impediment to creating meaningful environmental policy. Environmentalists’ emphasis on conversion may worsen polarization on environmental issues. Moreover, deliberate obstruction of environmental regulations and willful disregard for the evidence of climate change has characterized the past two decades of American politics. Because this obstruction and disregard is based on the trivialization of beauty, framing the value of biodiversity in terms of beauty has the potential to bolster environmental reforms. Materialist feminist perspectives on the Anthropocene offer revelatory approaches capable of explaining ecological catastrophe, offering transformative and meaningful possibilities forward.

Colin Weaver, University of Chicago

Eco-conversion and Polarization in the Age of Climate Catastrophe

One role for the study of religion and ecology in an age of climate catastrophe is to analyze practices that exacerbate the crisis, including practices within environmentalism. In this presentation, I examine environmental scholars’ and activists’ emphasis on
“worldview conversion” in response to catastrophes such as climate change. I juxtapose examples of this emphasis with a sample of conservative American perceptions of environmentalism, which represent environmentalism as a missionizing movement seeking to erase conservative ways of life. Next, I consider recent studies of environmental polarization in the U.S. I suggest that environmentalists’ emphasis on conversion may worsen polarization on environmental issues by confirming conservatives’ concerns. Such polarization, in turn, exacerbates the climate crisis by fueling resistance to meaningful efforts to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change. I conclude by suggesting further roles for religion and ecology, such as researching techniques and institutions that help overcome environmental polarization.

- Dorothy Dean, Hastings College

*Are Ashes All That Is Left? Grace Jantzen’s Aesthetics and the Beauty of Biodiversity*

This paper engages Grace Jantzen’s late works on death and beauty in the context of the climate catastrophe. Juxtaposing her theory of the displacement of beauty with Kevin O’Brien’s theological ethics of biodiversity, I suggest that biodiversity is something that can create an affect of “responsiveness to beauty.” O’Brien posits that theological ethics needs to be oriented around biodiversity, and that the best way to do this is by allowing biodiversity to serve as inspiration for living better, rather than being a source of obligation. I argue that Jantzen’s work lends itself to a theology that can help to cultivate a responsiveness to the beauty of biodiversity that can serve as inspiration for protecting the nonhuman world.

- Emily Theus, Yale University

*Crisis Clarity, or the Occlusion of Meaning? The Problems of Revealed Relationality*

This paper considers materialist feminist approaches to the Anthropocene that understand ecological crisis to be potentially capable of unveiling realities that are the source of the problem and (therefore) able to offer transformative political and ethical possibilities. Taking Axelle Karera’s and Lynne Huffer’s critiques of vitalist accounts of relationality as a starting point, I identify one common feature of such accounts as a revelatory move, where revelation is that which makes possible coherence and therefore meaningful crisis responses. I demonstrate this revelatory logic in the work of Anna Tsing and Donna Haraway, particularly where they understand environmental crisis as a loss of certain forms of coherence (progress narratives, anthropocentrism, etc.). Finally, reflecting on the relationship between these revelatory strategies and the naturalizing tendencies identified by Karera and Huffer, I consider whether a modified heuristic of revelation might instead offer resources to resist the occlusive effects of these relational approaches.
As streaming services continue to develop “binge-worthy” television programming, religion’s presence as a subject matter and narrative device continues to offer scholars subjects worthy of reflection. This panel considers two recent programs, *Squid Game* and *Lovecraft Country*, and the phenomenon of “cult” documentary series as a pleasurable way of educating audiences about the ongoing place of religion and those who practice it in modern societies.

- DeAnna Daniels, Rice University

*On Ghosts, Hoodoo, and Complex Subjectivity: Examining Horror and Black Religion in HBO's Lovecraft Country*

*HBO's Lovecraft Country* explores intersections of horror, science-fiction, and fantasy to engage questions of being, agency, and monstrosity while providing a visualization of the after-effects of slavery. This paper argues that *Lovecraft Country* offers a cinematic representation of what scholar of African American religion, Anthony Pinn, has theorized as a quest for complex subjectivity—which is the core of Black Religion. Through examining Leticia "Leti" Lewis's unique quest for complex subjectivity in *Lovecraft Country*, horror’s capaciousness and potentiality as a somewhat underexplored dimension of Black religion are revealed. *Lovecraft Country* interweaves horror tropes and Afro-diasporic spiritual practices. I contend that an examination of the distinguishing religious characteristics in the television series situates horror as vital for understanding the impetus and development of Black religion.

- Joshua Urich, Bowdoin College

“‘So, sit back, relax, don’t join any cults, and enjoy these shows:’ ‘cult shows’ and political crises

This paper seeks to understand why cult shows, at the peak of their popularity circa 2020, became a method of self-care and relaxation. Through an examination of the shows’ narratology—with a particular emphasis on the affective undercurrents of that narratology—this paper argues that cult shows offer viewers a chance to feel like a secular, modern self in contrast to the naively superstitious, primitive cult member. That sensation was particularly desirable during the Trump presidency and the rise of the QAnon movement, both of which were frequently described as "cults." Watching cult shows enabled audiences to feel like they were getting a handle on a seemingly incomprehensible political situation.
This panel examines the intersection of religion, the body, and technology from a variety of research perspectives. The first paper examines a variety of religions’ statements and actions regarding the polio epidemic, including the rationalization of suffering children, visitations to iron lung facilities, and other messaging to families and care for sick children. The second paper uses empirical research to investigate the appeal of radical life extension for everyday religious people, focusing on how intersections of race and religion shape attitudes toward life extension. The final paper contributes to theorization about the effects of Virtual Reality in psychotherapeutic and spiritual care contexts by utilizing the conceptual framework of Isabel Millar’s The Psychoanalysis of Artificial Intelligence (2021) to analyze two telepresent-human-simulations.

- Brittany Acors, University of Virginia

*A Catastrophe of Body and Spirit: Religious Responses to Polio*

For the first fifty years of the twentieth century, polio was a recurring threat across the United States. Most summers, outbreaks forced children to stay inside, families not to travel, and religious buildings and services to close, especially Sunday schools. This paper will examine a variety of religions’ statements and actions regarding the polio epidemic, including the rationalization of suffering children, visitations to iron lung facilities, and other messaging to families and strategies of care for sick children. It explores how diverse religious communities responded to a health crisis that affected generations of young people in the early twentieth century, and how this ongoing catastrophe shaped religious responses to the polio vaccine upon its debut in the 1950s.

- Jacqui Frost, Purdue University
  Rachel Schneider, Rice University
  Elaine Howard Ecklund, Rice University
  Andrea Henderson, University of South Carolina

*Divine Purpose? Religion, Race, and Life Extension Technologies*

Humans are living longer than ever, and there is increased interest in technologies that extend our lifespan. Past research suggests that those most likely to be interested in life extension are nonreligious and white, as life extension is often seen as antithetical to most religions and people of color tend to more religious. We use survey data to critically investigate these findings. We find that religiously actually increases interest in life extension among Black and Hispanic respondents, but decreases interest among whites. Further, Black and Hispanic respondents reported more interest in long-term life extension (100+ years) than whites, and Black respondents were more likely to cite
“divine purpose” as their reason for being interested. This suggests that Black Americans may view life extension as enhancing their faith in ways that white Americans do not, raising theoretical questions about how technology and spirituality may work together to further Black flourishing.

- Sharday Mosurinjohn, Queen's University, Kingston

_The Self in Simulation: Psychotherapy, VR, and AI_

Virtual reality (VR) simulations can induce altered states of consciousness similar to those triggered by rituals and entheogens (Aday et al 2020). There is need for further theorization about their effects in psychotherapeutic and spiritual care contexts. This paper contributes to this work by utilizing the conceptual framework of Isabel Millar’s _The Psychoanalysis of Artificial Intelligence_ (2021) to analyze two telepresent-human-simulations: 1) Joseph Weizenbaum’s 1966, ELIZA program, which used Rogerian psychotherapy to empathetically repeat the client’s speech back to them. And 2) the VR simulation ConVRself which incorporates an algorithmized counselling program which triggers an experience of seeing and hearing your problems from a third-person perspective. Building from Millar’s shifting the question of AI from “does it think” to “does it enjoy,” this paper investigates what new forms of enjoyment of the self might digital algorithms enable us to think and experience as they trigger consciousness altering states.

**Business Meeting**

Heather Mellquist Lehto, University of Toronto, Presiding
Josh Reeves, Samford University, Presiding

**A22-108**

**Sociology of Religion Unit**

Theme: _Framing and Mobilizing Religion: National Contexts, Social Values, and the Meaning of Religion_

Tuesday, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM (In Person)
Warren S. Goldstein, Center for Critical Research on Religion, Presiding

This panel investigates how religion is framed and mobilized across national and local contexts. The first paper relies on ethnographic interviews with members of a “liberal observant” Jewish prayer group in the U.S. to reveal divergent views about cultural narratives of personal choice in religious identity and practice. The second paper draws on a Canadian survey and personal interviews to show how the term “religion” has become coded as anti-modern, unfree, American, and colonial since the 1960s. The third paper analyzes data from the World Values Survey to show that, while religiosity is generally associated with patriarchy, in some national contexts liberal gender ideologies are positively associated with religiosity. The fourth paper uses archival material and interviews to investigate how the U.S. federal government hires and trains chaplains for service in federal organizations where chaplaincy roles are mandated.
• Ellie Ash, Boston University

Narratives of Choice and Obligation in an American Jewish Congregation

How do people engage narratives of choice in a religious community that one participant described as “the space that lives in between untethered progressive Judaism on the one hand and calcified Orthodoxy on the other?” This paper draws on ethnographic interviews to examine narratives of personal choice in a traditionally observant, but socially liberal, Jewish community. This paper will disentangle different aspects of voluntarism to better analyze the ways that my interlocutors engage with ethics of choice. I argue that my interlocutors understand respect for individual authority as a basic moral principle, but have varied and complex relationships to the ideal of pluralism and the concept of obligation. Some embrace pluralism and reject external obligation. Many, however, are ambivalent about divergent Jewish practices, or defend the value of religious obligation against unrestricted personal freedom, intentionally resisting certain forms of voluntarism even while they affirm others.

• Galen Watts, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven
  Sam Reimer, Crandall University


How to explain the dramatic rise in "religious nones" in Canada? The secularization paradigm holds that modernization is the culprit. While we do not deny that secularization has taken place, the secularization paradigm, as classically conceived, cannot adequately explain this shift. Using Canada as a case study, we propose a way to think about secularization – guided by the discursive study of religion and neo-Durkheimian cultural sociology – which gives less attention to the three “b’s” – belief, belonging, and behavior – than to a fourth “b” – branding. Drawing from a nationally representative survey and interviews with fifty “spiritual but not religious” Canadians, we argue the country has seen such a rapid rise in religious disaffiliation because in the wake of the 1960s, the term “religion” became deeply polluted – widely coded as anti-modern, unfree, American, and colonial. In turn, we propose a novel and generative way to think about processes of religious decline.

• Di Di, Santa Clara University
  Esther Chan, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

Education, Work, and Politics: How Religiosity and National Context Shape Gender Ideologies in Different Social Spheres

How does religiosity shape the views of men and women in their social spheres of work, politics, and education? How does it vary across national contexts? Drawing on data from the World Values Survey (Wave 7), we examine the association between religiosity, religious affiliation, and a country’s religious culture on gender prioritizing across forty-
two countries. We find that while religiosity is generally associated with prioritizing men over women, it does not apply to all countries. The study’s findings indicate that, in some countries, in each social sphere, religiosity is sometimes negatively associated with prioritizing men over women. We also find that, in some cases, religiosity has the strongest positive association with gender prioritizing in Anglophone countries. Our findings have implications for understanding the association between gender and religiosity across national contexts.

- Grace Tien, Brandeis University
- Wendy Cadge, Brandeis University

Chaplain Hiring and Training in Federal Government Organizations

Scholars have paid little attention to the relationship between religion and organizational hiring and training practices, in spite of an extensive literature on labor market stratification. Through this case study of federally mandated chaplain hiring and training, we examine this relationship and explore how tensions between the church and state, along with recent secularization trends, are being reconciled through the work of the chaplain in federally mandated roles in the U.S. military branches, law enforcement, the Bureau of Prisons and Veterans Affairs. Unlike people hired into professional positions based on education, knowledge and skills to date, chaplains are hired—by design—without some of the skills required for the job. We examine the hiring and training process to illuminate the gaps for practitioners and employers, and we identify the strategies employers implement in a process of acculturation, or teaching new hires “the organizational culture” of their respective workplace context.

A22-109
Study of Islam Unit
Theme: Regimes of Muslim Subject Formation
Tuesday, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM (In Person)
Shatha Almutawa, Willamette University, Presiding

This panel will explore different perspectives on self and social formation.

- Samaah Jaffer, Yale University

Karbala as Discipline: Reflections on History, Memory, and Muslim Subjectivity

This paper is a meditation on the relationship between Muslims and history, considering collective memory of foundational pasts in early Islamic history as a central dynamic in the constitution of Muslim subjectivities. Focusing on the collective memory of the seventh-century revolution led by Imam Hussain ibn Ali, which culminated in Karbala on the tenth day of Muharram, 61 AH, this essay will theorize the remembrance of Karbala as discipline in a dual sense—as an epistemic opening and as a means of embodied, ethical self-cultivation. Karbala as discipline marks a critical departure from the Karbala paradigm, a model that places ritual remembrance in a mutually exclusive binary that

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“depoliticizes salvation and desacralizes revolution” (Szanto). Adopting a more expansive definition of politics, this paper will begin to articulate how the memory of Karbala functions as discipline through close readings of literary and cultural production in North America.

- Megan Robb, University of Pennsylvania

_Sweet Words: Calligraphy and the Emotions in South Asian Islam_

This paper reviews genres of texts discussing calligraphic training, reception and reproduction, and reflects on the role of emotions in calligraphic training. In the process, it becomes clear that between the 17th and the 20th centuries texts discussing calligraphy reflected changing attitudes to _usūl_ or principles of calligraphy among calligraphers and historians of _nastaliq_ calligraphy in South Asia. Debates and interpretations of _usūl_ strongly imply a range of roles for the emotions in training and reception of calligraphy. This paper is particularly interested in the presence of two emotions in literature on calligraphy and its reprinting: _shauq_ (desire, yearning, affection) and _afsos_ (regret). This article also attempts to trace attitudes to _usūl_, _shauq_, and _afsos_ across a few specific texts that are exemplars of their respective genres: a _rehnumah_ or handbook, a _sarguzisht_ or narrative history, and an _adab al-mashq_ or ethical handbook of calligraphy practice.

- Patrick D'Silva, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs

"Ayesha at Last" and "Hana Khan Carries On": Romance Novels and the New Adab of Muslim Self-Representation

Canadian novelist Uzma Jalaluddin’s _Ayesha at Last_ and _Hana Khan Carries On_ are examples of Muslim authors wading into one of the largest genres in publishing: romance novels. Through recasting older stories such as _Pride and Prejudice_ and _You’ve Got Mail_, Jalaluddin depicts Indian Muslims in the Greater Toronto Area finding their way to a “Happily Ever After” while simultaneously combating Islamophobia in the workplace and in public as well as struggling through the pressures to assimilate while still retaining their cultural and religious traditions. Jalaluddin’s work represents new forms of _adab_ in the sense of both literary production and a code of conduct. Far more than mere cultural mimesis, these novels are a vehicle for self-representation in which Muslim characters exhibit a great deal of agency and ingenuity in navigating myriad political and personal obstacles.

- Kathleen Foody, North Carolina State University

_Classify to Conquer: Defining Muslim Differences Under US Empire_

In today’s media, Sunni and Shi’a are diametrically opposed. In academic materials as well, defining the history and reasons for Sunni and Shi’a differences seems essential. For example, Stephen Prothero’s recent textbook _Religion Matters_ devotes one-quarter of the history of Islam to explaining this difference. Certainly, interest in Sunni and Shi’a
differences occupied Orientalists, colonial administrators, and historians of Islam since at least the sixteenth century. However, a survey of major American news sources suggests that this imagination—as far as the wider American public is concerned—is quite new. This article surveys the beginnings of this distinction in American public media and its development through the Iranian revolution and hostage crisis, the Lebanese civil war, and the first American invasion of Iraq. Through this period the notion of differences among Muslims not only takes on broader salience but also connects directly to questions about zealotry and predispositions to violence.

A22-110
Professional Development - Pedagogy and Teaching
Teaching Religion Unit
Theme: Addressing Dilemmas in Teaching Religion
Tuesday, 8:30 AM - 10:00 AM (In Person)
Anne Blankenship, North Dakota State University, Presiding
Based loosely around the theme of “classroom catastrophes,” this session centers around specific dilemmas that religion educators have faced in their classrooms and the strategies that they have employed in response to those dilemmas. What has worked and what has failed? How do institutional contexts inform the challenges we face in our teaching? And, how does our own positionality in the classroom (racial identity, gender identity, and more) play a role in these dynamics?

- Karen Trimble Alliaume, Lewis University

Proximity Alert: Science Fiction as Public Theology for Nones

How can we combat the dehumanization of marginalized groups? How can we encourage the development of empathy in our students when strong emotions are elicited by change and uncertainty? Public discourses that dehumanize others, when backed explicitly or implicitly by Christian ideas, can be resisted effectively only with theological literacy, among other tools. But for many students, theological ideas are implicit: absorbed from cultural representations of religious concepts, practices, ideas, and figures rather than from immersion in communities of explicit religious practice.

Reading Octavia Butler’s Dawn (her 1987 novel about first contact between humans and aliens) through a feminist theological anthropological lens (Saracino, 2011) offers students opportunities to feel and analyze their emotional responses to the unfamiliar and/or feared in a way that’s transferable to real world experiences, equipping students with tools to assess and intervene in public discourses used by some Christians in the service of dehumanizing others.

- Hilary Scarsella, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School

Anti-Racist, Decolonial Pedagogy for Teaching Gender and Sexuality Studies in Seminaries
This paper describes and analyzes a teaching experience in which dynamics of race, gender, class, and sexuality manifested as catastrophe in the context of teaching gender and sexuality studies in a Doctor of Ministry program. I discuss what happened, the pedagogical strategies I tried, reasons for their failure, and what my subsequent research suggests about more generative ways forward. I aim to articulate an anti-racist, decolonial pedagogy for teaching gender and sexuality studies in theological classrooms with majority cis, straight, black, male students, many of whom are pastors, some of whom may hold conservative views of gender, sexuality, and family.

- Shereen Bhalla, Hindu American Foundation

*The Educator’s Guide To Hinduism: From Research to Practice*

As one of the world's oldest religions, Hinduism is a collection of rich traditions connected by an underlying unity based on shared spiritual and philosophical concepts and beliefs, which have developed over the past 5,000 years. However, there are many complexities in Hinduism’s core philosophies and the religious and social practices of India which can make teaching about Hinduism a unique process. Additionally, many school districts confine teaching about world religions to one week or even one day, so there is an added stress on educators to effectively teach about Hinduism. In 2019, a survey was developed to find out what challenges became apparent when teaching about Hinduism and what concepts did students identify as being difficult to comprehend. From these findings, teachers identified that a lack of understanding about Hinduism is a direct correlation to misconceptions about religious practices that led to classroom and cyber bullying.

A22-111

Theology and Religious Reflection Unit

Theme: *Art Practice, Ritual Practice, and the Question of Spiritual Insight*

Tuesday, 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM (In Person)

David Newheiser, Australian Catholic University, Presiding

This roundtable session is a conversation between two scholars who have been in conversation with artists over the past year and two scholars of religious ritual. In this discussion, we consider the degree to which parallels between art practice and ritual practice point to a spiritual insight or understanding constitutive of non-religious art practice. Both art practice and ritual are ways that practitioners understand the world and their place in it, and parallels between them include the use of repetitive and formalized gesture, the re-framing of dimensions of everyday life for new purposes, and unique forms of attention and awareness. Besides illuminating the parallels and divergences between art practice and ritual practice as they pertain to reconceptualizing art as a source of spiritual insight, the panel will reflect on their experiences and on the methodological implications of engaging in theological and religious reflection in conversation with artistic and religious practice.

Panelists
A22-112  
Afro-American Religious History Unit  
Theme: **Frontiers of Nation-building: New Narratives of Black Religions through Biography, Iconography, Print, and Oral History**  
Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Nicole Turner, Yale University, Presiding

In this collection of emerging scholarship clustering around the themes of biography, iconography, print, and oral history, these scholars of African-American Religious History will introduce interested participants to a fascinating set of insightful topics ranging from religion in Houston's Pan-African Community to the theology of respectability in the life and work of Dr. Rosa Young. Additional papers focus on African-American emigration to Haiti in the Antebellum period, education and the state in the Allah Temple of Islam, and the iconography of nineteenth century Roman Catholic charity worker Julia Greeley.

- **Colin Bossen**, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston

*Religion in Houston’s Pan-African Community*

This project traces the intersections between Black religious life and Black radical politics in the fourth largest city of the United States. Over the course of a year, we are holding a series of public conversations with community leaders about their religious practices and beliefs, political commitments, and personal stories. Interviewees represent the city’s wide diversity of Black radical traditions and the Pan-African community. Participants in the project share their stories of political engagement and offer reflections on how they have been inspired by a wide range of religious traditions—including African, syncretic, Islamic, and other non-Christian religious practices—in their social justice work. The videos of the conversations are being recorded, posted on social media platforms, and will serve as the basis for a book of oral histories. The conversations are being held at community and religious organizations located in the city’s Third and Fourth Wards.
• Warren Lattimore, Duke University

*Between Accommodation's Philosophy and Respectability's Politics: Rosa Young and the Theology of Respectability*

This paper looks at the life and work of Dr. Rosa J. Young to explain how she found a way between and beyond the philosophy of accommodation and politics of respectability. Against both, she formulated what I call a "theology of respectability," one that rejects the elitism of the Talented Tenth and the materialism of accommodation. My goal is to find new ways to approach and critique the idea of 'respectabilities' in Black religious practices, particularly as conceptualized by Black theologians in predominantly white denominations.

• Joseph Stuart, Brigham Young University

*Creating a Nation for Black Men: Education, the State, and the Transformation of the Allah Temple of Islam*

When Muhammad became the Supreme Leader of the Allah Temple of Islam in mid-1934, he synthesized and explained W.D. Fard’s teachings to the Original Man’s descendants were now wandering “in the wilderness of North America.” He labored over the next twelve years to explain to others the truths he had learned from Fard that he believed would save them from white supremacy. Muhammad and other members of the ATOI synthesized and publicized his teachings through print media and built infrastructures to teach their founder’s doctrine systematically.

Using Muhammad’s words and the ideas explained by his followers in newspapers and to a sociologist studying their organization, I reveal how the ATOI made their case to their fellow Asiatics for why they should abandon Christianity and adopt Islam—and simultaneously abandon the United States to become “citizens of heaven” by joining the group now known as the Nation of Islam.

• Johanna Mueller, Stanford University

*The Canaan of the New World: African American Emigration to Haiti in the Antebellum Period*

Based on a close reading of the pro-emigrationist newspaper *The Pine and Palm* (1861-2), this paper explores the spiritual and ideological significance of Haiti for free African Americans in the antebellum period. Few issues caused more disagreement among Black northerners before the Civil War than emigration. Proponents hoped for a better life outside of the US. Opponents argued that emigration would mean relinquishing claims to the US as their rightful homeland, as well as abandoning those still enslaved in the South. As this paper will demonstrate, the *Pine and Palm* deliberately presented Haitian emigration as different from other repatriation plans. Combining Christian providentialism with the language of manifest destiny, it reframed emigration to Haiti as
a Black American nationalist project. Haiti was the Canaan of the New World. Rather than rejecting American ideals, *Pine and Palm* contributors placed their plan to emigrate in the very tradition of American exceptionalism.

- Alexia Williams, University of Illinois

*Julia Greeley, Denver's Angel of Charity*

In 2016, Catholic iconographer Vivian Imbruglia was commissioned by the Archdiocese of Denver to write an icon of Servant of God Julia Greeley. A formerly enslaved woman and candidate for sainthood in the Roman Catholic Church, Greeley rose to prominence in the 1880s for her charitable work among Denver’s impoverished families and firefighters. More than a portrait of a holy person, an icon structures a present encounter with a saint and the community that the saint represents. This paper explores the encounters that Greeley’s icon is intended to conjure, and the narratives of race and Catholicism in the Old West that it inspires.

**A22-113**  
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe  
Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Unit and Religion and Economy Unit and Religion, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism Unit  
Theme: Catastrophe and the Constellations of Racial Capitalism, Neocolonialism, and Religious Forms  
Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)  
Helen Jin Kim, Emory University, Presiding  

In a time of catastrophe, there is urgent work to be done in critically examining the structures that have brought humanity and our planet to the brink. A central spoke in the wheel of injustice – climate, economic, political, racial, and otherwise – is the constellation of racism, capitalist expansion, and the colonial rubrics that sustained these rapprochements in the emergence of early capitalist forms and continue to do so today. Scholars have attended to this complex matrix of power in various ways over the last decades, but few have asked what the field of religious studies can contribute to its unraveling, and how religious forms shape and accommodate racial capitalist expansions. Inspired by Jonathan Tran's latest book, "Asian Americans and the Spirit of Racial Capitalism," this Roundtable brings together scholars of religion who collectively ask: how are religious worlds embedded in the rise and preservation of racial capitalist forms, and in their undoing?

**Panelists**

Jonathan Tran, Baylor University  
Matthew Harris, University of California, Santa Barbara  
Keri Day, Princeton Theological Seminary  
Devin Singh, Dartmouth College  
Nichole Flores, University of Virginia
This panel assembles papers addressing Buddhist frameworks for creating resilience in the face of catastrophes such as climate change and humanitarian crises, and for young people making the transition to adulthood in unstable times, where traditional markers of maturing, such as establishing a career or buying a home, are difficult to obtain.

- Christina A. Kilby, James Madison University

*Mandalas of Security: Buddhist Approaches to Resilience and Humanitarian Relief*

This year's AAR presidential theme of "catastrophe" demands attention not only to experiences of calamity and trauma, but also to diverse understandings of resilience and security. In this presentation, I investigate mandala-inspired frameworks for human security drawn from Buddhist traditions and suggest potential contributions they can make to the global human security field. In my exploration of mandalic modes of imagining and creating security, I analyze the ritual of "securing the six directions" from the *Sigalovada Sutta* in the Theravāda tradition; the security framework offered in the Tibetan *Kalachakra* mandala; and the "mandala of security" model developed by Ven. Professor Pinnawala Sangasumana, which incorporates elements from both Theravada and tantric Buddhism.

- Kim Lam, Deakin University

*Re-envisioning the youth phase through Buddhism as contemplative practice*

Existing scholarship on contemplative practice among young people has focused on the self-regulatory and resilience impacts of mindfulness meditation, particularly for 'at-risk' or marginalised youth. Much of this research has looked at the outcomes of structured, short-term intervention programs delivered in secular settings, such as schools and universities, and has been underpinned by normative assumptions about what typical adolescent behaviour and successful transitioning to adulthood looks like. This paper
considers what new understandings about young people and contemplative practice emerge when young people’s own views about contemplative practice and transitioning to adulthood when located within the religio-ethical framework of Buddhism. It suggests that new understandings of young people and contemplative practice may emerge when researchers move beyond top-down, regulatory approaches to framing young people, and are attentive to the ways young people may pro-actively re-envision pathways to adulthood inspired by broader religio-ethical frameworks such as Buddhism.

Responding
Barbra R. Clayton, Mount Allison University

A22-115
Buddhist Philosophy Unit
Theme: Candrakīrti on Conventional Truth
Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Jay Garfield, Smith College, Presiding

Candrakīrti’s account of conventional truth, and of the possibility of making sense of knowledge in the context of the conventional is enormously influential in Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka. Nonetheless, just what Candrakīrti’s account of these matters was a subject of heated debate. Candrakīrti himself says apparently conflicting things about this matter. He tells us that all phenomena have conventional an ultimate natures, that there is a difference between conventional truth and conventional falsity, and that there are epistemic instruments (pramāṇas) that we can use in the conventional domain. But he also tells us that conventional truth is entirely deceptive and that conventional truth is entirely illusory. This panel addresses Candrakīrti’s own sources and how they might inflect our reading of Candrakīrti, critiques of Candrakīrti’s position in India, and Tibetan debates regarding how to read Candrakīrti. They represent both optimistic and pessimistic positions regarding the ontology and epistemology of the conventional.

- Greg Seton, Dartmouth College

An Indian Critique of the Conventional of Candrakīrti

Candrakīrti’s notion of the conventional (saṃvṛtiḥ) was heavily critiqued by the Indian scholar Ratnākaraśānti (975-1045) in his Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom (prajñāpāramitopadeśa). As a sworn opponent of Candrakīrti’s “pseudo-Mādhyamika” (dbu ma ltar snang ba, Guide, 226b4; Instructions, 143b4), Ratnākaraśānti paraphrases Candrakīrtian ideas uncharitably, but his refutations are valuable both for tracking the Indian reception of Candrakīrti’s philosophy and for understanding the subsequent reinterpretation of it by Tsongkhapa (1357-1419)—who often quotes Ratnākaraśānti’s Instructions in his own writing. Ratnākaraśānti aims to prove, on the one hand, that the Candrakīrtian notion of the conventional strays toward eternalism, since it entails an assertion that, despite being erroneous, minds with their mental processes and external objects actually exist. On the other hand, he argues that the Candrakīrtian notion
of awakening as lacking a mind with mental processes strays toward nihilism and such a “realization” of ultimate reality would contradict well-established worldly perception.

- Jed Forman, University of California, Berkeley

*Now I Know in Part: How Kedrub Saves Candrakīrti from Relativism*

Candrakīrti’s theory about the role of conventions in justification is well-known. However, it also leaves him vulnerable to relativism. If different communities adhere to different conventions, then is there no cogent, intercommunal notion of truth? If so, are the tenants of Buddhism only true for Buddhists, and not universally true? This consequence threatens to undermine Buddhism as a whole. Tibetan exegetes were aware of this problem and debated it thoroughly. This paper examines one solution offered by Kedrub Gelek Palzang (Mkhas grub Dge legs Dpal bzang, 1385-1438). He concedes that Candrakīrti’s theory entails truth only obtains within the context of a community and that it is not necessarily transferable to another. Nevertheless, this does not vitiate universal truth, which is constituted by the supervenience of all communities’ true claims. Thus, the universal truth of any given object is an amalgam of what various communities can justifiably say about it.

- Jeremy Manheim, University of Wisconsin

*Analysis, Overanalysis, & The Problem with Naturalism*

Can Candrakīrti’s critique of Buddhist epistemology be used to challenge scientific naturalism, particularly the methodological claim that the natural sciences provide the only reliable route to genuine knowledge? Like the Buddhist epistemological tradition Candrakīrti targets, methodological naturalism imposes high epistemic standards that exclude many of our commonly accepted ways of knowing. To the extent that Candrakīrti is successful in arguing that these restrictive epistemologies rest on belief in a svabhāva or essence, does this put philosophical pressure on the naturalist’s claim to be free of any *a priori* metaphysics? As a preliminary to answering this question, I explore whether such restrictive epistemologies are necessarily premised on belief in a svabhāva. To get a philosophical grip on why, for Candrakīrti, any given epistemology or inquiry presumes a svabhāva, in this paper I attempt to offer a cogent account of what he sees as the problematic sort of analysis of conventional truth.

- Sonam Thakchoe, University of Tasmania

*Taktsang Lotsawa, Tsongkhapa, and Illusionism*

In the Madhyamaka section of *Freedom from Extremes* (Yakherds 2021), Taktsang Lotsawa introduces Prāsaṅgika can be either Illusionism (*Māyopamādvaya-vāda*) nor Global Reductionism (*Sarvadharmāpratiṣṭhāna-vāda*). He aligns his version of the Prāsaṅgika qualifies with the global reductionism of the “Great Madhyamaka.” On his view, illusory entities patently appear without appealing to any epistemic
warrant (pramāṇa), as they can all be shown to be merely apparent to those with deceptive cognitive processes, and so do not exist in the way that they appear. In contrast, he charges Tsongkhapa’s Prāsaṅgika with being a version of illusionism, a system according to which the false epistemic warrant draws the correct conclusion from a Candrakīrtian analysis. I will interrogate the role of analysis in Taktsang’s interpretation of Candrakīrti and its implications in the light of his so-called the three contexts.

- Tsering Samdup, Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies

_Gorampa versus Tsongkhapa on Conventional Truth_

It would be safe to say that any difference Gorampa and Tsongkhapa have in their interpretation of Candrakīrti’s view on conventional truth stems from their understanding of ultimate truth. As much as Tsongkhapa is concerned about the validity of the conventional truth, Gorampa is equally concerned about the true nature of the ultimate truth. It seems they have different priorities. Even then Gorampa values the role and importance of epistemic instruments such as valid cognition and analogy when dealing with conventional reality. According to Gorampa, as long as it appears to mind, no matter whether it is a yellow snow mountain or two moons shining in the sky, is exists as saṁvṛti satya. Like Tsongkhapa, Gorampa also quotes dozens of lines from important Madhyamaka texts to support his arguments. This paper will discuss how Gorampa puts forward his arguments regarding conventional truth and the way he interprets the root texts without sidelining the obvious literal meaning.

- John R. Newman, New College of Florida

_Notes on one of Candrakīrti's 'favorite' āgamas, in reference to his ideas on 'the conventions of common people' (lokavyavahāra)_

Etic study of Candrakīrti emphasizes his status as a "philosopher," studying his writings with a focus on the ideas he presents that are amenable to philosophical discussion. Candrakīrti's position within and attitudes toward Buddhist religion have been less studied. Recently Shenghai Li has examined aspects of Candrakīrti's usage of the Samādhirāja sūtra. From this it is clear that Candrakīrti's citation of established Buddhist textual traditions (āgama) is a fruitful avenue of investigation, one that has yet to be fully explored.

- Tenzin Bhuchung, Emory University

_Two Truths in Gampopa's Mahāmudrā Tradition_

In his Mahāmudrā works, Gampopa offers a view of the two truths employing elements of both the Yogācāra and the Madhyamaka tradition such as establishing the nonduality of the mind (ultimate) and phenomenal appearances (conventional) using hermeneutical methods similar to the Yogācāra tradition, followed by establishing the nondual mind as emptiness in accordance with the Madhyamaka tradition. In Gampopa’s Mahāmudrā
tradition, the ultimate is regarded as beyond linguistic or conceptual description. The Mahāmudrā pith instructions are thus meant to circumvent subject/object dualism as well as conceptual thoughts so that the direct experience of the ultimate will dawn.

A22-116
Catholic Studies Unit
Theme: Global Circulations of Asian Catholics and the Making of 21st Century Catholicism
Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Stephanie Wong, Valparaiso University, Presiding

This session explores ways through which Asian Catholics directly participate in or indirectly intersect with the making of global Catholicism. Based on anthropological and sociological approaches, presenters explore issues located at the intersection of Asian Catholic migrations, religious practices, public engagement, and ethnic identities. They investigate the ways Asian Catholics are not limited to their local or national belongings – nor to a static, universal, and homogenous expression of their religious belonging. Rather, presenters shed light on the various modes through which Asian Catholics, their religious symbols, or their political awareness circulate and evolve across borders. Ultimately, the session reveals that Asian Catholic circulations that occur at different levels and through various modalities question how Catholics perceive themselves and enact a “global” Catholic economy that shapes the many locales of 21st century Catholicism.

- George Bayuga, Yale University
  
  *Queer Affect Abroad: Chinese Nuns and Remaking Catholic Worlds*

  This paper is a consideration of the role of queer affect and sexuality the spiritual education of Chinese Catholic nuns who travel to Manila for religious training. Beginning in the late 1990s, Chinese clergy started arriving in Manila for education to minister to growing Catholic communities in the Mainland. For many Chinese nuns, this exposure was filled with hybrid encounters—they at once were immersed in a Catholic dominant society and also surrounded by visions of life outside the bounds of their ascetic expectations. A major point of religious reckoning was their encounter with sexualities both inside and outside of the classroom. Thinking through two cases: the discussion of sexuality beyond physical intimacy in a seminary and the recognition of queer Catholics in Filipino Church settings, this paper highlights how queer affect served the Church’s mission to form cosmopolitan Catholic nuns ready to address China’s changing religious landscape.

- Bernardo Brown, International Christian University, Japan
  
  *Sri Lankan Migrant clergy and the shaping of a new Catholic youth in Italy*

  If you visit Catholic parishes in any Western European capital, you are likely to encounter Asian and African clergy at work. Clergy from India currently account for 30% of priests
in Germany, and given the aging profile of European clergy, it is likely that most pastoral work is conducted by priests raised and trained in very different cultural contexts. This paper examines the case of Sri Lankan priests working in Italy, to reflect on how they engage with social problematics of the youth in Europe. In particular, I explore the work that priests and young parishioners do to bridge the cultural divide that separates them, and the unlikely points of convergence that they find. Sri Lankan clergy who actively organize youth groups, catechism courses and other pastoral activities for local youths are creatively developing new forms of religious engagement in European communities.

• Michel Chambon, Hanover College

*Local autonomy and global sovereignty: the political entanglements of Chinese Catholics*

The People’s Republic of China and the Holy See have long engaged in diplomatic conversations to frame the status of Catholicism in China and establish formal diplomatic relationships. But the two sovereign entities have quite different and changing views on religion. Furthermore, the question of Taiwan adds another layer of complexity in their dialogue. While the White House has recently increased its interference in their dialogue, the ups and downs of the Sino-Vatican negotiations have attracted large media coverage. Thus, I argue that this international attention reflects the importance of the geopolitical issues that are at stake – i.e., defining sovereignty, religious autonomy, state-church relationships, human dignity, and the territorializing of Catholicism. As fieldwork in China confirms, Chinese Catholics are well-aware that they are not a mere national question but an international one with highly political ramifications.

• Thien-Huong Ninh, Cuesta College

*Our Lady of Lavang: Mediation of the Vietnamese Catholic Diaspora in the U.S., Germany, and Israel*

Since her first apparition in 1798 in Vietnam, Our Lady of Lavang has been associated with miracles within the contexts of martyrdom and other life-threatening experiences. In 1901, a French Bishop used a French model of Our Lady of Victories to (incongruously) represent the Virgin Mary with her Vietnamese name -- “Our Lady of Lavang.” It was not until 1998, that this statue was replaced. This time, the Virgin Mary was represented as a Vietnamese woman, an image created by a Vietnamese American Catholic sculptor and funded by the Vietnamese Catholic community in California. Although this Vietnamese image is a recent creation and the Vatican has not confirmed the historical accuracy of Our Lady of Lavang’s apparition, it has become popular throughout the world. This paper traces the globalization and transplantation of the Vietnamese-looking Our Lady of Lavang in the U.S., Germany, and Israel.

• Brandon Vaidyanathan, Catholic University of America

*Engaged Expats and Disengaged Citizens: Civic Participation among Indian Catholic*
Professionals in Dubai and Bangalore

How do religious institutions shape the civic participation of corporate professionals in rapidly developing contexts? Drawing on data from participant observation and in-depth interviews (n=135), this paper compares Indian Roman Catholic corporate professionals in two rapidly globalizing cities, Dubai, UAE, and Bangalore, India. The findings of this study reveal a paradox: Indian professionals in Dubai, though expatriates in a non-democratic nation, are actively involved in providing forms of economic, human, and social capital through the Church; meanwhile, their counterparts in Bangalore, despite being citizens in a democracy, are intentionally disengaged from such activities. I discuss three key factors that explain this variation—legal frameworks, authority structures, and institutional priorities—and conclude with implications for understanding the role of religious institutions in both facilitating and inhibiting the civic engagement of professionals in contexts of rapid development.

Responding

Hirokazu Miyazaki, Northwestern University

A22-117
Cognitive Science of Religion Unit
Theme: Cognitive Historiography of Religions
Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Paul Robertson, University of New Hampshire, Presiding

This session presents papers that employ cognitive science methodology to questions of religious history and the engagement with historical minds. This session is intentionally broad in scope. Of particular interest is how to employ cognitive science as a means to recover otherwise lost religious histories.

- Jennifer Carlier, Emory University

A Neuroscientific and Theological Understanding of Addiction

The National Institutes of Health indicate that 10% of US adults suffer from addiction. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also pinpoint drug overdose deaths as one of the leading causes of the decrease in life expectancy in the US in both 2015 and 2017. The isolation and stress associated with Covid-19 has only exacerbated this problem. Despite these and many other sobering statistics, churches struggle to address the problem of addiction in a way that is theologically robust, while psychologically and scientifically responsible.

In this paper, I propose a theological conception of SUDs that is grounded in and modifies St. Augustine and John Calvin’s metaphor of the bondage of the will, in order to offer a theological understanding of addiction that is consonant with neuroscientific understandings of addiction, while allowing for a pastoral response to those struggling in
the form of validation and a reduction of shame.

- Hannah James, University of Saint Andrews

*Forgiveness: A benefit or sacrifice?*

This paper will explore the relationship between the psychological approaches to forgiveness and the philosophical and theological conceptualizations of forgiveness in order to determine their similarities and where they diverge. While there is much that can be learned through the cognitive and evolutionary approaches to forgiveness, what we will find is that the conceptualizations of forgiveness with which many cognitive scientists are working are too simplistic to realistically be able to explain the motivations and effects of forgiveness—particularly for the religious person. With this in mind, I will then suggest a few ways that the two fields may be able to move forward together in the study of forgiveness.

- Matthew Ong, University of California, Berkeley

*The debate over family resemblances in religion: time for a reevaluation?*

Defenders of the sui generis nature of religion such as Ninian Smart and Peter Byrne have appealed to the concept of family resemblances because it allows them to assert that religion is a valid independent category without specifying essential characteristics of all its members (i.e., specific forms of religion as practiced in human history). Yet critics of the concept of sui generis religion such as Timothy Fitzgerald have argued that appealing to family resemblances provides little definitional control and effectively smuggles in an essentialist definition of religion based on European Christianity. This paper argues that in its modern cognitive formulation as radial categories, the updated family resemblances approach to religion survives Fitzgerald’s criticisms and even has the potential to synthesize older historical and newer cognitive approaches in powerful ways. I sketch an example of this using Dale Cannon’s Six Ways Model of religion.

**A22-118**

**Comparative Theology Unit**

Theme: *The Political Implications of Comparative Theology*

Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Bin Song, Washington College, Presiding

The papers of this panel analyze specific examples where comparative theological analysis highlights political aspects of resonant practices from diverse religious traditions. While previous comparative theological studies involving politics typically have centered on the broad issue of the political implications of comparative theology itself (i.e., as a discipline), the papers of this panel pursue a more focused inquiry at the intersection of politics and comparative theology. Specifically, they examine the political dimensions which emerge when comparing specific practices and traditions across multiple religions. Such practices include normative understandings and traditions involving “saints” in Christianity, Islam, and Judaism; perceptions
and practices of women's ordination in Christian and Hindu traditions; and compelled self-naming in Christian and Buddhist texts. United by their common attention to political aspects and implications, the four papers of this panel advance comparative theology by showing how it elucidates resonant political dimensions among the practices of diverse religious traditions.

- Hans Harmakaputra, Hartford International University

*Worldly Saint, Political Saint: Revisiting the Christian Notion of Holiness*

Both Christian and Muslim traditions emphasize holiness as otherworldly spirituality. However, regardless of the similar negative perception about the world, Christians seem to have a more difficult time imagining the interconnection between holiness and politics than Muslims, as seen in the canonization process of Óscar Romero. This paper utilizes a comparative theology lens to draw insights from the Islamic tradition of friends of God, particularly through an account of a Muslim saint from Indonesia, to transform the negative perception of politics in Christianity. Several insights drawn from the comparison are these: rethinking Jesus’ political role, differentiating types of saints, and redefining the meaning of “miracle” or extraordinary power of saints. In addition, the paper will construct a theological rationale, drawn from Karl Rahner’s and Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s ideas, for revisiting the Christian notion of holiness and suggesting a different kind of saints for contemporary time: a worldly and political saint.

- David Maayan, Boston College

*Metaphysical Politics: Constructing the Devotional Self in Early Hasidic Judaism and the Pauline Epistles*

This paper compares the construction of the self of the devotee in relation to the archetype of the supremely holy person in early hasidic literature and in the Pauline epistles. In each, the political and the metaphysical are intertwined and mutually informing. Profound theological concepts are evoked to explain, and encourage, financial donations which will help their respective nascent movements. Does this transform or merely disguise the nature of the giving act? A second issue concerns hierarchy and collectivism in the similar analogies (head and body, root and branches) used to mark the relationship of the devotee(s) and the tsaddik (hasidic leader) or Christ. These texts often reinscribe hierarchy even where it may seem to be subverted. Yet in each there are intimations of a holographic model, in which each “part” is not only necessary to the whole but also, in a sense, a unique instantiation of the whole.

- Katie Mahowski Mylroie, Boston College

*The Politics of Women Priests: Gender in the Catholic and Hindu Priesthoods*

Theological debates about legitimizing Catholic women deacons and priests are ongoing, and while there are innumerable Catholic theologians who support and advocate for reform to allow women’s ordination, the Church remains resolutely opposed. In the late
1990s, women began to seek ordination, and those conferring and receiving this sacrament were promptly excommunicated from the Church. Women priests and their congregations are now the subject of recently published academic and ethnographic studies as the politics of women priests deepen. Hindu women, in the early 2000s, began to study Sanskrit texts, receive the sacred thread in upanayana ceremonies, and become priests. Without a Magisterium to excommunicate them, Hindu women priests rely on believers that will either accept their priestly identity, or refuse to hire or include them in religious life. This paper contributes to the exploration of legitimizing Catholic women’s ordination by examining these tensions in light of Hindu women priests.

- Joseph Kimmel, Harvard University

“What is Your Name?”: Names Comparatively Compelled in Christian and Buddhist Texts

This paper addresses a significant lacuna in comparative theological studies by reading Christian and Buddhist texts through the political hermeneutic lens of Louis Althusser’s interpellation theory. While this theory has typically been used to understand how hegemonic systems subjectify individuals, this paper illustrates how interpellation also provides a compelling way to account for the dynamics of manipulation in texts where names and naming are used to compel certain behavior. Specifically, the paper examines the exorcistic battle between Legion and Jesus in Mark 5 and a tenth-century collection of spells featuring the Buddhist deity Bhṛkuṭī. The paper analyzes each document in light of both Althusser’s theory and the other text in order to show why and how onomastic obtainment plays such a powerful role via interpellation. Following this comparative analysis, this paper concludes by discussing the enduring resonance of such texts with the perpetuation of interpellation in contemporary socio-political hierarchies.

- Ha Young Kang, Drew University

Hearing Voices: Pathology or a Path Toward Religious Authority of Women?

This paper examines comparative theology through a feminist approach, utilizing the concept of “outsider-within,” which was coined by a black feminist scholar, Patricia Hill Collins, and adopted into the field of comparative theology by Michelle Voss Roberts. Voss Roberts’ framework of the outsider-within confronts the traditional comparative theology manifested as a conversation among the privileged who are considered to have the authority to speak for their own and to others. Furthermore, it attests to the possibilities of the marginalized becoming part of interreligious discourse, namely women in diverse religious communities. Utilizing this framework, this paper attempts to explore a way in which women religious leaders, who are outsiders-within their respective traditions, claim their authority, which is unfolded as a power to hear voices. By inviting Monica A. Coleman and Jarena Lee as interlocutors, this action of hearing voices will reveal as both pathology and a path-toward-authority in interreligious dialogue.
Responding

Lucinda Mosher, Hartford International University for Religion and Peace

A22-119
Presidential Theme - Religion and Catastrophe
Ecclesiological Investigations Unit
Theme: Catastrophe in the Life of the Church
Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Scott MacDougall, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, Presiding

Many discussions of catastrophe as a dimension of religious studies or theological analysis focus on public events which religious communities must interpret or to which they must respond: how do theologians, religious leaders, lay adherents, and others, make sense out of (for example) climate change, political upheaval, or a public tragedy? Without ignoring such considerations, these papers engage in a more specifically ecclesiological conversation on catastrophe as an internal dynamic of Christian communities confronted with realities that obligate profound soul-searching and transformation. Reflecting on the sense of catastrophe as a sudden overturning (kata-strephein) of things as they are, these papers highlight forms of catastrophe in response to climate change, as suggested by this year's AAR theme, as well as other forms of catastrophe in ecclesial life - the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the Shoah, and the more personally felt catastrophe of infertility.

- Christopher C. Brittain, Trinity College, Toronto

For a Church that Looks Up Without Punching Down: Praying the Disaster in a Time of Climate Emergency

Maurice Blanchot describes the dilemma facing anyone seeking to respond to a catastrophe, “the disaster takes care of everything.” It consumes all; it “swallows” meaning; it “ruins everything, all the while leaving everything intact.” This paper analyses ways in which the Christian churches have struggled to navigate such challenges in the face of climate change, and how this exposes issues in ecclesiology. The paper analyses such dynamics in three ways. First, it will focus on the impact on Hurricane Katrina (2004) and Typhoon Haiyan (2013) on Christian discourse. Second, an analysis of the film Don't Look Up (Netflix, 2021) illustrates a secular version of a similar theodicy. Finally, the paper concludes with an account of the Church and its relationship to the Spirit that seeks to navigate the temptations of both "disaster porn" and "disaster fatigue," while nurturing a capacity to continue to look up to God in hope.

- Shannon Quigley, University of Haifa

Women’s Religious Thought in Post-Shoah Jewish-Christian Dialogue

Following the Shoah, much work has been done on the bimillennial history of Christian antisemitism among both Christian and Jewish leaders and theologians.
investigations have been done looking at the tireless work of Jules Isaac, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Elie Wiesel, Edward Flannery and Franklin Littell who pioneered the efforts to help the Church acknowledge her historical sins against the Jewish people. Little exploration has been done of the work of female religious thinkers who similarly explored Christianity’s anti-Jewish problem with a similar desire to help the historical Church return to the God of Israel and to His people. I will assess two who lived their lives to do just that: Charlotte Klein and Eva Fleischner. Both fled Europe with their families in the Nazi era and became devoutly religious women in their adult years. Additionally, each one lived and worked to make Jewish-Christian dialogue and reconciliation a living reality.

- Emma McDonald, Boston College

*Ecclesial Belonging and Moral Formation: A Qualitative Study of Catholic Women Coping with Infertility*

This paper examines how Catholic ecclesial structures and cultures in the United States contribute to pressures that women feel to conceive biological children and shape opportunities for communal discernment—in person and virtually—among American Catholic women experiencing infertility. The paper argues that adherence to magisterial teaching on reproductive technologies functions as a boundary marker that shapes how American Catholic women seek and receive support for infertility in ecclesial settings. Further, the church’s institutional structures privilege women who adhere to magisterial teaching, such that accompaniment offered in institutional ecclesial settings and in virtual communities often excludes women who dissent.

- Jason Steidl, Saint Joseph's University, New York

*Making Sense of Social and Ecclesial Catastrophe: DignityUSA, the HIV/AIDS Crisis, and Becoming Church outside the Church*

The responses of Dignity USA, a national gay and lesbian Catholic ministry, to the catastrophes of the mid-1980s yielded new forms of ecclesiology and church. In 1986, HIV was spreading like wildfire, and Joseph Ratzinger, then head of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, issued the infamous “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons,” which reiterated church teaching describing homosexual acts as “intrinsically disordered” and called on bishops to stop supporting ministries like DignityUSA. By the end of 1987, most Dignity chapters were expelled from parishes and dioceses. The catastrophic events had a radical impact on the group. No longer interested in assimilating to the church’s heteropatriarchal culture, DignityUSA embraced fully affirming theologies and women’s full sacramental leadership. Today, the group stands as a powerful example of the possibilities for ecclesiology transformed by catastrophe.

**Business Meeting**
Evangelicals in the United States have been explicitly embracing and promoting capitalism as a God-ordained system for nearly two centuries. Recent trends in scholarship on the intersections of American religion, business, and economics have rendered clear and identifiable a tradition I call Enterprise Evangelicalism. Enterprise Evangelicalism presents capitalism as a natural God-ordained system that properly respects human freedom, rewards virtue, and punishes vice. Capitalism, according to Enterprise Evangelicalism is a conduit of God's disciplining love. This paper analyzes the intriguing case of Enterprise Square, USA, a 60,000ft² economics education center built at a cost of $15 million by Oklahoma Christian College in 1982, as a brick and mortar example of the Enterprise Evangelical tradition. The aim of this paper is to offer the category of Enterprise Evangelicalism as a useful historical frame that may guide future scholarship on the intertwining of evangelical theology and economics in American life.

Andrew Gardner, Baylor University

“Evangelicalism and the Catastrophic Potential of Early American Democracy”

This paper argues evangelicalism’s eventual “embrace” of democratic governance in the early republic was one of convenience as opposed to conviction. For evangelicalism and democracy to mutually thrive, individuals like Jedidiah Morse believed the movement needed to recalibrate the purpose and role of ministerial authority. Without well-educated clergy to lead and guide the American electorate, the country would divulge in anarchy. Morse’s efforts to found Andover Theological Seminary served to address the challenges of democratic governance. Following Andover’s lead, theological seminaries became an important institutional mechanism through which evangelicals sought to engage and regulate the American political and theological landscape.

Marcia Pally, New York University

The Ethics of White Evangelical Populism

Much work has been done on what white evangelicals do and think politically. This paper
investigates how and why many deeply religious people find right-wing populism to be the ethical stance. What in white evangelical religious and political history, theology, and present circumstances makes right-wing populism seem best? The paper begins with a minimal definition of populism and explores each aspect as it applies to current white evangelical politics. As populism is a response to duress that finds solutions in us-them binaries, the paper reviews the economic and non-economic duresses from the white evangelical perspective. It discusses the psychology of us-them formation and the historico-cultural resources that, under duress, are drawn upon and re-shaped by such binaries. Several examples from current politics illuminate this trajectory from duress through resources to us-them binaries. Ironically, the resources that contributed much to U.S. and evangelical vibrancy may, under duress, turn to exclusionary populism.

• S. Kyle Johnson, Boston College

From Ham’s Curse to Haiti’s Catastrophe: Demonic Genealogies and the Evangelical Missio.

This paper offers an analysis of portrayals of Haiti in American evangelical missiological literature. Specifically, I investigate portrayals of Haiti as a demonic or possessed land, often made in reference to the trope of a pact with the devil at Bwa Kayiman on the eve of Haitian independence. The American Christian provenance of this pejorative narrative has recently been demonstrated by scholars of Haitian Protestantism and white American evangelicalism. My presentation expands on their work by analyzing the theological and rhetorical roots of this evangelical trope, comparing it to the “curse of Ham” in American white supremacist theology. Specifically, my paper argues that the literature on the evangelical appropriation of Bwa Kayiman has ignored the American Protestant logic of demonic genealogies, first worked out in rhetoric regarding the curse of Ham.

• Janel Kraigt Bakker, Memphis Theological Seminary

Advancing the Kingdom of God: Evangelical Political Theology and Secularization

The basileia tou Theo—often translated as “the kingdom of God”—is the central metaphor in the gospels’ account of Jesus’ message. Jesus used this metaphor to describe the ever-present domain of God’s love and justice. However, many Christians in positions of cultural dominance have sought to expand their power under the banner of advancing the kingdom of God. This paper will give particular attention to the contemporary culture wars in the United States, studying the secularizing impulse of white Christians’ bid for social and political dominance in the name of their faith.
A22-121
North American Religions Unit
Theme: Innovative Sources for the Study of US Religions
Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Samira Mehta, University of Colorado, Presiding

This panel brings together scholarship that looks to new and "non-traditional" sources for building accounts of religion in North America, and scholarship that approaches more "traditional" sources in new ways.

- Lydia Willsky-Ciollo, Fairfield University

  Centering the Religious World of the Penobscot in Thoreau’s The Maine Woods

  This paper seeks to find the Penobscot who peopled Maine at the same time that they peopled the pages of Thoreau’s traveling writings and private writings. Specifically, it looks at the religious world of the Penobscot of the 1840s and 1850s with whom Thoreau came into contact, and, second, to turn, as best as possible, their gaze back onto him. The backdrop is Thoreau’s set of travel writings that took place in Maine, posthumously compiled as The Maine Woods and Thoreau, as representative “tourist,” but the religious and cultural worlds of the Penobscot of Oldtown (“Ktaadn”), Joe Aitteen (“Chesuncook”), and Joe Polis (“Allegash and East Branch”) are in the foreground. By re-centering and re-placing Polis and the Penobscot in Thoreau’s accounts, it is they, not he, who have final say about “true” Indian religion.

- Morgan Barbre, Yale University

  On Door Swings: Mastery, Spatiality, and Familial Grammar in the 19th-Century American Home

  In 1869, domestic scientist and abolitionist Catharine Beecher published The American Woman’s Home, a guidebook for homemakers that brought soteriological stakes to the banality of chores and to oft-ignored spaces of the home: the space beneath stairs, the clearance of door swings, the recesses of kitchen cupboards. This paper considers the architectural drawings of Beecher’s The American Woman’s Home as theological technologies, visual and material interventions into a white familial grammar in the post-plantation United States. It proposes that the interventions Beecher makes are yet haunted by a logic of mastery, a logic of the plantation, even as she subverts other racialized and gendered structures of power. These spatial moves present a way to think the nexus of American religion, white abolitionist politics, and domestic reform that accounts for the era’s millenarian sensibilities by way of the humdrum.

- Kaitlyn Lindgren-Hansen, University of Iowa

  Crafted Proximities: Spiritualism, Clothing, and Writing in Elizabeth Keckley's Behind
Simultaneously an autobiography, slave narrative, and an exposé of the Lincoln family, Elizabeth Keckley wrote and published *Behind the Scenes* in 1868 to redeem Mary Todd Lincoln’s reputation after the “Old Clothes Scandal” in 1867. Keckley’s attempt to clarify the the scandal was unsuccessful, destroying the relationship between the two women and inspiring public backlash against Keckley for supposedly revealing the private affairs of the Lincoln family for her own gain. However, the concluding sentences of the autobiography link two creative processes together: sewing and writing. I suggest that, by connecting her work as a seamstress with her work as an author, Keckley explores the transformative possibilities of U.S. spiritualism through veils, dresses, and other mundane pieces of clothing. Through her work produced by the pen and needle, Keckley’s autobiography crafts proximities between the living and the dead and between U.S. citizens divided in the wake of the Civil War.

- Rachel Lindsey, Saint Louis University

*Record and Revelation: Photojournalism and the Visual Politics of Religion in the American Century*

Building from original archival research and critical analysis this paper introduces two photographers—Margaret Bourke-White and Yoichi “Oke” Okamoto—whose work gestures to a broader "repertoires" of photographic production and reception between 1930 and 1970. Whether in primarily commercial venues (Bourke-White) or in official government offices (Okamoto), both photographers trafficked in visual grammars of race and religion to define the affective contours of American citizenship. Throughout, this paper brings into focus many ways in which photographic representations of religion were embedded in systems of production, circulation, and reception that collectively contributed to the development of visual grammars of citizenship in the twentieth century.

**Responding**

Sarah Dees, Iowa State University

**A22-122**

**Philosophy of Religion Unit**

Theme: *Theory in the Wake of Hegel and Marx*

Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)

Andrew Chignell, Princeton University, Presiding

This panel explores the legacies of G.W.F. Hegel and Karl Marx in relation to the study of religion. Two of the papers examine how Hegel's philosophy in relation to ritual theory, engaging with Catherine Bell's ritual theory and the relationship between thought and action in ritual. The third paper turns to the thought of Marx, as developed by Michel Henry and Simone Weil, and the role of labor in constituting subjectivity. The final paper examines apophatic and
genealogical criticisms of Enlightenment rationality, in conversation with Eberhard Jüngel and various figures in the Marxist tradition.

- Jack Hanson, Yale University

*Hegel's Ritual System: Absolute Knowing and the Practice of Theory*

The great ambition of Hegel's speculative thought is the generation of a philosophical system, which begins without presuppositions and builds to comprehend all intelligibility. In facing the challenges posed by this project, especially in the moment the system is founded or begun, we find Hegel turning to the language of ritual, which, so far from being a supplement to reason, points to a crucial aspect of its ongoing activity. Reading Hegel alongside the ritual theorist Catherine Bell illuminates what ritual offers to philosophical thinking and what this relationship means for the study of religion today.

- Andrew Tebbutt, Trinity Christian College

*Toward a Philosophy of Ritual Expression: Bell and Hegel against Thought-Action Dichotomies*

In *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (1992) Catherine Bell rejects the understanding of ritual as a second-order medium for the expression of thought. According to Bell, while this expression framework offers an attractive resource for classificatory approaches that define ritual as symbolic or non-instrumental action as opposed to technical or utilitarian action, it ultimately illustrates of the basic thought-action dichotomy that pervades ritual studies. While agreeing with Bell's overall critique, my paper identifies a subtle elision in her account whereby her rejection of the thought-action dichotomy implicitly accepts the “secondary” status of expression. Drawing on G.W.F. Hegel, whose work demonstrates the secondary nature precisely of thinking, I argue that it is possible to challenge the reduction of ritual action to a second-class status without simultaneously designating expression a “secondary” act. In this way, Hegel's work offers a philosophical resource for undermining the thought-action dichotomy alongside Bell’s notion of “ritualization.”

- Inese Radzins, California State University, Stanislaus

*A Philosophy of Living Labor: Michel Henry and Simone Weil on Marx*

This paper considers two heterodox interpretations of Marx’s living labor: that of Simone Weil and Michel Henry. Both reject traditional Marxism in favor of an approach that emphasizes what they will call the spiritual aspect of Marx—his notion of living labor. For both thinkers, living labor provides a way of rethinking the philosophical category of subjectivity. This kind of labor has nothing to do with wage labor, or what Marx designates dead labor. Weil and Henry reject dead labor and argue that it has infiltrated all forms of thinking, whether philosophical, political or religious. In place of dead labor, they draw out the possibility of a subjectivity rooted in living labor: a uniquely singular and creative capacity. Henry calls this capacity life, or living subjectivity. Weil simply
labels it labor. Both contend that social, political and religious life have ignored this subjectivity. My paper argues that reconsidering subjectivity along Weilian and Henryian lines situates spirituality in an unsuspecting place—laboring. It is thus a very “mundane” activity: the chef baking, the student studying, the runner running. I conclude by discussing what Weil and Henry’s version of spirituality offers to the disciplines of philosophy of religion and political theology.

- Kristóf Oltvai, University of Chicago

*Doxographic Intervention: the past and promise of a method in the philosophy of religion*

The contemporary philosophy of religion is dominated by two methods, “apophasis” and “genealogy.” Both claim to challenge models of modern rationality associated with the European Enlightenment. Using the work of Eberhard Jüngel, I first argue that apophasis’s turn to a mystical archive, which reaches its apex in French phenomenology, covertly colludes with the discourse it claims lies behind modernity: ‘ontotheology.’ By framing the alleged object of religion, ‘God,’ as supra- or nonrational, apophasis risks homogenizing religious experience and rendering doxographic differences between and within traditions unintelligible. I then propose that genealogy has historically, but mainly only implicitly, accounted for religious truth-claims’ rationality. If the philosophy of religion makes such “doxographic interventions” explicit, it could advance a pluralistic concept of reason able to appreciate non-Western religions’ philosophical rigor without ignoring the field’s historical origins in the study of Christianity or refusing an engagement with non-Western traditions through the excuse of untranslatability.

**A22-123**
**Reformed Theology and History Unit**
**Theme:** Reflecting on the Belhar Confession After 40 Years
**Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)**
Joshua Ralston, University of Edinburgh, Presiding

The Belhar Confession has its roots in the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa. This “outcry of faith” and “call for faithfulness and repentance” was first drafted in 1982 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) under the leadership of Allan Boesak. The DRMC took the lead in declaring that apartheid constituted a status confession in which the truth of the gospel was at stake.

2022 marks the 40th anniversary of Belhar’s initial drafting and adoption, with full ratification coming in 1986 at the next General Synod. This session will feature papers offering reflections on the significance of Belhar and its ongoing relevance.

- Rachel Sophia Baard, Union Presbyterian Seminary

*Christ, Context, and Culture: The Confession of Belhar in Continuing Conversation*

This paper examines the Belhar Confession in conversation with other theological
responses to apartheid. By contrasting Belhar’s confessional theology with the liberationist approach of the Kairos Document, and the African cultural approach of Desmond Tutu’s Ubuntu theology, Belhar’s strengths and weaknesses come into stark relief. Its greatest strength lies in its emphasis on the central kerygma of the Church: the one Lord who calls people into one church, which is not to be separated by so-called “natural” revelations like ethnic differences. At the same time, Belhar needs supplementation by more overtly contextual and cultural theologies that reflect the theological conversation in the global church, including the Reformed community worldwide.

- Derek Alan Woodard-Lehman, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Protest Theology: Barmen, Belhar, and Black Lives Matter

The connection between Karl Barth and the Belhar Confession is widely known, if not fully understood. Most know that the German Confessing Church and their Barmen Declaration inspired the South African Confessing Church and their Belhar Confession. Some know that Belhar’s threefold pattern of unity, reconciliation, and justice was first articulated by students at University of the Western Cape who were studying Barth’s “Doctrine of Reconciliation.” Hardly anyone appreciates how Barmen and Belhar embody the theology of Confession that Barth develops before and during the Church Struggle, especially his emphasis on what he calls “the second turn of the Reformation,” the Reformed turn from dogmatics to ethics and politics. This paper revisits the composition of Barmen and Belhar, revises the standard story of their authorship, and revives the intrinsically political and inherently democratic character of Reformed Confession as a resource for engaging contemporary Black Lives Matter struggles for racial justice.

- Henry Kuo, Greensboro College

Doing the Truth: Belhar’s Next Step

The continuation of unjust policing practices of Black and Latino men and the targeting of Asian women and elderly peoples in recent years raises the question of whether Belhar still matters in our times where geopolitical instabilities; economic and environmental catastrophes; and gendered or racial anger and hatred intersect in insidious and oftentimes dangerous ways. This presentation contends that while Belhar contains wisdom that remains pertinent and critical for our unstable times, it alone is insufficient because of the intersectionality of race, economic systems, and environmental destruction. Hence, inspired by Augustine of Hippo's idea of veritatis facere, the presentation argues that to "do the truth" that Belhar unfolds requires us to name the concrete sins that feed racial apartheid. Thus, the 2004 Accra Confession provides a concrete blueprint for what it means to truly confess our complicities with racisms and to “do the truth” that Belhar has uncovered.
Responding

Keith Johnson, Wheaton College, Illinois

A22-124
Religion and the Social Sciences Unit
Theme: Islam, Secularism and Contestations of Identity in the State
Tuesday, 9:00 AM - 11:00 AM (In Person)
Amanda Baugh, California State University, Northridge, Presiding

his panel addresses the relationship between Muslim identity, secularism, and inequality in comparative state contexts (United States, Turkey, Germany, and Iran). Through ethnographic and social scientific theoretical analysis, this panel illuminates mechanisms of religious and social exclusion, and explores how diverse Muslim groups negotiate religious identity and seek to craft their own public narratives amidst exclusion and in relationship to secularism and public discourses on religion in the nation. In so doing, the papers in this panel offer important insight into the value of including Muslim communities and non-Western perspectives in collective efforts to address social inequalities and environmental catastrophe.

• Carrie Dohe, University of Toronto

“How does religion have to do with nature conservation?” Investigating the Tensions in an Interreligious Nature Conservation Project in Germany

This presentation discusses tensions that emerged in an interfaith initiative called Religions for Biological Diversity. Sponsored by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation and the Abrahamic Forum, this project promotes nature conservation through religious communities. Based on participation observation, semi-structured interviews and action research, findings show that participants’ concerns extended beyond either religious or environmental ones; rather, they revolved around social status, social cohesion, discrimination, and secularization. Muslim participants faced suspicion of instrumentalizing nature conservation to improve their social image, while the Catholic Church came under fire for child abuse and embezzlement. Moreover, although the project is supported by major nature conservancy organizations in Germany, grassroots-level conservationists often resented partnering with religious communities, fearing indoctrination and social regression. This empirical study expands our understanding of the potentials and limitations of religiously-motivated environmentalism and its contributions to civil society, challenging simple assertions about religions’ potential contribution to environmentalism.

• Valentina Cantori, University of Southern California

Stigmatized? Muslim American Advocates Crafting Public Images of Islam in the U.S.

How do American Muslim advocates craft public images of Islam in the U.S.? American Muslims are one of the most excluded groups in the United States. Yet, little do we know
about how American Muslim advocates navigate the exclusionary mechanisms of U.S. civic life and how they craft public images for Muslims. This study is based on a comparative ethnography of two Muslim advocacy organizations that engage in different image crafting practices. I argue that these different public image crafting practices emerge from the folk theories of inclusion that Muslim advocates embrace. I show that folk theories of inclusion are constituted by three components: a) a cartography of public Islam; b) a bundle of American values; and c) a set of strategic solidarities. I conclude by arguing that public image crafting practices deserve more attention to understand how the exclusion of religious minorities is perpetuated in U.S. public life.

- Caroline Tee, University of Chester

*Religious Charisma in the Shadow of the State: Pathways to ‘Routinisation’ in Turkey*

According to Max Weber (1978), religious charisma rarely survives intact the death of the charismatic individual. ‘Hot primary charisma’ can translate itself into ‘cool secondary charisma’ (Lindholm 2013) as posthumous institutionalisation takes place, yet the intensity of the original charismatic encounter is inevitably diminished. In this paper, I draw on ethnographic fieldwork in Turkey to interrogate this claim, and more specifically to illustrate the role of political context in shaping the routinisation of charisma. Using the Nur Movement as one example and the Alevi as another, I show how charisma is transferred from religious leaders to material objects and places in diverse and creative ways. In both cases, contestations over Islam and its relationship to Turkish secularism have been profoundly influential on the ways in which religious charisma is encountered in the present day.

- Samira I. Ibrahim, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

*The Voltaire of Iran: Insights in Shariati’s Sociological Theories of Religion*

In February 2022, the second part of the IPCC report was published emphasizing there is no doubt that climate change will worldwide affect the most vulnerable communities. As a consequence, inequalities, in particular social and economic inequalities, will only increase under the unfolding climate catastrophe. Plenty of studies are performed on investigating inequalities, however, too often marginalized cultural and religious insights of non-Western communities are excluded from this field. In an attempt to contribute to the healing of this ongoing deficiency, this research is specifically dedicated to the work of an Iranian scholar from the 20th century: Ali Shariati. In focusing on these writings from a non-Western, Islamic context, this paper aims to contribute to a broader understanding of sociology of religion in light of increasing (economic) inequalities worldwide. In addition, it will be discussed how the work of Shariati can still contribute to overcoming these inequalities nowadays.
This panel brings together scholars of religious studies, literature, intellectual history, and philosophy to offer a set of broad reflections on the relationship between Jewish thought and indigeneity in twentieth-century North Africa. The panel understands the relationship between Jewishness and indigeneity as a question traversed by formations colonial power: legal, religious, and racial. It further posits North Africa as a significant site for negotiating the thematics of indigeneity across modern Jewish thought. On the one hand, this means interrogating indigeneity as a major theme and point of debate in North African writing. On the other hand, it means considering how the question of indigeneity in North Africa has ramified and inflected discussions of the topic across other contexts, including the relation between decolonization and post-Holocaust Jewish identity.

- Adam Stern, University of Wisconsin

*What is a “globalatin” translation?*

This paper reads Jacques Derrida’s writing on Algeria, Jewishness, and colonialism in conjunction with his reflections on the Christianity and Latinity of *globalatinization*. Through a reinterpretation of a controversial passage in his 1996 book, *Monolingualism of the Other*, the paper calls for a reconsideration of Derrida’s *globalatinization* as a decolonizing intervention into the legacy of French Algeria. The paper argues that Derrida’s reading of colonialism can unsettle the inheritance of a colonial formation structured around an opposition between Jews and indigeneity.

- Tsivia Frank Wygoda, Bar-Ilan University, Israel

*Aporetic Indigeneity: Reclaiming North African Autochthony in Contemporary Algerian Jewish Literature*

This paper analyzes the reclaiming of Algerian Jews’ North African indigeneity in post-1962 literature, as an *aporia*, in other words, a conceptual framework that has historical, philosophical, and affective efficacy, and inherent limitations. Through the analysis of memoirs and autobiographical essays, I claim that Algerian Jewish authors are fascinated with the notion of a redemptive indigeneity, while also trying to avoid its pitfalls.

My analysis of writings by three Algerian Jewish authors – Albert Bensoussan, Hélène Cixous and Denis Guénoun – argues that reclaiming indigeneity in literature navigates the theoretical paradoxes of indigeneity and testifies to the contemporary evolutions of Jewish thought and religion, while also pointing at the aporia faced by Algerian Jews.
after 1962.

I argue that this cautious reclaiming of indigeneity offers to our reflection a new paradigm: a paradoxical claim of identity and belonging without exclusion and authority.

- Alma Heckman, University of California, Santa Cruz

*Anti-Semitism and Anti-Fascism in Interwar Morocco*

The interwar period was a time of tremendous political upheaval for Moroccan Jews. Between rising currents of fascism, nationalism, anti-Semitism, Zionism, and internationalism, Moroccan Jews increasingly began to examine their place in their homeland and the nature of their relationships to Moroccan Muslims, Jews abroad, and Europe. One organization which proved particularly popular among Moroccan Jews was the LICA. The LICA, or the International League Against anti-Semitism, began activities in Morocco in the mid-1930s. Originally founded as the League Against Pogroms in Paris in 1927, the LICA was active across the Middle East and North Africa and brought together Jews and Muslims in the fight against fascist influence in the region. Through a discussion of the LICA in Morocco during the 1930s through to the outbreak of war in 1939, this paper will discuss Moroccan Jews’ evolving notions of indigeneity against a backdrop of rising racial and political tensions.

- Yaniv Feller, Wesleyan University

*The Birth of the Indigenous from the Spirit of Exile: Jean Améry on the Paradoxes of Home*

This paper argues that indigeneity is intimately bound with the experience of exile and dispossession. It takes as its starting point the Jean Améry’s essay “How Much Home Does a Person Need?,” in which he argues that what was previously thought of as home is to be understood after atrocity as having been no home at all. I develop this claim by showing how although Améry is writing of his experience as a Jewish-Austrian Holocaust survivor, his thought is shaped by North African questions of indigeneity, and in particular the thought of Frantz Fanon. Building on this expanded understanding of Améry’s philosophy, I compare his theorizing of Jewish indigeneity and its loss with Edward Said’s “Reflections on Exile.”

**Responding**

Santiago H. Slabodsky, Hofstra University
“Curating Covid and Healing: Womanist Rituals and Responses,” names significant challenges to Black disabled and abled bodies, amid systemic oppression and engages womanist responses through artistic digital, virtual engagement, and rituals toward healing. The 2022 President theme of “Religion and Catastrophe,” emphasizing ecology and the environment, resonates with womanist theological aesthetics/praxis/activism, current issues, the pandemic, and the threat to loving our whole selves.

- Raedorah Stewart, Wesley Theological Seminary

**COVID Kills Us and Nobody Notices aka Womanist Response to Disability Awareness in the African American Church**

Womanist process casts the *imago Dei* with disabilities as incarnate. According to the CDC, one in four African Americans has a disability in the midst of it reporting over 950K deaths due to COVID in the United States alone. African Americans have disproportionately succumbed to this insidious virus. With calculable grief noted by USAFacts, African Americans have disproportionately succumbed to this insidious virus by making up 13% of the US population and 23% of COVID-19 deaths. This presentation uses ethnographies to elevate voices and validate experiences of Black women of faith with disabilities during the COVID pandemic to theoretically inform and radically transform an African American theology of disability among our cache of liberation theologies and congregational care. African American churches are charged with directives for action-oriented disability justice to accommodate persons with disabilities while they live and take notice when they die.

- Reelaviolette Botts-ward, University of California, Berkeley

**curating #blackgirlquarantine: digital altar work and ancestral collaging**

“curating #blackgirlquarantine: digital altar work + ancestral collaging” is an autoethnographic visual essay that narrates a Black feminist praxis of ancestral collage-making within my curation of #blackgirlquarantine: an exhibition of blackwomxnhealing in the wake of 2020 (BGQ). I detail my spiritual, affective, and embodied journey of stretching collage art to make room for memorializing the lives of Black womxn and girls who are no longer here to tell their stories. I write at the intersection of healing, memory, and mourning, and merge a Methodology for the Black Femme Sacred with visual anthropology and digital humanities to read creative rituals of digital altar work as text. In many ways, this project is a meeting of clairaudience and clairvoyance. It is an invitation to see the dead, to hear the dead, to listen closely. It is *I See You, Sis* meets *I
Hear You, Sis meets I hear you ancestors, I'm listening.

- Estee Dillard, Independent Scholar

*Where the Ritual resides: the influence of virtual communication and womanist ritual practices in African derived religious spaces.*

African derived religious practices in hoodoo, voodoo, and orisa traditions have been often women led and can trace their lineages of eldership back through priestesses. The synchronicity experienced in these local and global practices are linked to practices like Africentric Christianity, West African Orisa traditions and Candomble. These practices are too sustained by the religious practices of women who go to mass/church and lead African derived religious rituals. For these women who are central to the larger religious practice, their womanist religious practices are primarily embodied and communal. There are many women for whom, they also carry their spiritual power through possession and other embodied spiritual practices. The global pandemic of COVID-19 has shifted the realities of women practitioners in African derived religions due to strict social gathering mandates and social distancing. The lives of women practitioners have been changed and so have their ritual practices. Influenced by both their connections to ancient slave rituals and new available technologies like Zoom, African diasporan women practitioners have revolutionized gathering in ritual spaces. This paper will use womanist methodology to name and identify the shifts in embodied epistemology in ritual spaces of the COVID-19 realities.

**Responding**

Chanequa Walker-Barnes, Columbia Theological Seminary

**A22-128**

**Chinese Religions Unit**

Theme: A Panel in Celebration of Daniel B. Stevenson’s Retirement

Tuesday, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (In Person)

Jimmy Yu, Florida State University, Presiding

In what ways does Chinese Buddhist scholarship influence other fields of Buddhist Studies? To what extent has the guild of Chinese Buddhist studies influenced the study of Daoism and Chinese religions? Lastly, what is the role of collegiality, collaboration, and friendship in scholasticism? This roundtable answers these questions through a celebration of the academic contributions and influence of Daniel B. Stevenson on the occasion of his retirement. Over the span of over thirty years, he has produced some of the most important scholarship on Chinese Buddhist praxis and ritual. Unrestrained by disciplinary or sectarian parameters, he has explored the diversity of shifting religious idioms, liturgical knowledge, and historical networks that have formed the vast landscape of late medieval China (10th – 14th centuries). The seven panelists below will speak to his innovative approaches in the developments in the fields of Buddhist studies and Chinese religions.
Panelists

Jacqueline I. Stone, Princeton University
Paul Groner, University of Virginia
Peter N. Gregory, Smith College
Brenton Sullivan, Colgate University
Jingyu Liu, Harvard University
Natasha Heller, University of Virginia
Hiroshi Kanno, Soka University

A22-129
Christian Systematic Theology Unit
Theme: Constructive Proposals in Queer Theology
Tuesday, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (In Person)
Natalia Marandiuc, Southern Methodist University, Presiding

Apophatic Anthropology: Dionysian Insights for Queer Explorations, David Dawson Vasquez, Pontifical Beda College

Locating Non-Binary Persons in Messianic Times, Jamie Myrose, Boston College

Queer Hope: One Virtue’s Limits and Potential for Queer Lives, Theory, and Theology, Patrick Haley, Princeton Theological Seminary

- David Dawson Vasquez, Pontifical Beda College

*Apophatic Anthropology: Dionysian Insights for Queer Explorations*

Deification is at the center of Christian hope. However, the essential link between deification and the unknowability of God is often not reflected upon. If God is essentially unknowable, then what we are becoming is something unexpected. Today, LGBTQ+ issues are too often presumed to arise from the errors of modern society. Yet, an apophatic understanding of deification can help uncover an essential Christian perspective in queer concerns. The paper uses the thought of Dionysius the Areopagite to show that the unknowability of God equally implies an unknowability of ourselves. It then shows that apophatic theology is a journey of discovery and increasing unfolding of beauty where our transformation is not framed by a logic of human nature drawn from mere philosophical reflection but is an opening to unexpected possibility. It concludes by looking at how Dionysius’s apophatic anthropology can offer practical insight on the queering of human relationships.

- Jamie Myrose, Boston College

*Locating Non-Binary Persons in Messianic Times*

Appeals to unsatisfactory anthropology have led to tensions between Catholic magisterial
teaching and the experience of the LGBTQ+ community. The recent focus on complementarity—that the appropriateness of the male-female relationship manifests in gendered and sexual differentiation—dismisses relationships that do not conform to this schema. These documents, however, primarily discuss same-sex attraction and only secondarily address gender expression. Invoking the work of Kathleen Lennon, Rachel Alsop, and Giorgio Agamben, this paper examines how non-binary persons (NBP), who transcend the gender binary, can serve in healing this divide through the category of messianic vocation. I argue that Catholic theology can positively account for NBP because NBP serve as messianic witnesses to the Church’s relationship with human categories. By embracing multiple forms of gender expression simultaneously, NBP model for other Christians how to treat cultural categories functionally. Celebrating this witness would open grounds for healing and dialogue between both parties.

- Patrick Haley, Princeton Theological Seminary

*Queer Hope: One Virtue’s Limits and Potential for Queer Lives, Theory, and Theology*

Hope has been rightly critiqued both in theology and queer theory for its potential to prop up oppressive regimes. Yet hope remains, for many, an essential component of flourishing, even and perhaps especially for LGBTQ people. Here I begin by appraising what theologians and queer theorists have said about hope’s limitations and dangers. Next I consider queer utopianism, which also seeks to meet these challenges. Then I show how queer utopianism helpfully accentuates what was nascent within the theological virtue tradition: First, rightly ordered hope hopes in the assistance of others (God, other people) and rejects presumption or despair about one’s own powers (pace oppressive forms of hope). Second, rightly ordered hope hopes for something (God, a better future) that is better glimpsed, as queer utopianism says, in the world’s ephemera than in the certainties of our own ambitions and projects. Finally, I argue such hope will inspire revolutionary action.

A22-130
**Contemporary Islam Unit**
Theme: *Islamic Piety and Devotion in New Contexts*
Tuesday, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (In Person)
Nick Lorenz, University of Chicago, Presiding

How do a tradition’s grammars of authority travel into new contexts? What tensions and relations are resolved, created, and re-made? This panel offers close analysis of three case studies in the work of contemporary Islamic piety and devotion. The first paper examines how Islamic investment companies and giving organizations navigate the financial instruments of late capitalism—even claiming to turn algorithms toward religious values of the “good” and the “just”. The second paper analyzes the survival of a halal restaurant in North Philadelphia, offering the term “devotional resilience” as a means of emphasizing the role of Islamic discourses, ethics, and bonds in enduring social crises. The third paper considers the contemporary role of audio technology in cultivating relationships with the family of the Prophet. Taken together, these innovative papers follow forms of Islamic piety and devotion
through novel technologies, media forms, and social ruptures.

- Esra Tunc, University of California, Santa Barbara

*Algorithmic Piety? The Creation and Use of Algorithms for the Good and Just in Islamic Finance*

This paper examines finance companies’ claims that algorithms operate for the “good” and “just” in Muslim contexts. The main question of this paper is: How are algorithms made, designed, and owned through claims to serve various understandings of the good and just in financial settings, especially those structured by religious principles and pieties? This paper aims to contribute to scholarly conversations on algorithms by examining how algorithms are used through claims to benefit individuals and solve social issues in finance settings, even as these claims overlook the larger financial structures and operations in which these algorithms are located. This paper draws on ethnographic research at American Muslim investment and giving-based organizations that are creating new forms of capitalism.

- Max Dugan, University of Pennsylvania

*Devotional Resilience: Weathering Catastrophes with Islamic Tradition at a Halal Restaurant in North Philadelphia*

The following paper analyzes the devotional resilience of a halal restaurant in North Philadelphia as Islamic practice. The techniques of resilience of my interlocutors are "devotional" insofar as their engagement with Islamic discourses, ethics, and social bonds orients them toward God and against asymmetric forces. This restaurant faces challenges that afflict food service business across Philadelphia. As a locally-oriented and Black-owned business in an under-resourced community, these struggles have been especially acute. But they are not entirely novel. Whether eminent domain in the past or, more recently, family tragedy and slimmer profit margins, this business has persisted by circulating Islamic discourse, providing clean food, and cultivating Islamic social bonds. Catastrophe in the form of COVID-19 and market logics have pushed this restaurant to the edge of viability. Their devotional resilience shows some U.S. Muslims practice Islamic tradition by confronting catastrophe, as well as the neoliberalism and racialization entangled in it.

- Stefan Williamson Fa, University of Birmingham

*Sonic Devotion: Cultivating Relations with the Supernatural in Shi‘i Islam*

The family of the Prophet Muhammad holds a central position in Shi‘i Muslim religiosity. As immaterial beings able to intercede in this world they are said to be witnessing and co-present in the lives of Muslims. Anthropology has neglected relations with supernatural beings like these. Instead of regarding them merely as symbols or moral exemplars, this paper focuses on the cultivation of relations of intimacy with them.
through the devotional practice of vocal recitation. Amongst Shi’a across the world, genres of vocal devotional lament and praise in honor of the Family of the Prophet lie at the center of ritual gatherings and, with the development of audio technology, are listened to in a variety of everyday settings. This presentation uses audio examples as sensory props to demonstrate how their vocal and discursive features offer ways for Muslims to cultivate love and intimacy to live life alongside these supernatural beings.

Responding

Candace Mixon, Occidental College

A22-131
Psychology, Culture, and Religion Unit
Theme: Joy, Hope, Resistance and Resilience: Contextual Responses to Suffering
Tuesday, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (In Person)
Danjuma Gibson, Calvin Theological Seminary, Presiding

In the face of multiple, ongoing, experiences of suffering - individual, communal, global - hope and joy can come in many forms, not all of which may fit conventional or culturally-dominant models of “happiness” or “resilience.” Hope, joy, and resilience are, in part, socially constructed and can be influenced by place, culture, class, and ethnicity. Imposing a singular understanding of these concepts on any person, care seeker, or group can reflect a form of colonial dominance, especially in times of suffering and vulnerability. What are the parameters of joy, hope, or resilience that are meaningful in the real lives of people in widely disparate cultural, social, economic, familial contexts? This call seeks papers that address these questions from psychological and religious perspectives.

- Brendan Case, Harvard University

“Hoping against Hope”: A Thomistic Critique of Contemporary Psychological Approaches to Hope and Optimism

Our age of crisis, beset as it is by the specters of disease, social unraveling, accelerating climate change, and now wars and rumors of war, has underscored the importance of hope in promoting resilience and flourishing amid great suffering. Recent psychological research on this topic, however, has been dominated by Charles Snyder’s definition of hope as “the cognitive energy and pathways for goals” and by his corresponding survey measure (“Conceptualizing, measuring, and nurturing hope,” 1995). This is unfortunate, as Snyder’s account is inadequate for capturing the role of hope in the face of apparently overwhelming adversity. This paper will propose instead that psychologists might improve on Snyder’s conceptualization by drawing on Thomas Aquinas’s richer account of hope as the desire for a future, difficult good (Summa Theologiae 1-2.40.1) and on Viktor Frankl’s reflections, in Man’s Search for Meaning, on the role of hope in sustaining prisoners in Auschwitz.
Julien Kennedy MacQuarrie, Independent Scholar

Setting Hearts on Fire in a World on Fire: Toward an Existential Framework of Care for Adolescent Mental Health Patients with Suicidal Symptoms in the COVID-19 Pandemic

The catastrophic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of our children cannot be understated. Before the pandemic, however, the mental health of our children had already undergone severe wounding and impairment by a culture at times deeply inimical to the wellbeing of children and adolescents. I argue that, at heart, this problem is a crisis caused by the incapacity of our children to imagine any possible public and private future, and the deep inability to make or engage with a framework of positive and sustaining meaning. Evoking contributions of existential psychology, and in conversation with data from the National Institute of Mental Health and my own experiences as an educator in a mental health facility, I propose a framework of adolescent care that engages them with meaning-making and engagement while enduring the COVID pandemic.

Konnie Vissers, University of Toronto

Resilience, Development, and Children’s Spirituality: How Gardening as a Spiritual Practice for Children Builds Resilience in the Face of Trauma

In the wake of the pandemic, the climate crisis, and international conflicts, trauma and strife are all around us. What would it look like to equip children who are growing up in this context with protective factors for resilience in the face of trauma? Combining insights from studies in children’s spirituality, with studies in psychological development and resilience, this paper explores gardening as a spiritual practice for resilience in the lives of children as they face an increasingly uncertain future in an ever-changing world. Drawing upon empirical studies in resilience and developmental psychology, this paper correlates specific protective factors in resilience to the act of gardening. Then bringing in work in children’s spirituality, gardening will be explored as an inter-religious spiritual practice which further builds resilience in children who face trauma.

A22-132
Religion and Politics Unit
Theme: Liberalism and Islam
Tuesday, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (In Person)
Jocelyne Cesari, Harvard University, Presiding

This panel considers several representatives and representations of Islam that reveal different ways that some Muslims have navigated liberal societies in pursuit of greater freedom, reform, accomodation, or integration.

Dragos Stoica, Concordia University, Montreal

From Harlem to Mecca and Back: Malik el-Shabazz as the Paradigmatic Black
This paper focuses on Malcolm X/El-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz’s perspective on Islam as a comprehensive and global revolutionary religion which functions as cornerstone of his multilayered perspective on race and social justice. It postulates that Malcolm X’s uncompromising Black Nationalism and Malik el-Shabazz unyielding Islamic identity must be understood as profoundly complementary binomial and that Islamic Studies must engage Malcolm X as a seminal African-American Muslim revolutionary voice who is fundamentally resistant to the temptations of forced one-dimensionality through de-Islamisation, secularization or de-radicalization.

- Ehsan Sheikholharam, University of North Carolina

**The Ismaili Global Network and the Ambiguity of Transnational Citizenship**

Transnational Islamic networks are often characterized by their oppositions to the existing political structures. They seek allegiance from their members against both secular and Islamic governments. The Ismaili global community is an exception. Scattered from Tibet to Texas, this multiethnic community represent a version of Islam aligned with secular politics. Prince Aga Khan (b. 1936) advises his followers to be loyal citizens of their States. There is nonetheless an ambiguity inherent in this call, as Ismailis are supported by the Aga Khan Development Network that offers what is otherwise provided by the States: roads and infrastructures, energy networks, hospitals, universities, and “national” constitutions. What transformation in citizenship is represented by this global network? Drawing on the work of Jonah Steinberg, Michel Boivin, and Olivier Roy, this paper examines how the Aga Khan Development Network reunites cultural identities divided by political borders, while also shaping modes of belonging beyond nation-states.

- Morgane Thonnart, University of California, Santa Barbara

**‘Islam’ in Gutfeld’s brand of (right-wing) comedy**

The boom of right-wing comedy has increasingly garnered attention from scholars in various fields. As of 2021, Fox News self-described libertarian and comic host Greg Gutfeld joined Stephen Colbert as ‘king’ of late night television. Focusing on Gutfeld’s shows *Gutfeld!* and – secondarily – *The Five*, this paper examines the ways in which Islam plays a role in Gutfeld’s construction of group belonging, promoting an exclusionary (and exceptional) vision of American identity along the lines of a conservative-liberal division. Considering comedy’s rhetorical power, meaning-making possibilities and community dynamics, the analysis demonstrates that Gutfeld’s brand of juvenilian satire and rhetoric present a regime of ‘truth’ about ‘Islam’ that is free of journalistic conventions and perpetuate alarmist narratives of threat, peril and evil.

Gutfeld’s discussions of Islam are particularly significant given the news channel’s use of satirical programming to expand its viewership.
This format offers an opportunity for more substantive conversation about works in progress than the traditional panel presentation. This year, we will be discussing two exciting new projects exploring such things as religious identity, film, dance, memory, and alternative archives. There will be four panelists: two authors, who will share a brief overview of their work for the benefit of the audience; and two respondents, who will have read the longer versions of the papers and will share comments and questions designed to stimulate discussion and move the conversation and work forward. Audience questions and suggestions will follow.

- Jared Vazquez, Iliff School of Theology

*Queering Puerto Rico: Reclaiming Taino and African Identity and Religion*

Using queer theory and queer of color critique this paper seeks to explore the movements in Puerto Rico working to reclaim Taino and African identity and religion. The focus of the paper is on how that work demonstrates and reflects a desire for emancipation from Western political ideologies that deny Puerto Rico and its citizens (even those in diaspora) a sense of self-determination unless they opt for the rigid categories of U.S. statehood or national sovereignty. This paper proposes the idea of a queer Puerto Rico which, rather than give in to colonial and imperial force, finds a way to flourish and claim a self-determined identity in the midst of political and economic catastrophe by tapping into its indigenous and African spiritual past.

- Carlos Ramirez-Arenas, Syracuse University

*Dancing Archives: Performance and Historiography in Salsa*

This paper interprets the documentary *Our Latin Thing (Nuestra Cosa)* (1972) and salsa songs from the 70’s as archives that not only portray performances of brown migrant bodies in the U.S., but that are meant to inspire in others performative gestures that re-tell stories. The paper argues that salsa has a historiographical potentiality that is actualized in the form of dance and interprets songs as “minoritarian performances” that (mis)appropriate the Western musical canon to tell the experience of migration. Thus, salsa creates “beastly” narrations whose excessive nature reveals the “affective reality” of Latinos/as that creates new forms of knowledge and tradition. The paper compares the aesthetic and affective dimensions of salsa and a Santeria ceremony scene in the documentary to claim that Afro-Caribbean religious traditions can also be read as “beastly,” excessive performances that inherit and disfigure colonial inheritances, like Christianity, to transmit other forms of knowledge and history.
The monastery in South Asia has long been siloed within discussions of world-renouncing asceticism. Even with the welcome turn to critical analyses of the logics of monastic governance, the scholarly gaze has remained cloistered within the monastic walls, adverting to the alien logic of its maintenance. By constituting the South Asian monastery as a category of comparative study, this panel proposes to relocate the study of this institution where it belongs, firmly entrenched in the networks of power—economic, ethical, geographic, and governmental—that constitute and are constituted by such social institutions. The papers in this panel focus on the mechanisms of monastic subject-formation as a site for the analysis of the logic of monastic governance. By examining modes of governance that were developed in Buddhist, Jaina and Hindu monastic orders, this panel attempts to resituate the monastery as an alternative source of political and social order in South Asia.

- Upali Sraman, Emory University

*Rival Monastic Groups and the Messiness of Ethical Practice in Buddhist Vinaya Texts*

The Vinaya texts of the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition contain a series of narratives depicting rival groups of monks who stay, study, play, and work together. This paper explores the dynamics of the relationship between two such monastic groups as they compete for domination, goad each other into excelling in their studies, and inadvertently create the conditions for critical self-reflection crucial to ethical formation. In this paper, I argue that the Buddhist Vinaya narratives, which are frequently read merely as the background for disciplinary rules, can profitably be read as pedagogical devices to explore the messiness of the conditions in which a life devoted to ethical practice can grow. This messiness includes conflicts between competing groups and using the Buddha’s words for deceitful purposes—forcing readers, including us, to a second order reflection on the very function and limits of vinaya (discipline) itself as a way life.

- Harsha Gautam, University of Texas

*To Discuss, Defend and Dissent: Locating the Agency of the Students in the Saṅgha*

This paper explores the power dynamics of the teacher-student relationship within the Buddhist saṅgha, focusing on the probation period before the upasampadā (higher ordination and official entry to the saṅgha) to examine the relationship between
the upajhāya (preceptor) and the saddhivihārika (student-attendant) and the rules meant for the sāmaṇera/sāmaṇeri (novice monk and nun). I argue that a student asserts considerable agency vis-à-vis their preceptor as well as in the monastic commune, as a yet-to-be permanent member. A comparison with the Dharmaśāstric promulgations of the teacher-student relationship, will be attempted to situate the students of the saṅgha in relation to the contemporary traditions and analyze the scope of subversion in this relationship as reflected from the prescriptive texts of the two religious traditions. The final section will note instances from Buddha’s own engagement with his students to identify how successful were those who either reasoned with or even challenged the Buddha.

Christopher Fleming, University of Oxford

The Royal Supervision of Monastic Religious Endowments in Medieval India: Jurisprudence and Epigraphy

My paper examines the relationship between Sanskrit jurisprudential literature (Dharmaśāstra) and epigraphic records concerning the royal supervision of monastic religious endowments in medieval (600-1400 C.E.) India. Dharmaśāstra articulates a juridical model in which (often richly endowed) monastic institutions are sui iuris: religious communities enjoy the privilege of formulating their own internal laws (dharma) which govern their members’ conduct, their modes of succession, and, most importantly, the administration of their assets. In this model, the sovereign must ensure that monastic communities observe their conventional (sāmayika/paribhāṣika) dharma – to the extent that they do not violate public order and safety – and intervene to rectify the situation when breaches of dharma occur. I explore several epigraphic records concerning the foundation - and concomitant sāmayika dharmas – of monastic endowments in connection to historical cases where disputes concerning the maladministration of these endowments (tax evasion, expropriation, diversion of resources to purposes other than those specified in the grant) elicited direct royal intervention. Drawing on these representative examples, I outline a legal phenomenology of ‘breach of dharma’ as it pertained to monastic religious endowments in medieval India and explore the remarkably consistent manner in which sovereigns invoked Dharmaśāstric principles to justify their interventions.

Nabanjan Maitra, University of Texas

How a Great Tradition Universalizes: The Digvijaya Reconsidered

Beginning in the second millennium, the genre of the religious digvijaya (narratives of universal conquest) was adopted and employed to great effect by Jaina and Vedāntin groups, particularly in promulgating the legendary spiritual exploits of founding figures of ascetic orders and monastic institutions. The narratives of universalizing religious triumphs, borrowing directly from the courtly genre of the same name, was used to strikingly different ends by the Advaita Vedantins, who likely appropriated the idiom from their Jaina counterparts. Whereas, for the Jainas, the digvijaya enabled monastic
leaders to liken the spiritual toil of ascetics to the heroic pursuits of kingship, for the Vedantins, the *digvijaya* served as an ideal medium to not merely unify a disparate tradition into a single Vedic order, but moreover to absorb kingship itself within the transcendent and moral hierarchy governed by the ascetic guru.

### A22-135
**Theology and Continental Philosophy Unit**  
**Theme:** *Death, Destruction, and the Violence of the Present: Reflections on Grace Jantzen*  
**Tuesday, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (In Person)**  
**Adam Kotsko, North Central College, Presiding**

This roundtable convenes a group of scholars who work with philosophical and theological materials, to reflect on the work of feminist philosopher of religion, Grace Jantzen. Jantzen’s work raised critical questions about the intellectual foundations of modernity, including questions about power, gender, and mysticism as well as questions about this tradition’s “necrophilic” orientation toward death and destruction. In the midst of the violence and catastrophe of the present, how does Jantzen’s work hold up? What are the elements of Jantzen’s thought that provide resources for thinking through these actual and conceptual impasses? And where did her analyses fall short? Scholars on this panel approach Jantzen’s work with both critical and constructive questions.

**Panelists**

- Marika Rose, University of Winchester  
- Amaryah Shaye Armstrong, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
- Beatrice Marovich, Hanover College  
- Alex Dubilet, Vanderbilt University

**Business Meeting**

**Anthony Paul Smith, La Salle University, Presiding**

### A22-136
**Women and Religion Unit**  
**Theme:** *Confronting Silences: Spiritual and Sexual Abuse in Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Perspectives*  
**Tuesday, 10:30 AM - 12:00 PM (In Person)**  
**Dawn Llewellyn, University of Chester, Presiding**

Spaces for examining spiritual abuse are emerging, yet it is largely hidden, dominated by Christian discourses in which survivors feel shame and guilt and religious institutions fear reputational damage. Moreover, while spiritual abuse can present as a single phenomenon, it is often integral to other violence - such as sexual abuse - but can be missed in these experiences, which are inflected with gendered dynamics that disproportionally impact women. To confront these silences, this roundtable brings together insider and outsider academics and pracademics, using cultural, psychological, sociological, criminological, political, and feminist approaches to
share interdisciplinary insights across religious contexts. Panellists draw on various methodologies and methods (ethnography, focus groups, interviews, surveys, content analysis) to analyse the relationship between spiritual and sexual abuse in Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Finally, we discuss strategies for creating the collaborative, safe, public conversations necessary for survivors and researchers to challenge this pressing topic.

Panelists

Ann Gleig, University of Central Florida
Wendy Dossett, University of Chester
Maryyum Mahmood, University of Birmingham
Lisa Oakley, University of Chester
Guila Benchimol, Safety, Respect, Equity Network